

## Health & Medical careers:

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With over 350 health-related roles, there are opportunities for people with all levels of qualification. Some careers involve close contact with patients, whereas others are behind-the-scenes jobs. This leaflet gives you some general information about work settings, entry, training, pay and prospects, as well as a brief overview of the broad areas of work.

### Employers and work settings:

While the NHS is the main employer of medical and healthcare staff (it's one of the biggest employers in the world!), there are also opportunities in the private sector, with charities etc. In recent years there's been a shift from NHS-provided to NHS-funded healthcare, with private healthcare companies, social enterprises etc contracting to deliver certain health services. Although many health and medical workers are based in hospitals, there are increasing opportunities in the community, e.g. visiting patients in their homes, or working at GP surgeries, health centres and clinics. Those in areas like dentistry, pharmacy and optical work can often choose whether to work in hospitals or community practices. Depending on the role there may also be the chance to work in schools, prisons, sports institutions, social care settings, the Armed Forces and in industry. In some careers you can work on a self-employed basis, set up your own practice or work as a locum. Those with experience sometimes enter advisory work, teaching, research, or media careers.

### What it takes:

- Exact requirements vary, but to work in most jobs in health and medicine you need:
- good communication and teamworking skills
- to be reliable and conscientious
- sensitivity, patience and understanding
- an interest in science and technology.

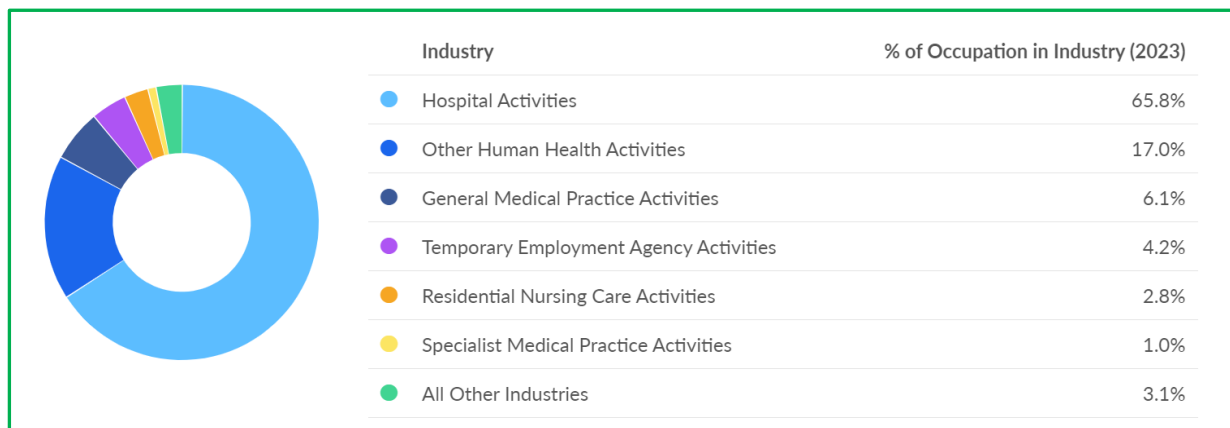
If your role involves working with children, young people, or vulnerable adults, you will have to undergo background checks. Depending on the post, you may be subject to health checks. Applicants for training and jobs in the NHS in England will be expected to show that they know and can demonstrate the core values of the NHS and understand how they would apply them in their everyday work. In the NHS in Wales, there is a similar set of core principles. (Other employers will have similar values.) You can find out more on the following links: [www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/working-health/working-nhs/nhs-constitution](http://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/working-health/working-nhs/nhs-constitution)

### Entry and training:

Entry requirements vary widely depending on the role. For most practitioner/professional careers you need an approved degree, but for assistant-level roles you can get started with just a few GCSEs or equivalent qualifications. Experience working with people (possibly with a particular client/patient group) is valued and may be required to start training. For many jobs it's possible to train in employment through an **Apprenticeship**. There are plans to increase the number of Apprenticeship opportunities over the coming years. In England, Degree Apprenticeships are being introduced as an alternative route into certain professions. These provide structured training in the workplace alongside part-time study for an approved degree; some are aimed at those who already work in related role. For information on Apprenticeships, navigate to <https://www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship> or <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/career-planning/study-and-training/nhs-apprenticeships>.

