

NHS

Careers

Careers in health informatics in the NHS

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 300 different careers on offer, there is a job for you no matter what your interests, skills 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 – our commitment to skills development. See pages 10 and 11 for more information about this.

Scientists, accountants, porters, psychologists, nurses, health informatics staff 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 or visit www.nhscareers.nhs.uk

We look forward to hearing from you!

Contents

2	The NHS – a rewarding place to work Benefits Pay and conditions Work-life balance	12	What opportunities are available? Information and communication technology (ICT) Information management Libraries and knowledge management Clinical informatics
6	Your career in health informatics	17	Getting started Qualifications Graduate opportunities Work placements
10	Career Framework Developing your career in the NHS	20	What's your next step?

Foreword

Welcome to *Careers in health informatics in the NHS*.

In this booklet, you'll find out about the wide range of opportunities within health informatics in the NHS.

One of the key ways to provide better healthcare is through the intelligent collection, management, use and sharing of information – otherwise known as health informatics. If you love working with computers, enjoy library work, are good at analysing data or find satisfaction in keeping accurate records, then there could be a job for you.

All members of the NHS team, including healthcare professionals, managers and administrators, rely on fast, accurate information to deliver the best care they can. Using IT creatively to achieve this means health informatics is one of the bedrocks of the NHS.

Whatever your academic background, you can find a role that's right for you. What's more we offer a flexible workplace, excellent benefits and a wealth of opportunities to develop your career.

The NHS Careers team

To find out more about working in health informatics please visit

www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/working

Or if you have any questions, you can call our helpline on 0345 60 60 655 or email

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 different 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 will receive at least 27 days' holiday each year, plus a range of other benefits, including 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/list/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 entitlements of 27 days per year, plus eight general and public holidays, rising to 33 days after ten years' 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 review 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 bands, and see the most up-to-date starting salaries for each one, go to www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/payandbenefits



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 the centre pages for more on the Career Framework, and an example of how an employee has progressed through the NHS.

CASE STUDY

Name: Heather Noon

Job title: clinical system trainer/ IT trainer, Sussex Health Informatics Service

Entry route: joined from the private sector

As an information technology trainer you have to be a real 'people person', as well as understanding IT systems. You are a bridge between the machines and the people who use them.

We show staff what they can do on a computer that supports their work. IT systems lead to better patient care – just one example is an alert we can put on a computer, which appears after a patient has waited a certain time in A&E.

It's not just a matter of showing people how to use a screen. We are reinforcing what the trust wants to achieve, improving services, so we have to gain a really good understanding of the way people work – everything from registering patient

details to running clinics. We need plenty of details so we can configure the system precisely to suit them.

It's very satisfying when you see results in the training room, like someone who started out really petrified of computers – and we do get a lot of them – but who ends up happy and confident.

Taking a wider view, I see more and more people across the trusts gaining computer skills and learning how to use the systems confidently. It is great to help equip them for the future.



IT systems lead to better patient care

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 careers. These include:

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

You can find more information on health and well-being at work at
www.nhsemployers.org/healthyworkplaces

Managing 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 job-share opportunities are often available in some jobs, 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 everyday life – whether you’re studying for a new qualification, raising a family or juggling other responsibilities.

Many people take an extended break to look after young children or other dependants 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, if you work for the NHS you will also have access to a range of free childcare services, including:

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

You can find out more about the benefits of working in the NHS at
www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/payandbenefits



Your career in health informatics

The intelligent use of information and computers to provide better healthcare – that's health informatics, one of the fastest-growing areas of the NHS.

Every day in the NHS, information has to be collected, managed, used and shared. Good patient care depends on this fast and accurate flow of information.

As a health informatics professional, you are a vital part of the NHS team, the expert on patient information that others rely on to do their jobs.

Whether the job is to provide technical support or to develop cutting-edge electronic projects, health informatics staff are responsible for the non-stop cycle of information flowing throughout the NHS.

Health informatics staff help clinicians keep up with the latest evidence and research. They work with researchers or run their own research projects to advance clinical knowledge. They help find new ways of delivering vital services, such as laboratory test results, X-rays and drug dispensing, while also making them faster and more foolproof. They develop systems to free up clinicians from routine paperwork, allowing them to spend more time treating patients.

They work on systems analysis and development while maintaining intranets within hospital or community organisations. They also develop technologies that help patients live independently and longer with a better quality of life.

