

**NHS**

*Careers*

# Careers in nursing

Join the team and  
make a difference



# Welcome to the NHS

The NHS offers a huge range of exciting and challenging opportunities for people who are passionate about making a difference.

With more than 350 different careers on offer, there is a job for you no matter what your skills, interests or qualifications.

What's more, you'll be given every opportunity to build on your skills and learn new ones as part of the Career Framework – a system that demonstrates our commitment to skills development. See pages 10 and 11 for more information about this.

Scientists, accountants, porters, psychologists, nurses, information technologists and estate managers, to name but a few, are all needed to ensure the smooth running of the NHS. These people, and many more, work together as a team to deliver the very best care for our patients.

**To find out more about becoming a member of the NHS team, call 0345 60 60 655, email [advice@nhscareers.nhs.uk](mailto:advice@nhscareers.nhs.uk) or visit [www.nhscareers.nhs.uk](http://www.nhscareers.nhs.uk)**

We look forward to hearing from you!

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## Foreword

If you want to work in an environment that's interesting, rewarding and challenging, then a career in nursing will give you plenty of scope to do exactly that.

Nurses form the largest group of staff in the NHS and are a crucial part of the healthcare team. Nurses work in every sort of health setting from accident and emergency to working in the community, in patients' homes or schools, with people of all ages and backgrounds.

Some nurses begin their career in support roles, which require no set professional qualifications to start with, and go on to do a registered nursing degree, which qualifies them to work as a nurse. Others apply straight to university to undertake their studies. Whatever route you take, you'll need to gain a degree in nursing, during which the NHS will support you financially.

Nurses working in the modern NHS must be able to demonstrate the values and behaviours of 6Cs:

committed; caring; courageous; compassionate; competent; and have excellent communication skills.

Once you are part of the NHS, you'll benefit from flexible working arrangements, excellent benefits and a wealth of opportunities to develop your career. There are few professions that offer so much in terms of job satisfaction and support, while giving you the chance to enhance people's lives during their times of need.

### The NHS Careers team

**For more information about working in nursing, please visit**  
[www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/nurse](http://www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/nurse)

**If you have any questions, call our helpline on 0345 60 60 655 or email**  
[advice@nhscareers.nhs.uk](mailto:advice@nhscareers.nhs.uk)



# The NHS – a rewarding place to work

There are very few careers as rewarding as one in the NHS, or that give you the opportunity to work with such a wide variety of people.

We actively recruit people of all ages, backgrounds and levels of experience. This helps us understand the different needs of the patients we serve every day and provide the best possible service.

Whichever area you join, you become part of a talented, passionate team of people – committed to providing the best care and treatment to patients. You will also enjoy one of the most competitive and flexible benefits packages offered by any employer in the UK.

### Benefits of working in the NHS

Everyone who joins the NHS is guaranteed a salary that matches their ability and responsibilities, and given every opportunity to increase it through training and development.

On top of your basic salary, you'll receive at least 27 days' holiday each year, plus a range of other benefits, including occupational health and counselling services.

### Join one of the UK's best pension schemes

The NHS Pension Scheme is one of the most generous and comprehensive in the UK. Every new employee automatically becomes a member and you will get an excellent package of pension benefits.

**For more information about the pension and a full list of the benefits included, please visit [www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/payandbenefits](http://www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/payandbenefits)**

## PAY AND CONDITIONS

The NHS pay system, known as Agenda for Change, offers real benefits for all directly employed staff except doctors, dentists and very senior managers, including:

- a standard working week of 37.5 hours
- holiday entitlement of 27 days a year, plus eight general and public holidays, rising to 33 days after 10 years of service
- pay enhancements to reward out of hours, shift and overtime working
- career and pay progression based on the application of knowledge and skills
- annual personal development reviews to support career aspirations.

Other benefits of working in the NHS include training, occupational health services, automatic membership of the NHS Pension Scheme (unless you choose to opt out) and study leave for sponsored courses.

**To find out more about the different Agenda for Change pay bands and to see the most up-to-date starting salaries for each one, visit [www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/payrates](http://www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/payrates)**



## FULFIL YOUR POTENTIAL

- The NHS is committed to offering development and learning opportunities for all full-time and part-time staff.
- No matter where you start within the NHS, you'll have access to extra training and be given every chance to progress within the organisation.
- You will receive an annual personal review and development plan to support your career progression.
- You will be encouraged to extend your range of skills and knowledge and take on new responsibilities through the Knowledge and Skills Framework.

**See pages 10 and 11 for more on the Career Framework and examples of how other employees have progressed through the NHS.**

## CASE STUDY

**Name:** Chris Dzikiti

**Job title:** modern matron, East London NHS Foundation Trust

**Entry route:** nursing diploma\*

**Chris decided to leave his career in banking after being inspired by his cousin's enthusiasm for nursing. He now works as a modern matron and manages a budget of over £2 million.**

My first placement in elderly care was fascinating – the patients were as interested in me as I was in them. Before I finished my diploma training, I was already planning my career.

I wanted a challenging specialty where I'd really get to know my patients. Mental health seemed perfect: the patients love to talk, and the nurses don't wear uniforms.

To gain the right skills, I studied part-time for my nursing degree and then took a masters in Transcultural Psychiatry, which gave me an insight into how mental disorders and their treatment can be influenced by cultural and ethnic factors. I also spent a year as unit manager in a private hospital, which really opened my eyes to financial management.