Job and Apprenticeship vacancies in the NHS in England and Wales are advertised on: [www.jobs.nhs.uk](http://www.jobs.nhs.uk). In England, some schools and colleges offer relevant T levels. These may provide entry to employment/training in certain healthcare roles or to higher education (check with individual universities). The T level in health has occupational specialisms in dental nursing and in supporting the adult nursing, midwifery, mental health, children and young people, and therapy teams. The T level in healthcare science has an occupational specialism in assisting with healthcare science and in optical care services. You can find out more about T levels in the leaflet on Choosing level 3 courses after year 11.

Most jobs in Health & Medical careers fall in the Hospital sector:



### The broad areas of work:

The following will give you an idea about the range of opportunities available:

**Doctors** can specialise in general practice, surgery, psychiatry, obstetrics and gynaecology, anaesthesia, paediatrics, oncology, and many other areas.

**Anaesthesia** associates work under the direction of a consultant anaesthetist, performing pre- and post-operative assessments, sedation procedures, general anaesthesia, and resuscitation physician associates support doctors by taking patients' medical histories, and making medical diagnoses after examining patients and analysing their test results surgical care practitioners work within surgical teams. They can perform certain surgical procedures. wound closure and undertake pre- and post-operative assessment and care under the supervision of a consultant surgeon. For entry to a recognised training programme, you need to be qualified and registered healthcare professional and have suitable experience.

**Nursing and midwifery** train for one or two fields of practice - adult, children, learning disabilities or mental health; the role of a Registered Nurse can vary widely midwives provide care during pregnancy, labour, birth and after babies are born health visitors work with families with children aged up to five years, promoting good health and wellbeing nursing associates (in England) have a role that sits between that of a healthcare assistant and Registered Nurse.

Charts 1 shows opportunities from starting as a Nurse Practitioner:

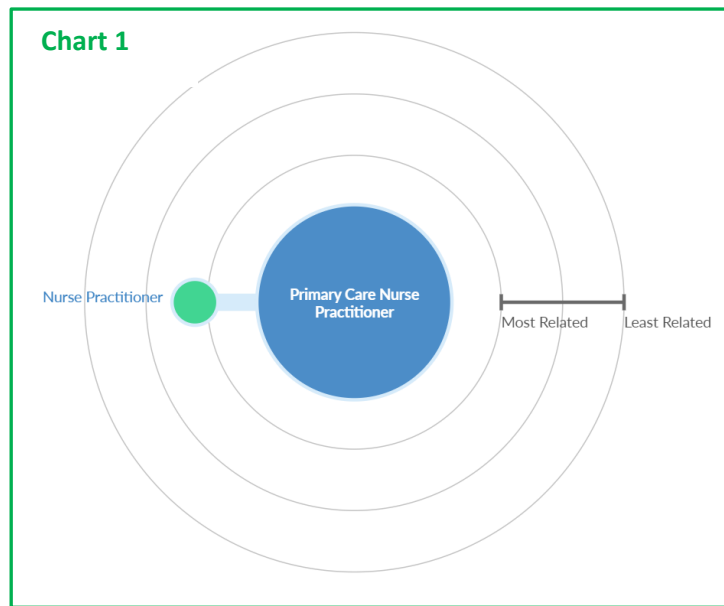
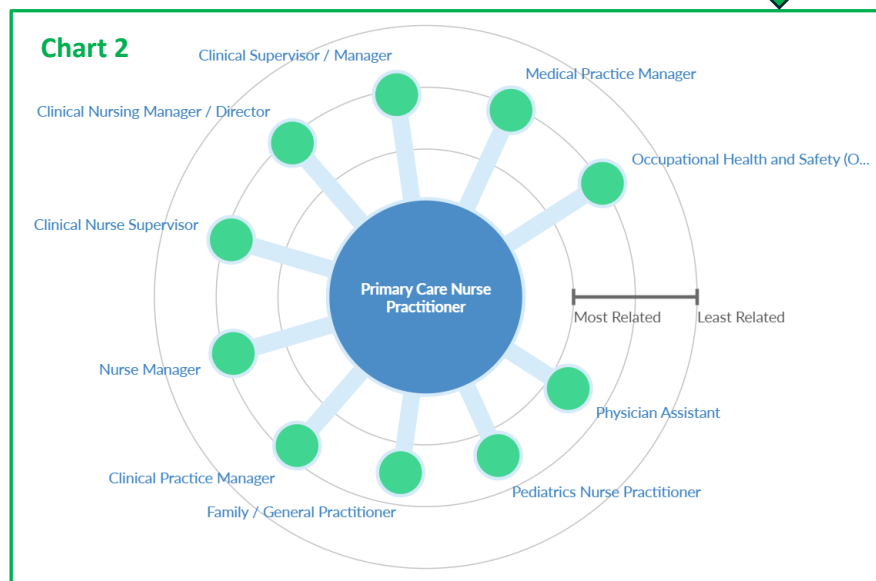


