

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 300 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 or visit 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, 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 patients' homes, with people of all ages and backgrounds. So, if you've got an interest in caring for people, you'll find a role that suits you in nursing.

Some nurses begin their career by working their way up from support roles, which require no set qualifications, and go on to train for a registered nursing degree or diploma, 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 or diploma in nursing, during which the NHS will support you. For instance,

your tuition fees will usually be paid and you may be eligible for a bursary.

Once you are part of the NHS, you'll benefit from flexible working arrangements, excellent benefits and a wealth of opportunities to help you fulfil your ambitions and progress up the career ladder. 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.

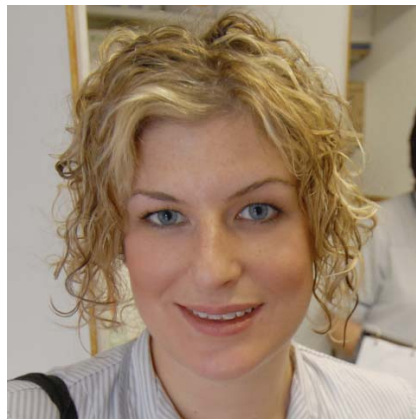
The NHS Careers team

For more information about working in nursing, please visit

www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/working

If you have any questions, 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 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.

You will 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, fully protected against inflation and guaranteed by the government.

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 entitlement of 27 days a year, plus eight general and public holidays, rising to 33 days after 10 years of service
- new pay enhancements to reward out of hours, shift and overtime working
- better 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/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 pages 10 and 11 for more on the Career Framework and examples of how other employees have progressed through the NHS.

CASE STUDY

Name: Stuart Kerr

Job title: staff nurse, Royal United Hospital, Bath

Entry route: access course followed by diploma

Stuart had planned to join the Royal Navy, but instead decided to do an access course to gain entry to university where he took a diploma in adult nursing. He is currently studying for a degree in critical care.

There is nothing quite like having a close-knit team, such as the one I'm in at the minute. You have to be a good communicator to work well in teams but you also have to be able to work on your own. So, you have to have a bit of initiative and



get on and do stuff, and when you're stuck you can't be afraid to ask questions.

I'm really happy where I am at the moment – I'm doing my critical care degree, specialising in coronary care. I would like to work on the intensive therapy unit for a while and eventually move up the career ladder and become a senior nurse, and maybe one day become an NHS ward manager – but that's a long way down the line. One of the advantages of being a nurse is there are so many opportunities and career pathways.

To do my job, you have to be someone who loves learning because it is a life-long process when you are a nurse. While I'm still learning, I'm happy. I feel that nurses make a difference every day; it could be assisting with the resuscitation of a patient, assisting the medical staff at 3am or just listening to a person talk about their feelings regarding their diagnosis.

Nursing is hard work, however nothing gives you a better feeling than being able to see a person, who on admission was seriously ill, leave hospital a lot healthier and go home.

One of the advantages of being a nurse is there are so many opportunities and career pathways

Helping you find the right work-life balance

As an NHS employee, you can benefit from flexible working, childcare, and high standards for equality and diversity thanks to the Improving Working Lives (IWL) initiative.

Since its introduction in 2000, the programme has helped bring about a real culture change within the NHS – reducing stress, increasing motivation and improving productivity among staff. All these factors have led to higher levels of patient care.

You can find more information about the initiative and the plans for the future at 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.