Two years later, these skills helped bring me to my current position as modern matron for a mental health unit. Our team includes

ward managers, nurses, psychologists and psychiatrists, and my budget is just over £2 million.

Throughout my career, I've been careful to maintain my patient focus and still get involved with new admissions. People lose so much when they suffer from mental illness: jobs, relationships, physical health, even the ability to look after themselves. It's incredibly satisfying to help someone get their life back, watch them regain their skills and give them hope and aspirations.

I also do lots of training on mental health issues. I presented at a conference hosted by the National Association of Psychiatric Intensive Care Units, and was recently appointed honorary lecturer at City University. It's amazing how much confidence this career can give you. Ten years ago I never thought I'd give a lecture to 200 people. Now, I feel I can do anything and talk to anyone.

Friends of mine in say they've never changed someone's life for the better. I have. On Sundays, they dread going to work the next day. I can't wait.

*\*Nursing diplomas are no longer available. You now need to take an approved degree in nursing*



I wanted a challenging specialty where I'd really get to know my patients. Mental health seemed perfect

### Helping you find the right work-life balance

The NHS is committed to maintaining a healthy work-life balance for all NHS staff. There is a real focus on specific areas that are designed to make your life easier at certain times during your career. These include:

- flexible working and retirement
- childcare provision and support for carers in the workplace
- coping with stress
- training and development
- tackling discrimination, bullying and harassment.

**You can find more information on health and well-being at work at [www.nhsemployers.org/healthyworkplaces](http://www.nhsemployers.org/healthyworkplaces)**

### Manage your commitments in and out of work

The size and diversity of the NHS means we can offer you a range of flexible working opportunities.

Part-time roles and jobshare opportunities are often available, as well as term-time only, evening and weekend positions. We will do everything we can to help you combine your work for us with commitments in your life outside work – whether you're studying for a new qualification, raising a family or juggling other responsibilities.

Many people in the NHS take an extended break to look after young children or other dependents who need special care, or to study full time.

**We will help you combine your work for us with commitments in your everyday life**

As well as advice and support for people looking after sick or elderly relatives, we provide a range of childcare services for NHS employees, including:

- nursery care
- after-school and breakfast clubs
- holiday play schemes
- emergency care.

**Get more information about the benefits and opportunities offered by the NHS at [www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/payandbenefits](http://www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/payandbenefits)**



## Your career as a nurse

Patients from all walks of life and with all types of health problems depend on the professional skills and care of the nurses who work in the NHS.

Whether working in the community or in a hospital environment, nurses at all levels are relied upon to listen to patients, recognise their needs and respond in a way that puts the individual first.

It's a highly responsible job, and challenges will be part of your career, making each day different. Knowing how to deal with the unexpected comes with experience, training and the support of colleagues including doctors, therapists, assistants and healthcare scientists, who form dynamic teams where learning never stops. A combination of people skills and initiative is essential for the hands-on care that nurses are required to provide.

Healthcare is continuously changing as new drugs and treatments are developed. To improve care for patients, you may be involved in developing new treatments and you'll need to keep up to date with research and evidence, especially if you choose to take on additional prescribing duties.

Nursing is a varied and deeply satisfying career. You could be running a vaccination clinic, treating a car crash victim in A&E or just chatting to a nervous patient. One of the most rewarding aspects of nursing is working with older people and helping them retain the independence that is so important to them. Whichever branch of nursing you choose, you'll be making a significant difference to people's lives.

### Communication skills are vital

To relate to patients and colleagues, you'll need to enjoy communicating with people of all backgrounds. It's important to see beyond a patient's medical problem and relate to the individual.



## CASE STUDY

**Name:** Suzanna Whitwell

**Job title:** tissue viability nurse, Milton Keynes Community Health Services

**Entry route:** degree in nursing, now completing a district nursing qualification

**Suzanna’s ambition to be a nurse began in childhood. She is now part of a district nursing team, providing care to patients in their own homes and she cherishes the autonomy of community nursing.**

During the various placements on my degree course, I realised that working in the community came closest to my idea of what nursing is about. In my last community placement as a student, I was given my own caseload to work with under supervision. I really loved it.



You need very good interpersonal skills and a wide knowledge base

After qualifying, I worked in A&E for a short period. Then I got a job as a community nurse with a primary care provider. After two years, I moved to my current role and am now being sponsored by my employer to study for a community specialist practitioner degree. I’m learning more about management and team leadership, and about the implications of the policy shift towards more community-based care. Once finished, I will be a qualified district nurse and a team leader, which is quite special for someone of my age!

I am now part of a new tissue viability team. This involves teaching and advising community staff around policies relating to wound care. My experience in district nursing has been really useful to my current role, as a large part my work involved wound care. I work closely with other community colleagues, especially district nurses, to continue to develop and improve practice and standards.

Why do I like nursing in the community? I like the greater autonomy you have in the way you treat and manage patients. Patients feel less stressed and anxious than in hospital wards and the close teamwork with a wide range of other professionals in health and social care. The regular hours are also a plus point – I might work one weekend in four or five but otherwise it’s a normal working day.