Chart 2 demonstrates progression opportunities for Nurse Practitioners:



### Allied health professions (AHPs):

- **Art therapists, music therapists and drama therapists** help people (e.g. those with mental health problems or learning disabilities) to express themselves, cope with their problems and gain confidence through creative activities.
- **Dietitians** use their understanding of the science of nutrition to assess, diagnose and treat people with diet-related problems, such as diabetes or eating disorders.
- **Occupational therapists (OTs)** help with the rehabilitation, motivation and recovery of people who have difficulties with everyday living; they work with clients to find ways to help them live as independently as possible

- **Operating department practitioners (ODPs)** work as part of a clinical team to provide patient care and support before, during and after surgical procedures.
- **Osteopaths** focus on the relationship between the musculoskeletal system (muscles, joints, and associated tissues) and the rest of the body, and are concerned with the diagnosis and treatment of a range of health problems; they use hands-on treatment and give advice
- **Paramedics** - see under 'the ambulance service' below
- **Physiotherapists** deal with problems concerned with loss of movement due to illness, injury, disability, or ageing, particularly those that affect the muscles, bones, heart, circulation and lungs
- **Podiatrists** (or chiropodists as they are also known) are specialists in the care of feet and lower limbs; they diagnose problems, decide on treatment, and try to prevent conditions getting worse
- **Prosthetists** and orthotists assess, design, prescribe and fit artificial limbs (prostheses) or devices such as spinal braces or wrist splints (orthoses), to support and relieve parts of the body
- **Radiographers** specialise in either diagnostic radiography, where they help to diagnose injuries and diseases by providing images using X-rays, ultrasound and other techniques, or therapeutic radiography, using radiation to treat patients with conditions such as cancer
- **Speech and language therapists (SLTs)** work with people who have speech, communication, and swallowing problems. SLTs devise treatment programmes and monitor progress. They treat a wide range of conditions including stammering and the loss of speech, e.g. due to a stroke.

#### Healthcare scientists may work in:

- **Life/biomedical sciences** carrying out investigations and tests on body tissues and fluids, to help diagnose diseases.
- **Physical sciences and biomedical engineering** working on the research and development of medical equipment and techniques, quality control, and in the maintenance of equipment
- **Physiological sciences** using equipment to measure and analyse how well patients' organs or bodily systems are functioning, such as their cardiovascular system, nervous system, or hearing.
- **Clinical bioinformatics** using digital tools to work with biological data, and developing new and better ways to collect, store and analyse data to support patient care.

#### The ambulance service includes:

- **Paramedics** who attend emergency calls, but who can also work in other settings; they are senior members of the paramedic team and are trained to provide advanced forms of life support.
- **Emergency medical technicians** - employed by certain ambulance services as single responders or to work with a paramedic; they can perform many of the same tasks as paramedics
- **Emergency care assistants** who carry out emergency care under the direction of a paramedic
- **Ambulance care assistants/patient transport service drivers** who carry out routine, non-emergency work, such as taking patients to clinics and hospitals.