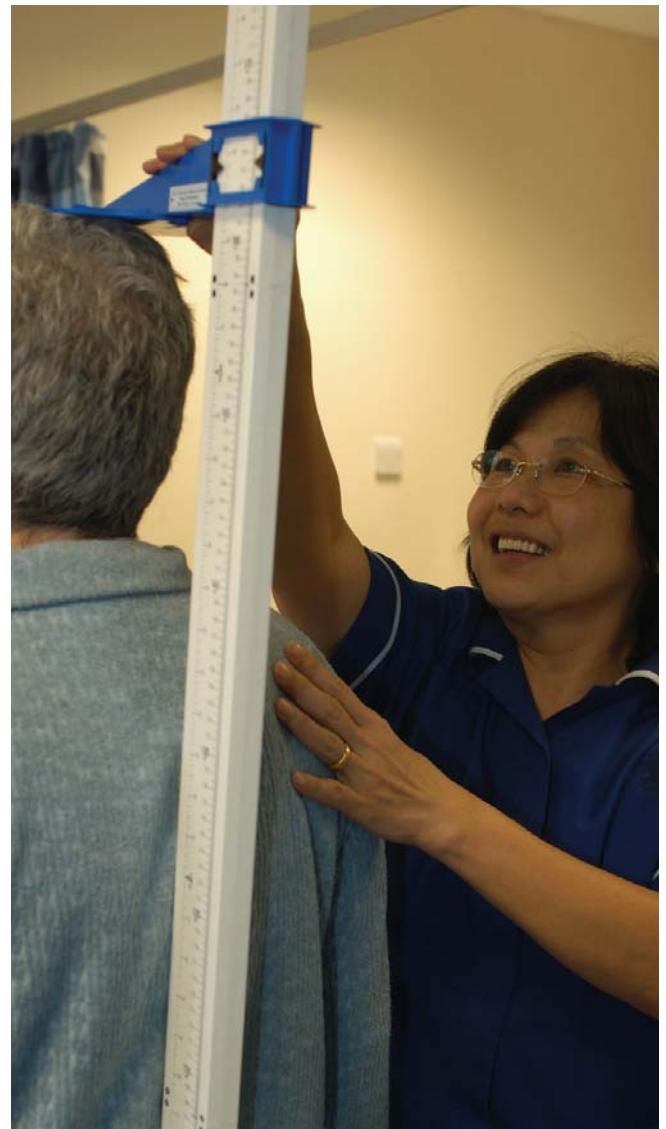
Many people in the NHS take an extended break to look after young children or other dependents who need special care, or to study full time.

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 all 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/list/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. 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 Cousin

Job title: student district nurse, Milton Keynes Primary Care Trust

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.

I had wanted to be a nurse since I was a child and 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.



After qualifying, I worked in A&E for a short period. Then I got a job as a community nurse with a primary care trust. After two years I moved here and am now being sponsored by the PCT 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. I will leave with a district nurse qualification and will be a team leader, which is quite special for someone of my age!

Why do I like nursing in the community? I like the greater autonomy you have in the way you treat and manage patients, the fact that your 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. It's my job to assess and support patients, then co-ordinate a care package to give them the help they need. 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 various specialties within nursing: mental health, children's, older people and learning difficulties. This allows you to focus on the needs of a particular client group during your nursing career.

Similarly, nurses can choose to work in a general nursing environment or choose a role working in a school or prison, for example. Nurses can also combine a clinical career in education or research. Whatever branch of nursing appeals, there is plenty of scope to move around the NHS, to work in different settings and progress up the career ladder if you wish.

More opportunities in the community

As healthcare increasingly moves away from hospital,

the settings in which you can work will expand. 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 help to 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, coupled with more roles for senior nurses to lead and manage multidisciplinary teams.

Whatever your chosen speciality, you will be able to benefit from the flexibility, support and learning opportunities offered by the NHS throughout all stages of your career.

For information about the qualifications needed to work in nursing, see the 'Getting started' section on page 19 or visit www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/qualifications



There are various specialties within nursing: mental health, children's, older people and learning difficulties. This allows you to focus on the needs of a particular client group

CASE STUDY

Name: Shirley Powell

Job title: modern matron, City and Hackney Teaching PCT

Entry route: pre-nursing foundation course

Shirley started her career as an auxiliary nurse. She has worked in various settings and is now a modern matron.

Initially I wanted to become a nursery nurse but when I applied to do the training the course was oversubscribed. A pre-nursing course was advertised so I applied to do the foundation level and thoroughly enjoyed it. After this, I worked as an auxiliary nurse, and commenced my enrolled nurse training before applying for a permanent position working on a care of the elderly ward.

Because I enjoyed working in operating theatres during my nurse training, I applied for a post as an enrolled nurse at the local hospital recovery unit and worked there for several years.



In 1993, I took a conversion course to become a registered nurse (RGN) and I took additional courses to gain insight into how older people live in the community, which really changed my perceptions about the elderly and the ageing process.

I returned to work at the recovery unit and used my experience to contribute to the management of the unit. I was a mentor to students and taught basic post-anaesthetic recovery of unconscious patients to students and new staff. I gained a wealth of experience and developed specialist skills in caring for the unconscious patient. I found working in recovery really stimulating and enjoyed many positive experiences caring for patients and providing one-to-one nursing care.

I left the acute setting to work as a community staff nurse, working at various GP practices. I completed a district nursing degree and then worked for six years as a district nursing sister.

In 2004 I moved to London to work as a modern matron in primary care. I facilitate the professional development of community nurses, ensuring they have the skills to deliver high-quality care. I also help develop nurse-led and patient-centred services and monitor standards of clinical practice and patient care.

I've enjoyed working in numerous roles in the NHS, I feel that I have made a difference to many people's lives and experienced many training opportunities, all of which have given me the chance to develop and innovate.