You need very good interpersonal skills and a wide knowledge base. In the community, you have the opportunity to look at people holistically; you have to be aware of their whole home situation, not just their condition. In future, it’s going to be more and more important that people are well looked after in their own homes.

## 8 Careers in nursing

There are four main branches of nursing; mental health, children's, adult and learning disabilities. Working within one of these areas will allow you to focus on the needs of a particular client group during your nursing career.

Similarly, nurses can choose to work in a variety of settings from patient's homes, schools, care homes and specialised areas, such as prisons. Nurses can also combine a clinical career in education, management or research. Whatever branch of nursing appeals, there is plenty of scope to move around, work in different settings and progress up the career ladder.

### More opportunities to work in the community

As healthcare increasingly moves away from hospitals and into the community, the settings in which you can work will expand and change. Nurses are central to this change and future career options are likely to

include a greater amount of community-based roles for specialist nurses working to support patients with long-term conditions at home.

Some nurses will work in GP practices and in locations such as care homes, clinics, community hospitals, surgeries and schools as well as in health promotion to encourage people to live healthily and prevent illness. Others may choose to work in hospitals. Some of these roles will be outside of the NHS, as more organisations (including social enterprises, private healthcare providers and charities) provide NHS services to patients.

As hospital stays become shorter, demand for district and other community-based nurses will increase. New opportunities are emerging for nurses, including those who are newly qualified, to work in general practice and the community as a district nurse, school nurse or health visitor. There are also more opportunities for senior nurses to lead and manage multidisciplinary teams.

Whatever your chosen speciality, you will be required to keep your skills and knowledge up to date through continuing professional development (CPD). You will benefit from the flexibility, support and learning opportunities offered by the NHS throughout your career.

**For information about the qualifications needed to work in nursing, visit [www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/nursetraining](http://www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/nursetraining)**



There are four main branches of nursing; mental health, children's, adult and learning disabilities. Working within one of these areas will allow you to focus on the needs of a particular client group

## CASE STUDY

**Name:** Clare Barton

**Job title:** advanced neuroscience nurse practitioner, North Bristol NHS Trust

**Entry route:** degree in adult nursing

**Clare started her career as a dental nurse in a hospital but soon realised she enjoyed the challenges found in neuroscience and now works as an advanced neuroscience nurse practitioner.**

While at school I hadn't really considered doing a degree, but training and working as a hospital dental nurse showed me I could achieve more than I realised. This encouraged me to study for my degree in adult nursing.

After qualifying, I worked on an adult neurosurgery department and high dependency unit, caring for patients with spine or brain problems. The thought of nursing patients like this seemed scary at first, as they seemed so complex, but I was soon enjoying the challenge. It's fast-paced, with so much to learn.



While in my first role, I helped set up a nurse-led clinic aimed at getting the best pain relief possible for patients with long-term back and leg problems. We were the first nurses to set up something like this in the area and the data we collected at the clinic was published in a medical journal. I hadn't thought I'd be published so soon after qualifying.

After three years of working on the neurosurgery ward, I was promoted and asked to develop a brand new role: neuroscience nurse practitioner. I started to take on some of the responsibilities previously handled by other healthcare professionals such as doctors, including assessing patients before an operation.

Three years later, I was promoted again to advanced neuroscience nurse practitioner. Now I lead a 14-strong team of specialised nurse practitioners and work as a senior manager. While I still see patients every day, I also look at other issues, such as ways to reduce how long patients have to stay and how to improve patient outcomes. I work with everyone from anaesthetists and surgeons to specialist nurses and GPs.

Probably the best thing about a nursing degree is how it opens up career paths. As a graduate nurse you can quickly specialise in some really exciting roles, if you put the work in. The opportunities I've had have been amazing; I've already taken two postgraduate degrees.

# Career Framework

The Career Framework has been designed to improve career development and job satisfaction for NHS employees.

It encourages individuals to learn new skills and take on extra responsibilities that enable them to

progress within the organisation. Many people take on additional responsibility within their own area, while others retrain and move in to different roles.

The case study on page 9 describes how Clare Barton has progressed in her nursing career. You can follow

	Ambulance service professions	Allied health professions	Dental care professions	Healthcare science
<b>9 More senior staff</b>	Clinical director of service	Director of therapies		Director of regional genetics services
<b>8 Consultant practitioners</b>	Consultant paramedic	Consultant radiographer		Consultant clinical scientist (medical physics)
<b>7 Advanced practitioners</b>	Advanced paramedic	Specialist speech and language therapist		Specialist respiratory physiologist
<b>6 Senior practitioners specialist practitioners</b>	Specialist paramedic	Specialist occupational therapist	Senior dental technologist	Senior biomedical scientist
<b>5 Practitioners</b>	Paramedic	Dietitian	Dental technician	Cardiac physiologist
<b>4 Assistant practitioners/ associate practitioners</b>	Control room duty officer	Assistant clinical psychologist	Dental therapist	Critical care technologist
<b>3 Senior healthcare assistants/technicians</b>	Emergency medical dispatcher	Rehabilitation assistant	Dental hygienist	Newborn hearing screener
<b>2 Support workers</b>	Patient transport service driver	Therapy clinical support worker	<b>Dental nurse: supporting the dentist in all aspects of patient care</b>	Pharmacy dispensing assistant
<b>1 Initial entry level jobs</b>				

her career path in the white boxes on the diagram below, alongside other potential paths in the different areas of the NHS.