#### Dentistry:

- **Dentists** are mainly concerned with preventing and treating dental decay and oral disease, correcting dental malformations, and treating dental and facial injuries
- **Dental nurses** prepare the surgery, help to look after and reassure patients, prepare dental materials, and sterilise equipment

- **Dental technicians** design, make, modify, and repair dental appliances, such as dentures, implants and crowns
- **Clinical dental technicians** are dental technicians trained to provide removable dental appliances directly to the public
- **Dental hygienists and therapists** - advise people on how to look after their teeth and gums, clean and scale teeth, and carry out other treatments; dental therapists are trained to do additional work such as simple fillings.

#### Optical careers include:

- **Orthoptists** who diagnose and treat defects of vision and abnormalities of eye movement; they carry out tests on patients, decide on the treatment required and monitor the patient's progress
- **Optometrists** test eyesight to detect and measure faulty vision, prescribe lenses to correct it, and examine the eyes for signs of disease, injury or abnormality

#### Pharmacy:

- **Pharmacists** supervise the dispensing of prescriptions, explain how medicines should be taken and give advice on treating minor ailments; there are opportunities to work in the community, in hospitals and in industry
- **Pharmacy technicians** make up prescriptions and prepare medicines, supervised by a pharmacist.

**Mental health** - a wide range of careers involve helping people with mental health issues including:

- **Clinical psychologists** who assess and treat people who are experiencing psychological distress; assessment may be through interviews, observation and tests, and treatment can include counselling and therapy
- other **psychological professions**, such as: children's wellbeing practitioners, clinical associate in psychology and assistant clinical psychologists, counselling psychologists and health psychologists, counsellors, education mental health practitioners, high intensity therapists, mental health and wellbeing practitioners, peer support workers, psychological wellbeing practitioners, psychotherapists, support, time and recovery workers, and youth intensive psychological practitioners.

#### Support staff in the health service include:

- **Healthcare/maternity support** workers who work alongside nurses/midwives to provide basic care to patients on hospital wards, in outpatient clinics and in the community
- **therapy support workers** (sometimes known as therapy assistants or healthcare support workers) who work in areas such as occupational therapy, physiotherapy, and podiatry
- **Orthopaedic practitioners** (or technicians) who apply casts and splints to patients following accidents or surgery or because of certain medical conditions
- **Healthcare Science Assistants** and associates who undertake routine work in laboratories and other settings
- **Hospital porters**

- **Management** areas of management include finance, facilities and estates, operational management, human resources, practice management etc. Managers are supported by administrative staff.
- **Clerical staff** e.g. medical secretaries, medical receptionists, and certain health records staff.
- **Health informatics** this area of work is concerned with the collection, management, interpretation, use and sharing of information to improve healthcare. It includes the broad areas of information management, ICT, libraries and knowledge management, clinical bioinformatics (see above) and patient health records.
- **Medical illustrators** clinical photographers, medical videographers, medical artists, and graphic designers make records for educational, diagnostic, and scientific purposes etc.
- **Health improvement** (or promotion) work raises awareness of how to live a healthy lifestyle. The work may include organising campaigns and providing advice and support to other health professionals and health service managers.
- **Chiropractors** diagnose, treat, and prevent problems with bones, joints, and muscles. They use hands-on manipulation as a main form of treatment.
- **Social prescribing** link workers are employed by a group of GP practices or voluntary sector organisations that work in partnership with the NHS. They support people to improve their health, wellbeing, and control over their lives, by connecting them to services or groups in their local community. Entry requirements vary, but you need good listening and communication skills and usually experience of working with people in a one-to-one care or advice role.
- **Advanced critical care practitioners** (ACCPs) work in hospital critical care units. They monitor and assess patients with life-threatening conditions and can make decisions about their clinical care. They work within a multi-disciplinary team. Training is at postgraduate level and applicants must hold a degree in a health-related subject and have suitable experience.

### Prospects and pay:

There are prospects for promotion in most areas of work. The NHS has a well-structured career ladder and there are opportunities for staff at all levels to improve their qualifications. Some roles allow you to branch out, e.g. from nursing into health improvement work. NHS staff are paid according to set salary scales; you can find information on 2023/24 pay rates in England for many roles at: [www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/working-health/working-nhs/nhs-pay-and-benefits/agenda-change-pay-rates](http://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/working-health/working-nhs/nhs-pay-and-benefits/agenda-change-pay-rates).