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 Shirley Powell has progressed in her nursing career. You can

	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		Specialist respiratory physiologist
6 Senior practitioners/ specialist practitioners	Specialist paramedic	Senior occupational therapist	Senior dental technologist	Senior biomedical scientist
5 Practitioners	Paramedic	Dietitian	Dental technician	Cardiac physiologist
4 Assistant practitioners/ Associate practitioners	Control room manager	Assistant clinical psychologist	Dental therapist	Critical care technologist
3 Senior healthcare assistants/technicians	Emergency medical dispatcher	Rehabilitation assistant	Dental hygienist	Newborn hearing screener
2 Support workers	Patient transport service driver	Therapy clinical support worker	Dental nurse	Pharmacy dispensing assistant
1 Initial entry level jobs				

follow 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/list/working

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	Modern Matron: clinical leadership and management of service delivery models in district nursing	Consultant midwife	Nurse consultant in stroke	
Clinical researcher	Head of accounts	Head of midwifery	District nursing sister (team manager): managing programmes of care with a multidisciplinary team	Head of estates
Systems analyst	Project manager	Community midwife	District nursing sister: prescribing and providing cardiac nursing to patients following a heart attack	Chaplain
Librarian	Payroll manager	Midwife	Community staff nurse: providing nursing care to patients in their own homes	Catering manager
Clinical coder	General office manager		Enrolled nurse: providing routine nursing care to patients following surgery	Medical secretary
Medical records clerk		Maternity support worker	Auxiliary nurse: recording patient temperature, pulse and respiration	Security officer
Support desk assistant		Healthcare assistant (maternity)	Healthcare assistant (nursing)	Maintenance assistant
Health records assistant			Nurse cadet	Porter

CASE STUDY

Name: Matthew Sebouhian

Job title: community psychiatric nurse, Humber Mental Health and Teaching Trust

Entry route: registered mental health nurse

Matthew sees patients with personality disorders in a GP practice and he enjoys the variety this gives him.

I am based in a GP practice that provides an enhanced medical service for people who are socially excluded. It's for people who are homeless, have substance misuse problems, work in the commercial sex industry, or have a level of violence and aggression that excludes them from normal services.



A typical day involves seeing anywhere between six and ten clients for face-to-face contact as well as offering formal and informal supervision to colleagues about clients in their caseload. My role occupies a senior position within the nursing structure so I attend quite a few strategic and planning meetings.

The thing that drew me to the role was knowing how much of a problem personality disorder (PD) is for the client group. That's my passion, that's where my enthusiasm lies – working with people with PD. The face-to-face contact with the client group and the management of the services surrounding them is the bit that I enjoy the most, I really like coming in to work and not being able to say what I'm going to be doing from day to day.

Being determined and sticking to your guns is one of the biggest assets a nurse doing my job can have. Clients who have been excluded often believe that the services are not going to be appropriate so I really need to persuade them. For my clients, getting them to attend an appointment on time is a huge achievement. Once you've got your head around that and got them to a point where they are actually engaging, it's great.

The face-to-face contact with the client group is the bit that I enjoy the most

What opportunities are available?

On the following pages you will find information of some of the many types of nursing that exist within the NHS.

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

However, there are many ways in which you can become a registered nurse. For instance, you can

work your way up from being a healthcare assistant (which may not require any qualifications), and progress to apply for a place on a degree or diploma course, or you can begin your professional study after gaining your A levels. (See the 'Getting started' section on page 19 for more information).

Depending on experience and training there are plenty of opportunities for you to rise up the ranks to manage teams, run wards and even reach consultant level, if desired.

Adult nursing

Adult nurses work with adults of all ages with all types of health conditions. They juggle 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 or, increasingly, community settings and you may do shift work to provide 24-hour care.

Your work as an adult nurse will involve:

- being part of a busy, multidisciplinary team that includes doctors, radiographers, physiotherapists and many others
- the use of 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 well-being
- a commitment to continued learning throughout your career.

Mental health nursing

As many as one in three 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 the mental health branch of nursing – a complex and demanding area –

work with GPs, psychiatrists, psychologists, 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 will involve:

- a great deal of autonomy in planning and delivering patient care within the healthcare team
- opportunities to specialise in areas such as alcohol and drug misuse
- the use of 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 live with or care for the patient
- dealing with occasional aggression in a sensitive and effective way.