They also run the systems that allow NHS staff to communicate with each other, to access information and to deal with all the day-to-day service needs, such as ordering vital supplies and booking patient appointments. In fact, there is very little happening in the NHS today that does not involve health informatics.

The main areas of health informatics

There are many opportunities in health informatics, whatever your interests, skills and education. The work falls into these main areas:

- information and communication technology (ICT)
- information management
- libraries and knowledge management
- clinical informatics.

You'll also find roles in four other areas – portfolio, programme and project management (P3M), health records and patient administration and education and training.

Factsheets can be found for each of these areas at www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/downloads

More information can also be found at www.hicf.org.uk

Information and communication technology (ICT) staff

Most people rely on computers and electronic communication to do their job. If you work in ICT you have a key role, helping to run the systems used by (among others) scientists, doctors, therapists and other healthcare professionals, secretaries and managers.

ICT staff are hands-on; diagnosing and fixing faults, supporting staff who use the systems, and developing improvements. Your work will support computers and communication systems ranging from appointment booking systems to systems in intensive care units.

Who will it appeal to?

Those with a natural flair for computing. Examples include helpdesk support staff, business analysts and information managers who develop better systems for staff and patient services.

CASE STUDY

Name: Manjinder Singh Dhesei

Job title: access, booking and choice programme manager, NHS Midlands and East

Entry route: joined from the private sector

The NHS has really unlocked the potential in me. I have gone from being a web developer to managing a big programme of change across 13 NHS trusts.

Coming from the private sector, the immediate difference I noticed was the autonomy and the responsibility. So instead of being a tiny cog in a machine, I had real responsibility very quickly.

When I joined I only meant to stay 12 months but the culture of the organisation has been so inspiring. There is a real drive to train and to develop people. My manager at the time is now my business coach and mentor. It's massively helpful to have someone who helps you stand



back from your day-to-day work and challenges you about where you want to go with your career.

I've had five positions in five years, and each time it has been a bigger project and more responsibility.

As a web developer I designed a web-based virtual library. Within a year I was promoted to special projects manager for an NHS workforce confederation. I had to deliver a variety of projects, such as a stakeholders' conference and a website, within tight deadlines.

After a year in that position I became head of communications and the independent sector project lead, responsible for both internal and external communications.

Then I moved to my present role, as manager of the booking and choice programme for a strategic health authority.

My job now is to help trusts put in the systems so patients have a choice about where and when they go for their outpatient appointments. With any IT project there are always ups and downs but when you get to the end and it delivers results, it is a fantastic feeling. You think 'well that year's work I put in made a real difference.'

8 Careers in health informatics in the NHS

Information management staff

Staff in information management gather, analyse, interpret and present information about health and healthcare to improve services and patient care. Such information supports NHS services in all sorts of ways, from finding out how a trust is performing to planning how many staff are needed to deliver care in an NHS organisation. An example is information that shows how quickly an ambulance trust responds to emergency calls and can be used to improve performance.

Who will it appeal to?

People who can interpret statistical data and turn it into meaningful information about services. This branch of health informatics includes performance management teams, which analyse information about patients and services in order to find ways of improving service delivery. It also includes staff working in data protection and confidentiality, who focus on ensuring information is handled legally and securely. Information management staff need a thorough understanding of health services and the way information is used throughout the NHS.

Libraries and knowledge management staff

Healthcare professionals and managers need information to keep abreast of changes, in the treatment of a particular disease for example, as well as for their professional development. It's your role to ensure they have ready access to the information they need, whether it's on paper, on disk or online. Increasingly your job will also be to help patients and their families find reliable information and sources of help on the internet.

Who will it appeal to?

A passion for information and for helping people access it lies at the heart of jobs in libraries and knowledge management. You will be the sort of person who can use a library system or an internet search engine to track down information. You need excellent people skills and a helpful attitude because dealing face to face with people at all levels of the NHS is a key part of the job.

Clinical informatics staff

How can we use clinical information to improve patient care? That's one of the important questions you will help answer. If you work in clinical informatics, your job is to capture, communicate and use clinical information to benefit healthcare services. This could be something as simple as analysing information about falls on wards to prevent hospital patients having accidents, or a large-scale, ambitious project such as helping to develop electronic patient records that link NHS organisations, from GPs to hospital clinics.

The work involves using and developing electronic means to support the whole cycle of information about patients and treatment, including research and audit. Clinical informatics staff are usually healthcare professionals who develop a strong interest in using IT and information to find better ways of working.

Who will it appeal to?