The diagram below gives an illustration of a variety of NHS careers and where they may fit on the Career

Framework. It is not exhaustive; details on other careers can be found in the relevant booklets and on the NHS Careers website.

**Visit the NHS Careers website at [www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/nurse](http://www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/nurse)**

Health informatics	Management	Midwifery	Nursing	Wider healthcare team
Director of information management and technology	Director of human resources	Director of maternity services	Director of nursing	
Pictures archiving communication manager	Associate director of children's services:	Consultant midwife	<b>Lead advanced neuroscience nurse practitioner: clinical leadership and management of service delivery models in neurological nursing</b>	
Clinical researcher	Head of accounts	Head of midwifery	<b>Advanced neuroscience nurse practitioner: assessing patients with neurological conditions before an operation</b>	Head of estates
Systems analyst	Project manager	Community midwife	<b>Senior staff nurse: caring for patients with spine and brain conditions on an adult neurosurgical ward</b>	Chaplain
Librarian	Payroll manager	Midwife	<b>Staff nurse: providing nursing care to patients in hospital</b>	Catering manager
Clinical coder	General office manager		Enrolled nurse	Medical secretary
Medical records clerk		Maternity support worker	Auxiliary nurse	Security officer
Support desk assistant		Healthcare assistant (maternity)	Healthcare assistant (nursing)	Maintenance assistant
Health records assistant			Nurse cadet	Porter

## CASE STUDY

**Name:** Sarah Trute

**Job title:** community behaviour specialist – learning disabilities, Surrey and Borders Partnership NHS Foundation Trust

**Entry route:** diploma in learning disability nursing\*

**Sarah sees patients in the community with learning disabilities and enjoys helping people reach their full potential.**

On leaving school with GCSEs, I got a job as a PA, then as a project manager, working in the health and social care sectors. My career was strategic and interesting, but I never saw how my work directly affected people.

Going from senior project manager to newly qualified nurse involved a drop in pay, but it has definitely been worth it. Given my interest in autism and special needs, I chose to study for a learning disability nursing diploma at Kingston University, supported by a bursary and holiday temping jobs.

Learning disability nursing is quite different to other branches of nursing. The focus is not on 'making people better' but enabling each person

to reach their full potential, increase their independence and enjoy an improved quality of life.

I decided that community work was definitely for me, so I took further training to become a community behaviour specialist.

Community behaviour specialists spend time assessing the whole person and their challenging behaviours. Interventions can be quite creative, like designing picture sequences to support skill learning, or making personalised reward charts. I've helped one client who self-harms to learn a safer way to express her feelings, which has been very effective.

My role is very people-oriented. Working with staff teams and managing risk can be challenging at times but it's very rewarding to see a client benefit from their positive behaviour support plan.

What I love most is helping a client achieve something that's really important to them. Whether that's teaching a new skill, preventing self-harm, or enabling them to access their local community.

*\*Nursing diplomas are no longer available. You now need to take an approved degree in nursing*



**I decided that community work was definitely for me, so I took further training to become a community behaviour specialist**

# What opportunities are available?

On the following pages you will find information about the different types of nursing that exist within healthcare.

To work as a nurse, you must be registered with the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC), which means you'll need an approved degree in nursing.

Some healthcare assistants progress to apply for a place on a degree course, or you can begin your

professional study after gaining your A-levels or after a relevant degree. (See the 'Getting started' section on page 19 for more information).

Depending on experience and training, there are plenty of opportunities for you to develop and eventually manage teams, run wards, work in the community and even reach consultant level.

## Adult nursing

Adult nurses treat and care for adult patients of all ages with all types of health conditions. They manage numerous priorities and use caring, counselling, managing, teaching and all aspects of interpersonal skills, to improve the quality of patients' lives,

sometimes in difficult situations. Work may be based in hospital wards, clinics and, increasingly in community settings. You may do shift work to provide 24-hour care.

### Your work as an adult nurse may involve:

- being part of a busy, multidisciplinary team that includes doctors, radiographers, physiotherapists and many others
- using your initiative and high levels of observation
- working in a fast-changing, demanding environment
- assessing what is best for the patient and acting on your decision
- a willingness to take responsibility for people's wellbeing.

## Mental health nursing

As many as one in four people will have a mental health problem at some point in their life, regardless of their age or background. Conditions range from personality and psychological disorders to neuroses and psychoses.

Nurses who choose to specialise in mental health – a complex and demanding area – work with GPs,

psychiatrists, psychologists, therapists and others, to help care for patients with mental illnesses. Increasingly, care is given in the community, with mental health nurses visiting patients and their families at home, in residential centres, in prisons or in specialist clinics or units. You may do shift work to provide 24-hour care. This is a valuable role that provides much reward and satisfaction.

### Your work as a mental health nurse may involve:

- autonomy in planning and delivering patient care within the healthcare team
- opportunities to specialise in areas such as alcohol and drug misuse
- excellent communication skills and an ability to empathise with people and understand their problems
- liaising with a patient's family and listening to and advising those who care for the patient
- dealing with occasional aggression in a sensitive and effective way.

### Children's nursing

This branch of nursing involves treating and caring for children with a wide range of conditions. Children's nurses deal with a range of situations, including babies born with heart complications, teenagers who have sustained broken limbs, and child protection issues.