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Children's nursing

This branch of nursing involves working with children of all ages with many 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 nursing takes place 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 will involve:

- the ability to respond to the challenges posed by caring for someone who is sick but may be too young to express what's wrong
- a keen awareness that a child's health can rapidly take a turn for the worse – and the knowledge to deal with this
- using sensitivity and the ability to communicate without words
- having the confidence to work in partnership with the patient's parents or carers and any siblings
- teaching the child's parents or carers what may need to be done to carry on with treatment at home.

Learning disabilities nursing

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

Learning disabilities 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 such areas 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 disabilities nurse will involve:

- the use of a great deal of patience, sensitivity and excellent interpersonal skills
- 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 new confidence in themselves thanks to your intervention.

District nursing

District nurses visit people of all ages, often in their own homes, GP surgeries or a residential home. Many patients are elderly; 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.

You'll need to qualify and work as a registered nurse (see page 19) and then complete a degree-level specialist practitioner programme, which usually lasts

at least one academic year, before you can become a district nurse. Funding or sponsorship may be available from your employing trust.

This is a rewarding role as you can work one-to-one with patients 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 will involve:

- working with a variety of people as part of a team that includes GPs, social services, voluntary organisations and NHS bodies, as well as working alone
- the capacity to be adaptable and put individuals at ease
- good organisational skills so you can plan your day to provide care for all those who need it
- visits to patients, some daily, some more frequent, 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.

Neonatal nursing

Neonatal nurses work with newborn babies who are born sick or prematurely. 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 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 will 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 degree of empathy
- the competence to operate in a busy, technical environment.

Health visitors

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 as diverse as people's homes, schools, GP surgeries, shelters for the homeless and medical centres.

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 to manage a team of health visitors or to other NHS management roles.

You'll need to qualify and have worked as a registered nurse (see page 19) or midwife before completing a degree-level training programme, which usually lasts a minimum of one year, full-time, 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.

Your work as a health visitor will involve:

- working with people who have disabilities or chronic health problems
- supporting new mothers 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 for much of the time – you will need to be highly organised
- using confidence and skills to deal with people in a variety of situations, some of which may be challenging.

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 be required to work one or two evenings a week. As the range of healthcare services provided in the community increases, the role of the practice nurse is likely to expand. For example, you might get involved in prison nursing, which may mean doing shifts to provide 24-hour care.

To become a practice nurse, you need to qualify and

have gained experience as a registered nurse (see page 19).

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 be organising and running 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 will involve:

- treating small injuries
- assisting with minor operations carried out under local anaesthetic
- health screening
- family planning
- running vaccination programmes (such as to protect 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 based in prison. They are either employed by the prison service or, increasingly, by the NHS. Many prisoners suffer from substance abuse or have a mental health problem, 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 opportunities to move between the NHS and the prison service through job share, job swap and secondment schemes, and, as in 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.

Your work as a prison nurse will involve:

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

School nursing

School nurses are usually employed by a primary care trust, local health authority, community trust or by individual schools. You will need to be an experienced registered nurse before you can apply to work as a school nurse.

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

Your work as a school nurse will 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
- the use of excellent communication skills
- a non-judgemental approach.

For more information on working in your chosen career, visit

www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/working

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

CASE STUDY

Name: Pat Whittingham

Job title: practice development sister, Blackpool Victoria Hospital New Lancashire Cardiac Centre

Entry route: cadetship, deferred training

Pat trained as a nurse in her 30s and gained experience during 12 years in the cardiac intensive care unit.

I started nursing initially as a cadet when I was 16, and started my nurse training when I was 18 but I didn't complete the course at that time because I went to Australia and worked in different industries.

I came back to England, and in 1986, I answered an advertisement in the local paper for an auxiliary school nurse/health visitor. While I was in



that post, my nurse manager encouraged me to do more training, as she said I had plenty of potential.

I completed my nurse training in 1993 and during the next 12 years, I went from being a novice nurse to an expert nurse in the cardiac intensive care unit at Blackpool, going from a newly qualified staff nurse to sister.

I progressed to practice development sister for the cardiac ward areas, covering the cardiothoracic and the cardiology wards. I enjoy the whole concept of working with the heart – it's fascinating. There are very few days that go by where I don't learn from something that's happened.

No days are typical but I mainly support student nurses in the area. I orientate and organise training programmes for new starters to the ward clinical area; I support and assess staff on post-registration courses, cardiology courses and high-dependency courses. Teamwork is critical – you have to be able to fit in and learn from one another. I find it rewarding when, not only patients, but also the staff say that I've supported them and that it is obvious I care about them.

You need to have faith in yourself that you can do the job. Between 1981 and 1986 I was a cleaner at a local government building and it wasn't until I was 37 that I went on to do my training - I qualified when I was 40.