Those who want to find ways of making services better through the imaginative use of information. A clinical background means you have a thorough understanding of the operational side of services, while you are likely to be interested in harnessing the power of IT and data to make those services work better. Within that there is a wide range of opportunities, such as clinical audit, as well as openings to develop your own problem-solving projects or research.

**For more information about working
in health informatics please visit
www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/working**

CASE STUDY

Name: Jan Butcher

Job title: clinical coder, West Suffolk Hospital NHS Trust, Bury St Edmunds

Entry route: joined from social services

This is a good sleuthing job. We gather all the activity – the diagnoses and the interventions – that happen during a patient’s stay in hospital, and we record it as a series of alphanumeric codes.

We need to represent a patient’s stay as accurately as possible. So we review all the notes and we have to check every detail and chase up any gaps. It’s very satisfying when you have pieced it all together.

We have a good skill mix to draw on – the team includes a midwife, nurses and a biomedical scientist. The knowledge of fellow team members can often help you make sense of an aspect of patient care. All of us like the investigation, the

attention to detail and learning about new treatments – it’s like medicine at second hand.

The eight members of the team code some 6,000 episodes of healthcare every month. We are basically creating a record of all the clinical activity in the hospital. It’s an essential record that can be used to map the incidence of disease, see what actions have been taken and how much has been spent, and then help plan the shape of future services.

The trust has been very supportive and we’ve had excellent training – my trainer was an exceptionally knowledgeable, motivational person. She really transformed my interest.



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 Manjinder Singh Dhesi describes how he has progressed within health informatics.

You can follow his career path in the white boxes on the diagram below, alongside other potential paths in the different areas of the NHS.

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

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.nhs.uk/careers
To explore other career pathways in health informatics visit the Health Informatics Career Framework, a web-based resource, at www.hicf.org.uk

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	
Access, booking and choice manager: managing the processes to ensure effective systems for patients to choose appointments	Associate director of children's services	Consultant midwife	Nurse consultant in stroke	
Head of communications: ensuring appropriate communication to staff, stakeholder organisations and the public	Head of accounts	Head of midwifery	District nurse (team manager)	Head of estates
Principal projects manager: overseeing and coordinating activities to ensure smooth running of projects eg conferences	Project manager	Community midwife	Community psychiatric nurse	Chaplain
Web information developer: developing a virtual library for the organisation	Payroll manager	Midwife	Neonatal nurse	Catering manager
Clinical coder	General office manager		Community care assistant	Medical secretary
Helpdesk adviser		Maternity support worker	Senior healthcare assistant	Security officer
Support desk assistant		Healthcare assistant (maternity)	Healthcare assistant (nursing)	Maintenance assistant
Health records assistant			Nurse cadet	Porter

What opportunities are available?

Health informatics offer a range of opportunities and challenges. Which area is right for you?

Would you enjoy the challenge of supporting, improving and developing computer systems? Is data analysis your strength, or are you attracted by the idea of helping healthcare professionals keep up with the latest knowledge and research?

This section gives you a brief overview of the roles in each of the areas of health informatics. You can find more detailed information in the relevant factsheets, or on the NHS Careers website.

Information and communication technology (ICT)

ICT staff are responsible for the development, management and support of the ICT infrastructure in one or more NHS organisations.

The roles listed below give an idea of the variety on offer.

For more information about roles in ICT see the relevant factsheet, or visit www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/working
To search for jobs visit www.jobs.nhs.uk

Type of work	Main responsibilities
ICT support technician	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> helps set up computing equipment, for example in a hospital installs new computers, carries out initial tests, loads programmes and helps maintain computers
ICT test analyst	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> supports the technical development and smooth running of new computer systems, for example development of an electronic patient record system analyses a problem within a computer system, diagnoses and solves it
IT training manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> manages the design and delivery of training in applications and IT awareness to NHS staff in the organisation works with trust staff to identify training needs provides advice on suitable training courses
Network manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> manages a trust's IT network infrastructure and provides technical support and advice to all the client organisations
Service desk operator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> investigates and helps staff with their computer problems resolves faults over the telephone
Systems developer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> works on the challenging programme of development in the NHS, for example linking GPs with hospitals by computer, allowing patients to book hospital appointments from the GP's surgery works closely with other healthcare professionals to make sure technical solutions are geared to improving ways of working and patient care
Telecommunication manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> manages the telephony system the job could involve using the latest technology to design a new hospital telephony system and ensure its smooth operation

Information management

Information management staff use information, including statistics, to plan health services, monitor how they are performing and develop them to improve patient care.

