

Title: **Case Study
Public Services
in the West of England**

Mel Battin plays a crucial role in Great Western Ambulance Service, answering 999 calls at its control room in Almondsbury near Bristol.

Her job – its proper title is Emergency Medical Dispatcher – is exciting and highly responsible. She has to take an address for the emergency, while questioning the caller to find out as much as she can about it.

Sometimes she gives first aid advice while an ambulance is on its way. Often she deals with people who are in a panic or very upset. “It’s quite difficult at times,” she says. “People react differently to their situation.

“Someone with a major emergency might be quite calm, and the next call you take the caller is hysterical. It’s quite difficult to get information out of people in that panic situation.

“You have to be quite a calm person. If someone is shouting at you, you don’t take it personally – it’s not aimed at you. It’s just their way of dealing with panic. And you have to have good listening skills and interpersonal skills.”

Mel, aged 21, went to St Mary Redcliffe School in Bristol, but she left after becoming pregnant at 15.

After her daughter was born she attended The Meriton education centre which helps young teenage mothers keep on track with their education.

She gained seven GCSEs, all A and B grades, before going on to take a National Diploma in Sports Development and Fitness at City of Bristol College.

After college she worked in administration at the University of Bristol for ten months to gain experience in the workplace. Then she saw an advert for her current job.

“I thought go for it,” she says. “When I was little, I quite liked the idea of becoming a paramedic and it’s always been in the back of my mind. When I saw the job I thought it might be a good way to get into the service, gain experience and make sure it was what I wanted to do.”

Great Western Ambulance Service put her through eight weeks of training, followed by two weeks mentoring with someone already doing the job, gradually gaining experience and confidence before taking on the role herself.

Mel is currently doing an A-level in Biology at evening classes. Next she wants to take A level Psychology and would like to progress on to university. Eventually she would like to move into a nursing or paramedic role.

“I like the patient care,” she says. “I really enjoy the satisfaction I get from helping people.”