Health problems can affect a child's development and it's vital to work with the child's family or carers to

ensure that he or she does not suffer additionally from the stress of being ill or in hospital.

Children's nurses work in hospitals, day care centres, child health clinics and in the child's home. Like other branches of nursing, care is becoming more community-based. You may do shift work to provide 24-hour care.

#### Your work as a children's nurse may involve:

- being able to handle the challenges posed by caring for someone who is sick and may be too young to express what's wrong
- knowledge and ability to understand that a child's health can rapidly take a turn for the worse
- sensitivity and the ability to communicate without words
- the confidence to work in partnership with the patient's family or carers
- teaching the child's parents or carers what may need to be done to carry on with treatment at home.

### Learning disability nursing

Learning disability nurses work with patients, and often with their family carers, to provide specialist healthcare to people with a learning disability and help them to pursue a fulfilling life. For example, teaching someone the skills to find work to help them to lead a more independent, healthy life where they can relate to others on equal terms.

Learning disability nursing is provided in settings such as adult education, residential and community centres,

as well as in patients' homes, workplaces and schools. You could specialise in areas such as education, sensory disability or the management of services. Learning disability nurses work as part of a team alongside GPs, psychologists, therapists, teachers and social workers. If you work in a residential setting, you may do shifts to provide 24-hour care.

#### Your work as a learning disability nurse may involve:

- a great deal of patience, sensitivity and excellent interpersonal skills
- a willingness to be adaptable, flexible and prepared to act as an advocate for those you support to ensure that they do not suffer discrimination
- the ability to work in a demanding and stressful environment, where at times progress can be slow
- great satisfaction when someone has learned a new skill or can demonstrate confidence in themselves thanks to your intervention.

## Neonatal nursing

Neonatal nurses work with newborn babies who are born prematurely or who need specific care. Often, premature newborns have respiratory problems, which can be life-threatening if they are not treated promptly and monitored. Also, ill babies need to be fed in a specialised way in a highly controlled environment that is kept warm. You may do shift work to provide 24-hour care.

Neonatal nursing training programmes are part of continuing professional development (CPD) and are normally studied as modules by registered adult and children's nurses and midwives. As with other types of nursing, there are opportunities to progress to management, research and education, as well as nurse consultancy.

### Your work as a neonatal nurse may involve:

- being a source of support to the baby's family at a stressful and emotional time
- taking an active role in the multidisciplinary team looking after the child
- a strong level of empathy
- competence to operate in a busy, technical environment.

## Health visiting

Health visitors are registered nurses or midwives who have done further training to work as vital members of the primary healthcare team, covering a specific geographical area. They work with a network of organisations concerned with health and can be based in settings such as people's homes, schools, GP surgeries, shelters for the homeless and medical centres.

You'll need to qualify and be a registered nurse or midwife to start the degree-level training programme, which usually lasts a minimum of one year, full-time (there are also some part-time courses available), before you can become a health visitor. You may receive financial support from your employer although this can depend on what course you take and where you live.

This is a role that will appeal to those who enjoy one-to-one nursing and want to work with autonomy, while remaining part of a healthcare team. You'll have opportunities to progress and manage a team of health visitors or to other NHS management roles.

Health visitor recruitment in the NHS is currently taking place across England, with 4,200 being recruited between 2011 and 2015.

For information about health visitor recruitment, visit [www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/healthvisiting](http://www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/healthvisiting)

### Your work as a health visitor may involve:

- working with people who have disabilities or chronic health problems
- supporting new parents in the care and development of their babies
- providing practical help and advice to people of all ages and backgrounds, aiming to prevent illness and promote good health
- working independently and being highly organised
- being confident and using your skills to deal with people in a variety of situations, some of which may be challenging.

### School nursing

School nurses work with schools and local communities to support the needs of children, young people and their families. Nurses in this key role are usually employed by a primary care provider, local health authority, community trust or by individual schools. It is possible to go straight into this role after qualifying as a registered nurse.

Experience of working with children, in child protection or health promotion will be beneficial.

Many school nurses will also work towards the Specialist Practitioner – School Nursing/Specialist Community Public Health Nurse qualification at degree and masters level.

#### Your work as a school nurse may involve:

- carrying out screening programmes
- providing information on drug and alcohol abuse
- administering immunisations
- providing health and sex education
- running health promotion or drop-in surgeries
- using excellent communication skills
- supporting children with disabilities
- working in partnership with teachers and families
- providing mental health support
- using non-judgemental approach.

### District nursing

District nurses visit people of all ages, often in their own homes, GP surgeries or a residential or a care home. Some patients may have dementia, others may have disabilities, be recovering after a hospital stay, or have a terminal illness. You may do shift work to provide 24-hour care.

practitioner programme, which usually lasts for one academic year, before you can become a district nurse. Funding or sponsorship may be available from your employing trust.

You'll need to qualify and work as a registered nurse and then complete a degree-level specialist

This is a rewarding role as you can work one-to-one with patients and their families, on an ongoing basis, which enables you to develop a trusting relationship while you improve their quality of life.