The roles listed below give an idea of the variety on offer.

For more information about roles in information management see the relevant factsheet, or visit www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/working
To search for jobs visit www.jobs.nhs.uk

Type of work	Main responsibilities
Clinical coder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • makes a full and accurate computer record of patients' stays in hospital • translates patients' diagnoses and treatment into alphanumeric codes • liaises with doctors, nurses and other staff to ensure patients' diagnoses and treatment are recorded accurately • reviews quality of data
Clinical coding tutor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • designs and delivers training for clinical and non-clinical staff to support the use of clinical coding • problem solving, and sharing ideas and best practice to make sure the information recorded about patient diagnoses and treatment is full and accurate
Data quality manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reviews current information systems to ensure that quality of data meets national standards and regulations • establishes and maintains new data audit programmes to ensure information is high quality
Information analyst	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • analyses information on health services, for example a population's health needs or hospital waiting times, and uses it to help managers and healthcare professionals plan services and improve performance
Information auditor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • helps healthcare professionals analyse the way they work, and uses the information to find ways of improving patient care
Information governance manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensures information systems comply with national rules about how information is captured, shared and stored
Planning and performance manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • analyses information to monitor current services and plans for the future • helps ensure key performance targets are met, for example on waiting lists

14 Careers in health informatics in the NHS

Libraries and knowledge management

The amount of information on healthcare is increasing rapidly as we see huge advances in medicine and new thinking on managing and delivering services. Librarians and knowledge management staff help healthcare professionals and managers access information in books, periodicals

and online so they can keep up with the latest research and evidence base to maintain their professional training and development.

The roles listed below give an idea of the variety on offer.

Type of work	Main responsibilities
Head of archives and museums	<ul style="list-style-type: none">responsible for art and historical collections of unique interest in the field of health within certain NHS trusts. These include collections of artifacts and documents that highlight the history of medicine, medical breakthroughs, or the men and women who pioneered healthcare in the past
Information assistant	<ul style="list-style-type: none">helps and supports the librarianstaffs the enquiry deskcarries out routine administration, such as sending out letters and ordering books, journals and other materials, as well as maintaining databases and records
Knowledge and information manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none">takes a lead on making sure a hospital or trust's information resources are set up and run in the best waymanages the introduction of new information resources, for example helping staff and managers redesign information services around the needs of patients
Librarian	<ul style="list-style-type: none">answers research enquiries from library usersprovides information using a variety of resources – from clinical textbooks to computer databases and the internetprepares packages of information for healthcare professionals and other staff who may use it for training, research or their own professional development

For more information about roles in libraries and knowledge management see the relevant factsheet, or visit

www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/working

To search for jobs, visit www.jobs.nhs.uk

Clinical informatics

Clinical informatics staff are usually healthcare scientists, doctors, nurses or other healthcare professionals who have moved to health informatics. Their job is to capture, communicate and use patient information to improve services and patient care. The

role also involves developing electronic tools to manage clinical information.

The roles listed below give an idea of the variety on offer.

Type of work	Main responsibilities
Clinical informatics specialist manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • carries out full or part-time audit or research, using understanding of clinical practice to find ways of improving services • manages information services for a specialist area, for example maternity • assists the development of specific IT and/or information projects, such as the electronic patient record, which shares patient information across hospitals and GPs
PACS administrator (picture archiving communication system)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • supports the running of the service that stores radiological images, such as X-rays, ultrasound and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scans, and transfers them electronically to specialists within a trust and around the country
Pathology links manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • responsible for the IT systems and applications linking shared pathology services • ensures the system works reliably and is compliant with national information governance regulations

For more information about roles in clinical informatics see the relevant factsheet, or visit www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/working

To search for jobs visit www.jobs.nhs.uk

CASE STUDY

Name: Katherine Cheema

Job title: specialist analyst, NHS South of England

Entry route: BSc Psychology and Physiology

My job is at quite a strategic level – collecting and analysing data to see how individual services are performing, and helping to work out how they can be improved.

My degree had a significant research and statistical component, and during my study I had part-time and holiday jobs involving IT, databases and knowledge management. I knew that when I finished at university I wanted to use my skills to make a difference.



I initially joined the team as a performance analyst but have changed roles to become a specialist analyst with a broad portfolio of responsibilities. I am actively involved in developing new information projects with clinical and management teams that help improve the user experience in terms of interpretation and presentation of information.

