

London Ambulance Service Cycle Responder Unit Fact Finder / Q&A

Q. How much do the bikes weigh?

A. The bikes fully loaded with equipment, along with the uniform each team member wears - including the stab vests, boots, etc, can weigh as much as 70kg.

Q. How big is the team?

A. We have roughly 50 members of staff at any one time on the unit, with about 100 members of staff who are CRU trained across the service.

Q. Is everyone/anyone on the unit permanently on the CRU, or do all/some members of the team join on secondments?

A. We aim to have approximately 50% of the unit as permanent members of the CRU, and the remaining 50% on secondments, which we find brings a positive and productive balance of stability with a constant steady stream of fresh and new ideas.

Q. Who can apply to work on the bikes?

A. We recruit experienced paramedics, who also have experience working as solo paramedic responders; and those that apply must also be fit, competent and experienced cyclists.

Q. After working on the bikes, do paramedics then “graduate” onto ambulances?

A. No, quite the opposite. We recruit experienced frontline paramedics, which normally means they have years of experience working on an ambulance; and then on top of that, also have experience working as a solo paramedic responder.

Q. What is the recruitment process and what training do you have?

A. The first step is to apply when a recruitment drive is advertised. If your application meets the criteria and is successful, you will be invited for an interview, a cycling proficiency assessment and also a cycling workforce assessment or what others may refer to as a fitness test. Pass all of those and you will then be invited to attend a week long PSC (Public Safety Cycling) course (@PSCycling). If you pass that, you then go on the waiting list for a vacancy.

Q. What is the PSC course and what does it involve?

A. The UK developed cycle patrol training course designed by Public Safety Cycling (PSC - @PSCycling) is for emergency services and is based on the hugely successful International Police Mountain Bike Association (IPMBA) course that is currently taught in the US, Canada, and Europe. This course is undoubtedly the leading UK emergency services course and is being used as the standard for nationwide public service cycling standards. It is a week-long cycling course that tests your proficiency in cycling knowledge, legislation including the Highway Code, fitness, road cycling, low speed cycle skills and group riding to national standards.

Q. What ongoing cycling training do you have?

A. The teams undergo regular cycling workforce assessments or what others refer to as a fitness test, and also have bike skills refreshers sessions.

Q. What is carried on the bikes?

A. The bikes carry very similar equipment to that found on the ambulances, fast response cars and motorcycle response units (MRU), but in smaller quantities.

Q. How do you find your way around? Sat Nav?

A. Each team member is inducted and gets to know their areas like of the back of their hand, and they also have a visible map at the top of their rear panniers.

Q. What types of bikes do you use?

A. We have had and currently use various different brands of mountain bikes eg Specialized, Cube, Saracen, etc. We replace them once they reach the end of their working lives, with sites/CRU hubs staggering the time when it comes to renew their fleet. So, although the bikes may superficially all look similar throughout the CRU, currently we don't have the same brand/maker across the Service. This means we aren't tied to one brand/maker which gives us resilience eg should there be a recall, and also makes for a competitive environment when we look to replace fleet.

Q. What uniform do you wear?

A. London Ambulance branded cycling clothes, most of which is provided by Endura (@endura and @endura_ems).

Q. What kind of jobs do you go to?

A. From the most serious life threatening jobs and cardiac arrests, to minor injuries where patients can be treated on scene or referred to appropriate treatment. This means the units are often the quickest to the most ill patients in congested areas, starting life-saving treatment before others can get to the patient; and for the less seriously ill, the CRU reduces the use of ambulances and the intake of patients into emergency departments, resolving over 50% of all incidents at the scene, saving time and money for the NHS, LAS and patients.

Q. How many jobs do you go to?

A. The unit attends to approximately 16,000 calls a year.

Q. How quickly do the bikes get to patients?

A. The average response time to calls is six minutes.

Q. How long is each shift?

A. Between 10 – 12 hours.

Q. How far do you cycle per shift?

A. It is not unheard of for members of the team to clock up 100km in a single shift!

For the latest news and goings-on of the unit, they can be followed on social media:

Twitter: @LAS_CycleTeam https://twitter.com/LAS_CycleTeam

Instagram: las_cycleresponse https://www.instagram.com/las_cycleresponse/