#### Your work as a district nurse may involve:

- working with a variety of people as part of a team with GPs, social services, voluntary organisations and NHS bodies, as well as the ability to work on your own
- being adaptable and the ability to put people at ease
- good organisational skills so you can plan care for all your patients, some of whom will have very complex care needs
- visiting patients, as required to administer medication and monitor health
- teaching patients or their families how to carry out procedures such as administering injections
- helping patients with personal hygiene
- carrying out annual health checks and delivering health promotion programmes.

## Practice nursing

Practice nurses work in GP surgeries as part of a primary care team that is likely to include doctors, nurses, therapists and pharmacists. In smaller practices, you may be the sole nurse, whereas in larger surgeries, you may share duties with practice nurse colleagues. You may also be required to work flexibly, including some evenings and weekends. As the range of healthcare services provided in the community increases, the role of the practice nurse is likely to expand and change.

To become a practice nurse, first you will need to qualify and have gained experience as a registered nurse.

This role offers much scope and variety for those who have highly developed communication skills, enjoy working flexibly and are organised. Depending on your experience, you could run clinics, which will demand attention to detail, initiative and plenty of confidence. You'll be employed by GP practices and may be able to work part-time. As a practice nurse, you will be able to apply for senior positions such as nurse practitioner, where you can manage your own caseload.

### Your work as a practice nurse may involve:

- treating small injuries
- assisting with minor operations carried out under local anaesthetic
- health screening
- family planning
- running vaccination programmes, for example protection against flu
- managing well woman clinics
- supporting the healthcare team in its monitoring of conditions such as diabetes, high cholesterol and high blood pressure.

## Prison nursing

Prison nurses are registered nurses who care for and treat patients who are in prison. They are either employed by the prison service, private providers or, increasingly, by the NHS. Many prisoners suffer from substance abuse or have mental health problems, making nursing in this environment challenging. By improving mental and physical health, the care provided by prison nurses may help to lower re-offending rates, and therefore have a positive impact on prisoners, their families and the wider public.

A background in mental health nursing may help. You may have the opportunity to move between the NHS and the prison service through jobshare and secondment schemes. As with other types of nursing, you can undertake further training and apply for management roles. As a prison nurse, you may do shift work to provide 24-hour care. There are also job opportunities for nurses elsewhere in the criminal justice system such as police custody suites and immigration centres.

### Your work as a prison nurse may involve:

- delivering care and treatment within a custodial setting
- developing positive relationships with prisoners and treating them with compassion
- developing excellent interpersonal skills
- treating and caring for individuals with substance abuse or mental health problems
- understanding the particular problems faced by your patients and those working in prisons.

For more information on working in your chosen area of nursing, visit [www.nhs.uk/nurse](http://www.nhs.uk/nurse)

To search for job vacancies, visit [www.jobs.nhs.uk](http://www.jobs.nhs.uk)

## CASE STUDY

**Name:** Nadia Halley

**Job title:** senior practice nurse, NHS Thurrock CCG

**Entry route:** nursing degree

**Nadia's role as a practice nurse varies from day to day and she looks after patients from all over the world.**

My mother trained to be a nurse and told me a lot about it as a career. She taught me lots of practical nursing skills too.

I volunteered in India in the early 1990s, working for a charity that provided medical and nursing care for people living in slums. It was then that I decided to train to be a nurse myself and returned to England to start my training.

After qualifying in 2005, my first job was a community nurse before progressing to a district nurse role when the team I was in, changed to an integrated care team. Working in the community, I developed a wide range of skills, including palliative care, wound care and liaising with hospitals and other care providers. In my team, we also provided a rapid response service during

the evenings. After I qualified, I also spent some time in Malawi, using my nursing skills to help people.

After 18 months, I started an apprenticeship as a practice nurse part time, working as a community nurse the rest of the week. I began specialising in managing diabetes and have been a full time practice nurse in various clinics in Essex since 2009. I am now the senior practice nurse at Acorns PMS in Grays.

I love what I do and working with the wide range of people who walk through my door every day! I have patients from Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Nepal, eastern Europe, Iraq, Iran, Turkey and from several African countries. A typical day could see me doing routine work like childhood immunisations, cytology and ear syringeing, electrocardiograms and wound care. And I also look after people with conditions like diabetes and patients who may self harm or are homeless.

I enjoy knowing I've been able to help someone from another nation and the fulfilment that comes with making a difference to someone's life and knowing it's appreciated.



**I love what I do and working with the wide range of people who walk through my door every day**

# Getting started

To work as a nurse in the NHS, you must hold an approved degree in nursing (a pre-registration programme), which allows you to register with the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC). You can start your career at various levels, and be assured of practical and possibly financial support as you progress.

## Work placements and volunteering

For those with no experience of working in the health service, or whose careers have been based in non-nursing environments, it is a good idea to spend some time making sure that it is the right career for you.

Securing a work placement or volunteering with your local NHS or voluntary organisation can be beneficial. As well as showing universities that you are committed, this will give you the opportunity to see what working life as a nurse may be like and talk to people in the profession. As openings for work placements and voluntary roles vary around the country, it's best to speak to your local NHS or voluntary organisations to see what's available.

## Assistants and healthcare assistants

As a clinical support worker or healthcare assistant, you'll provide vital assistance to healthcare professionals for diagnosing, treating and caring for patients. These roles are highly responsible and rewarding, with a direct impact on patients' lives. They also offer an ideal entry route to many NHS careers for people with commitment and enthusiasm rather than academic qualifications.