In this job, you need an eye for detail, as well as the ability to see the wider picture – it's easy to get bogged down in numbers! It's also important to be able to explain your analysis to a wide audience – the best kind of analyst is able to defend their conclusions, as well as make them, especially when they might not be what people expect.

I'm lucky enough to be part of a forward thinking, dynamic team that is nationally respected, and have recently completed a postgraduate diploma in research methods with a view to providing specialist support to help develop new patient services.

This might not be 'frontline' work but it can make a difference to a patient's experience

Getting started

Anyone can enjoy a career in health informatics. There are roles for everyone, no matter what qualifications or previous work experience you have. Wherever you start, you will have the chance to learn on the job and carry on studying if you choose.

Health informatics (HI) staff work in every area of healthcare on a huge variety of projects and tasks. This means that the scope for people with different interests, skills and qualifications is enormous. People come into HI from a variety of different backgrounds. They include librarians, academics, scientists, business specialists, statisticians, managers, IT specialists and also clinicians such as doctors, nurses and allied health professionals. They come from within healthcare, like the clinicians who move over into a full-time HI role, or they come from outside, bringing their specialist expertise to the NHS.

The entry requirements will vary depending on the job. It may be possible to enter a career in HI with no formal qualifications, but some roles may require very specific professional qualifications, relevant experience and a commitment to professional registration.

You can take up a career in HI straight from school, college or university, or from a previous unrelated career, entering at the appropriate level and choosing whether to remain at that level or whether to progress after further study and experience.

This section outlines your options and some of the routes into this area of the NHS.

You may not need formal qualifications to begin working in health informatics, although GCSEs or equivalent qualifications and/or some work experience may be an advantage. Diplomas for 14-19-year-olds, offer an alternative means of acquiring essential skills, providing a mix of classroom learning, creative thinking and hands-on experience.

At entry level, you can apply for a range of assistant jobs, working in libraries, outpatient departments, or IT helpdesks, supporting healthcare and health informatics professionals. Jobs at this level include assistant library or information officers and IT helpdesk advisers.

You will be given the IT training you need by the NHS. You will also be encouraged to study for NHS Elite, a learning and assessment tool accredited by the Chartered Institute of IT that covers the essential IT skills required for most NHS staff.

Apprenticeships combine on-the-job training and work experience while in paid employment, with formal off-the-job training. Apprenticeships are open to anyone over 16 and not in full-time education. Availability varies around the country, so it's best to speak to your local NHS trust for more information about opportunities in your area.

With A levels, equivalent qualifications and/or some work experience, you can start your career as a HI trainee. There are also opportunities for existing staff to enter junior HI positions. A levels may also be helpful for some specialist roles, for example A levels including the study of anatomy and/or physiology are helpful for specialist library posts such as clinical librarian.

Currently there are a few specific qualifications developed and certificated directly by the NHS for health informatics. For clinical coders, there is the National Clinical Coding Qualification, which is delivered by the Institute of Health Records Management or the Professional Association of Clinical Coders in partnership with the NHS. An increasing number of undergraduate and postgraduate courses in health informatics are available that meet defined standards set by the NHS Health Informatics Quality Scheme for Learning and Development. These can be gained as part of a degree or masters qualification, or you can study for them within the job role. Many universities now have part-time masters courses and offer diplomas in health informatics, as well as undergraduate courses in health informatics management.

Foundation degrees, designed primarily for existing healthcare employees, combine academic study with workplace learning, equipping you with the relevant knowledge, understanding and skills for your chosen career path. A number of foundation degrees are available in healthcare informatics.

18 Careers in health informatics in the NHS

Many staff taking up HI roles in the NHS will already have many of the core skills needed for the job and, once employed, will be supported in identifying any gaps and receive help towards bridging them. This learning will count towards professional recognition and may lead to a recognised qualification, for example a foundation degree in health informatics.

For more information on training in the NHS, go to www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/training

To find out more about diplomas, visit www.direct.gov.uk/diplomas

For links to health informatics qualifications, go to www.connectingforhealth.nhs.uk/phi

For more information on the career pathways in health informatics, visit www.hicf.org.uk

Graduate opportunities

The NHS Graduate Management Training Scheme has an option to specialise in informatics management. A strong academic background and sound management experience in health opens up opportunities in senior management positions in health informatics. Staff working in information management often hold a degree or masters degree in health informatics.

A degree in library and information studies or information science will allow you to join the professional tier of the library service. For a very senior role, such as knowledge services manager, you may also need a postgraduate qualification in information and library work.

A particularly specialist role, such as a head of archives and museums, might require specific qualifications or experience, such as a postgraduate qualification in museum or heritage studies.

For information on the graduate training scheme for the NHS, visit www.isthenhsforme.co.uk

Work placements

Arranging a work placement is one of the best ways to find out if a career in health informatics is for you. This will give you the opportunity to experience the working environment, the type of jobs you will be doing and to speak to people already working in that area of the NHS.

The number and type of work placements available vary depending on where you are in the country. For more information about opportunities in your area, please talk to your local trust.

Pay

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

Your career in health informatics could start at an AfC band 1 as a helpdesk adviser, rising to band 7 for an information management and technology section manager. More senior managerial posts attract higher bandings or are covered by the salary scheme for very senior managers in the NHS. Examples of other roles in this group, with typical AfC pay bands, include clinical coding support worker (band 2), service desk operator (band 3), information officer (bands 4–5), systems developer (band 5) and health records manager (band 7).

For more information on pay bands in your chosen career, visit www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/payandbenefits

CASE STUDY

Name: Tanvir Ahmed

Job title: clinical audit and R&D co-ordinator, City and Hackney Primary Care Trust, London

Entry route: joined from the private sector

What I love about my job is the challenge and the feeling that I can make a difference.

I came from a private company, where the targets were about money but in the NHS it is all about creating better services. Our challenge here is tackling health inequality and I feel I can help do that – that’s why I joined.

Clinical audit is all about learning what we are doing now and how we can improve. You might say that Florence Nightingale started audit – she found that soldiers were dying of infections, not their wounds. Strict sanitary routine and standards of hygiene were applied to the hospital and equipment, and death rates fell dramatically.

We learn in a similar way today to improve our

practice. We find out how services are performing, spot things we could do better and take our recommendations for change to managers. We’re always helping to drive forward improvements.

In the NHS you can use all the skills you have gained elsewhere. I was in marketing and now I market clinical audit to staff. I run sessions, explaining that it’s not about blame but improving the ways of working. They go back to their work with a new, positive mindset about clinical audit.

When an audit is completed then you see, yes, we have made a change, we have made a difference. In my previous job I wasn’t getting that sort of satisfaction.



What's your next step?

We hope you've found this booklet useful, and now have a better idea of whether a career in health informatics is right for you.

If you've decided you do want to work in this area, it's important to start planning ahead straight away. Find out as much information as you can about the qualifications you need and the opportunities that are available.

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

The table below gives some hints on what you should be doing and who can provide you with the best advice.

Whatever position you're in now, the NHS Careers service can help. Call us on 0345 60 60 665, email advice@nhscareers.nhs.uk or visit our website at www.nhscareers.nhs.uk

To search for jobs, go to www.jobs.nhs.uk to find information about professional bodies and all other contacts, please see www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/contacts

Here are some things you can be doing, depending on where you are right now. For all contact details, visit www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/contacts

Where are you now?	What should you do now?	Who can help?
Studying for your GCSEs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • check what your likely exam grades/results will be • 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? • are there any particular skills or experience that will improve your chances of getting into your chosen career? • enquire about volunteering or work experience • find out if you need any specific A levels, or equivalent qualifications • consider the option of a 14–19 diploma • consider the option of an apprenticeship. 	Subject teachers Your careers adviser/ Connexions service Professional bodies NHS Careers
Studying for A levels or another course at your school or a local college	As GCSEs, plus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • if you need to study a particular degree, investigate which universities offer it • investigate any further qualifications you might need for your chosen role • search the NHS Jobs website at www.jobs.nhs.uk and speak to your local trust to get an idea of current vacancies • consider the option of an apprenticeship. 	Subject teachers Your careers adviser/ Connexions service UCAS NHS Careers Professional bodies NHS Jobs
At university	As A levels, plus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • visit the Graduate Management Training Scheme website at www.isthenhsforme.co.uk 	University careers service NHS Careers Professional bodies NHS Jobs
Looking for a new career	As A levels, plus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 	Careers/Connexions service (you may have to pay to use these services) NHS Careers Jobcentre Plus Professional bodies NHS Jobs UCAS

FOR FURTHER COPIES OF THIS BOOKLET PLEASE CONTACT:

NHS Careers

PO Box 2311

Bristol BS2 2ZX

Tel: 0345 60 60 655

email: advice@nhscareers.nhs.uk

www.nhscareers.nhs.uk

10k Feb12

**NHSCB08 Feb 12
© Crown Copyright 2012**