Assistant practitioners are senior support roles for staff who have worked in the NHS and have the academic ability to cope with the demands of vocational study and the potential to go onto professional training. They will find that their experience is an advantage when they apply for a place on a nursing degree, which will normally be part-time and last for five or six years.

## Cadet schemes and apprenticeships

Some trusts offer apprenticeships in healthcare, or cadet schemes. This consists of placements at support worker level for around two years while providing the opportunity to work towards a relevant vocational qualification.

Apprentices and cadets are normally exposed to several areas of healthcare through their placements. Although the experience will enable you to work towards a vocational qualification, it will not count towards professional nurse training. Instead, an apprenticeship or cadet scheme aims to get you to the appropriate level so that you can apply to start a part-time pre-registration nursing programme.

## Professional training

When you are selecting your pre-registration degree, you will usually need to choose one of the four branches of nursing: adult (general) nursing, mental health, learning disability and children's (paediatric) nursing. A limited number of universities now offer the chance to train for two branches on the same course. All nursing degrees consist of academic study (taught across all four branches of nursing) and practice learning placements, relevant to the chosen field.

If, for example, you choose to go into mental health nursing, the practice learning placements will be mainly concentrated in that environment, and will focus on patients with mental health problems. However, certain aspects of training will be common to all branches of nursing and there will often be opportunities to study alongside students on other healthcare courses.

All applicants must be numerate, be of good character and health and, above all, be passionate about providing compassionate care to patients.

### Full-time degree

If you have appropriate qualifications, you can apply directly to universities to undertake a full-time pre-registration degree in nursing. These courses are at least three years long and are a combination of 50 per cent academic study and 50 per cent supervised work placements in hospitals and the community.

There is no national minimum academic entry requirement for nursing degrees. It is up to each university to decide what they will accept but, on the whole, degree programmes usually require applicants to have at least five A-C grade GCSEs (including English language or literature and a science subject) and two A-levels (or equivalent). Some universities may require three A-levels.

Universities will usually look for applicants to provide evidence of relevant care or customer service experience. A number of NHS regions are piloting formal pre-nursing degree care experience placements, in which applicants are employed by the NHS in support roles for several months. This helps them to confirm that nursing is right for them. Check with each university to find out what their precise requirements are and whether they are involved with such pilot schemes.

### Part-time degrees

Part-time pre-registration nursing degree courses are provided by some universities and normally last for five or six years.

Part-time nursing degrees should be available to anyone working in the NHS as an experienced healthcare assistant or assistant practitioner with qualifications up to NVQ level 3 (or equivalent).

Those studying part-time courses could receive assistance from their employers in terms of study leave or financial support. This varies between employers.

### Accelerated diplomas

Some universities will accredit an applicant's previous theoretical and practice learning (such as a relevant degree or relevant practical experience) against the

requirements of the pre-registration programme. This may mean that the student can complete the course in a shorter time. Up to one third of a three year programme can be accredited in this way.

### Access courses

If you have no formal educational qualifications, you can take an Access to Higher Education course, which teaches skills around study and confidence in how to deal with the academic demands of a university course. Access courses tend to be run by further education (FE) colleges around the country and are often linked to a specific university course. In such cases, you may be interviewed by someone from the FE college as well as the university. You may be guaranteed a place on the university course on successful completion of an Access course.

If you are planning to take an Access course, you need check that the university you want to apply will accept it for entry onto the nursing course.

### Foundation degree

Another route into nursing is to study for a foundation degree. These tend to be part-time qualifications, often run in conjunction with FE colleges.

Someone on a foundation degree could secure a healthcare assistant role, then apply for a position as an assistant practitioner and work their way up to a place on a part-time nursing degree.

**Speak to your careers advisor, call us on 0345 60 60 655 or email [advice@nhscareers.nhs.uk](mailto:advice@nhscareers.nhs.uk) to find out more.**

**For more information on nursing training in the NHS, visit [www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/nursetraining](http://www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/nursetraining)**

If you have no formal educational qualifications, you can take an Access to Higher Education course

### Funding

NHS Student Bursaries provides financial support to eligible students taking approved courses. To be eligible for financial support, you must meet certain criteria.

**For more information about student funding, visit the NHS Student Bursaries website at [www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/students](http://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/students)**

### Registration

You must ensure that your nursing degree course leads to registration with the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC), or you won't be eligible to practice as a nurse in the UK. Check with your university or college.

**For a list of approved institutions running nursing courses leading to registration, visit [www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/courses](http://www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/courses)**

### Pay

Most jobs are covered by Agenda for Change (AfC) pay scales. This covers all NHS staff except doctors, dentists and senior managers. The NHS job evaluation system determines a points score, which is used to match jobs to pay bands and decide basic salary levels.

Each pay band has a number of pay points. Staff will normally progress to the next pay point annually until they reach the top of the pay band.

You could start your career at AfC band 2 as a healthcare assistant or clinical support worker (nursing), rising to band 5 as a registered nurse and then to nurse consultant at bands 8a–c.

**For more information on pay and benefits, visit [www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/payandbenefits](http://www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/payandbenefits)**



## CASE STUDY

**Name:** Anthony Daniel

**Job title:** school nurse, Stockport NHS Foundation Trust

**Entry route:** degree in nursing

**Anthony feels the most rewarding aspect of his role is having direct contact with both children and their families.**

I qualified as an adult nurse in 2007 and worked on a renal ward for nearly a year before becoming a school staff nurse with Stockport NHS Foundation Trust. Initially, I worked in a special school for children with severe and profound learning difficulties before I transferred to mainstream school nursing. Since then I have worked in a variety of educational settings including pupil referral units, primary and secondary schools.

I completed my specialist community public health nursing qualification in 2011 and have since become a band 6 school nurse covering both primary and secondary schools.



Being a school nurse means no two days are ever the same and I enjoy the variety of work the job offers. I handle everything from safeguarding to immunisations and running health promotion sessions and drop in clinics.

My work is very holistic and I look after the health and wellbeing of both young people and their families. When I've assessed a young person for, say, a drugs or alcohol issue, I signpost them to where they can get specialist support. As a school nurse, you're that first port of call.

There are lots of opportunities for lifelong learning and career progression in school nursing. You can specialise in child protection or take on a specialist school nurse role in, asthma, diabetes or epilepsy, for example. You can also move up into more senior roles, usually starting at band 5 and working up to band 8.

Most days I leave work with a sense of fulfilment and satisfaction that I've helped a young person and their family.

There are lots of opportunities for lifelong learning and career progression in school nursing

## What's your next step?

We hope this booklet will have given you some idea of the many opportunities on offer for nurses in the NHS.

If you have decided that you want to join the NHS team as a nurse, your next step depends on your starting point. NHS Careers can provide further information on how to apply for training and you can also consult your local careers adviser or Connexions services.

If you need a degree, UCAS can advise on which universities offer the relevant courses. Universities will be able to tell you what qualities and characteristics they look for in applicants. For example, getting some work experience is an excellent way of showing your commitment and enthusiasm.

If you are considering a change of career, volunteering or shadowing an established professional in your spare time is a useful way to find out more about the field of work that you wish to pursue and can be invaluable in terms of making contacts.

Here is a checklist of things you should be doing, whether you're still at school, studying for a degree or looking for a change in direction.

- Have you explored routes into your chosen career? You will need to gain a degree in nursing but you could work your way up from healthcare assistant roles.
- Are there any particular skills or experience that will improve your chances of getting into your chosen career?
- Have you enquired about opportunities to volunteer or do relevant work experience?
- Have you investigated further qualifications you might need for your chosen role?
- Have you searched the NHS Jobs website or spoken to your local trust to get an idea of the type of vacancies available?

**Whatever position you're in right now, the NHS Careers service can help. For more information, please call 0345 60 60 655, email [advice@nhscareers.nhs.uk](mailto:advice@nhscareers.nhs.uk) or visit [www.nhscareers.nhs.uk](http://www.nhscareers.nhs.uk)**

**To search for nursing jobs in the NHS, visit [www.jobs.nhs.uk](http://www.jobs.nhs.uk), and for more information about professional bodies please visit [www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/nursecontacts](http://www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/nursecontacts)**



## 24 Careers in nursing

Here are some other things you can be doing, depending on where you are right now. For all contact details, visit [www.nhs.uk/nhs-careers](http://www.nhs.uk/nhs-careers)

Where are you now?	What should you do now?	Who can help?
Studying for your GCSEs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visit <a href="http://www.stepintothens.nhs.uk">www.stepintothens.nhs.uk</a> and register for more information on chosen careers.</li> <li>• Check what your likely exam grades/results will be.</li> <li>• Explore routes into your chosen career – will you need a degree or other qualification before you join, or will the NHS train you on the job? Can you start as an assistant?</li> <li>• Are there any particular skills or experience that will improve your chances of getting into your chosen career?</li> <li>• Enquire about volunteering or work experience.</li> <li>• Find out if you need any specific A-levels, or equivalent qualifications.</li> <li>• Consider a 14-19 diploma.</li> <li>• Explore the availability of apprenticeships in nursing.</li> </ul>	Subject teachers Your careers adviser/ Connexions service Professional bodies NHS Careers National Careers Service
Studying for A-levels or another course at your school or a local college	<b>As GCSEs, plus:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigate which universities offer the degree course you want.</li> <li>• Investigate any further qualifications you might need for your chosen role.</li> <li>• Search the NHS Jobs website at <a href="http://www.jobs.nhs.uk">www.jobs.nhs.uk</a> and speak to your local trust to get an idea of current vacancies.</li> <li>• Enquire about volunteering or work experience.</li> <li>• Explore the availability of apprenticeships in nursing.</li> </ul>	Subject teachers Your careers adviser/ Connexions service (you may have to pay to use these services) UCAS NHS Careers Professional bodies NHS Jobs National Careers Service
At university	<b>As A-levels, plus:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take advice on whether it's a good idea to switch your degree course.</li> <li>• Complete your current degree and look for post-graduate courses.</li> </ul>	University careers service NHS Careers Professional bodies NHS Jobs
Looking for a new career	<b>As A-levels, plus:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Find out if you will need to retrain before you apply for new roles or if the NHS will train you while you are working.</li> </ul>	Careers adviser/ Connexions service NHS Careers Jobcentre Plus Professional bodies NHS Jobs UCAS National Careers Service



**FOR FURTHER COPIES OF THIS BOOKLET PLEASE CONTACT:**

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