Getting started

To work as a nurse in the NHS, you must hold a degree or diploma 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 for your local trust, voluntary organisation or St John Ambulance can be beneficial. As well as showing universities that you are committed, this will give you opportunities 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, also known as healthcare assistant, you'll provide vital assistance to healthcare professionals for diagnosing, treating and caring for patients. These are all responsible and rewarding roles 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. See the Clinical support worker factsheet for further information.

Those who have worked in the NHS and have the academic ability to cope with the demands of a professional nursing course will find that their experience is an advantage when they apply for a place on a nursing degree or diploma, which will normally be part time and last for five or six years.

Cadet schemes and apprenticeships

Cadet schemes or apprenticeships are run by some NHS trusts in certain areas of the country. Also known as traineeships, the programmes offer school leavers placements at support worker level for around two years while giving them an opportunity to work towards an NVQ qualification. Some programmes are open to people beyond school-leaving age.

Cadets and apprentices are normally exposed to several areas of healthcare. The experience will enable you to work towards an NVQ but will not count towards professional nurse training. Instead, a cadet scheme or apprenticeship aims to get an individual to the appropriate level so that he or she can apply to start a part-time nursing degree or diploma – which usually lasts five or six years – at the end of the cadetship.

Professional training

When you are selecting your pre-registration degree or diploma, you will need to choose between the four branches of nursing: adult (general) nursing, mental health, learning disability and children's (paediatric) nursing. All nursing degrees and diplomas consist of common foundation programmes (CFP) that are taught across all four branches of nursing, usually for one year on full-time courses, before specialisation.

If, for example, you choose to go into mental health nursing, the placements during your second and third years of study (on a full-time course) 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.

All applicants must be numerate, literate and be of good character and health.

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Full-time degree or diploma

If you have appropriate qualifications, you can apply directly to universities to undertake a full-time pre-registration degree or diploma of higher education 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 diplomas and degrees. It is up to each university to decide what they want to accept but on the whole, degree programmes usually require applicants to have five good GCSEs and two A levels (or equivalent) – some universities require two A levels. For diploma courses, the requirement is generally five GCSEs at grade A–C including English language or literature and a science subject.

Part-time study

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

Part-time nursing degrees and diplomas should be available to anyone working in the NHS – usually as a healthcare assistant with qualifications up to NVQ level 3 (or equivalent).

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

Accelerated diplomas for graduates with health degrees

Shortened study pre-registration programmes are available from some universities for graduates who hold a health-related degree.

The courses last at least 24 months and include six months from the common foundation programmes (CFPs) that are taught in all nursing degrees, plus 18 months minimum in the chosen branch.

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 rigour 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.

Foundation degree

Another way in to 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 and work their way up to a place on a part-time nursing degree or diploma.

Speak to your careers advisor, call us on 0345 60 60 655 or email advice@nhscareers.nhs.uk to find out more.

For more information on training in the NHS visit www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/training

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 conditions.

For more information about student funding, visit NHS Student Bursaries website at www.nhs.gov.uk/sgu

Registration

You must ensure that your nursing degree or diploma 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.

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 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.nhs.gov.uk/list/payandbenefits



CASE STUDY

Name: Robert Dennis

Job title: ward manager, acute children's ward, King's College Hospital, London

Entry route: adult and children's registered nursing diploma/degree

Robert was inspired to become a nurse in his late teens, after visiting relatives in hospital.

At first, I didn't think about being a children's nurse because I was visiting adults' wards, but as it happened, my training placement at Alder Hey, Liverpool, was a year longer than normal and combined adult and children's nursing, qualifying me to do both.

From being a staff nurse on a children's ward, I undertook a variety of courses and worked my way up to become a ward manager. I could not over-emphasise how much support I have had within the NHS, particularly when it comes to

having training to gain more skills and knowledge. Since joining King's College Hospital, I have been given further opportunities to develop my management and leadership skills and these have given me greater confidence and opened up more options for my career path.

My ward deals with children with cystic fibrosis. We work very closely with our community children's nurses: increasingly the NHS seems to be strengthening its children's nursing within the community and that is a good thing.

Being ward manager is a mixture of clinical care – directing activities of the team on the ward to ensure that all patients receive the clinical care required – and being a role model, demonstrating to staff what is expected professionally, and being responsible for all aspects of a 16-bed acute ward that deals with any child who comes through the A&E department. We've got about 34 staff on the ward and I'm managerially responsible for them. There is also an element of having to manage finances and resources, so I look at the budget and make sure we are not overspending.

The NHS provides plenty of opportunities and there are options for career progression; I could go into a purely management role. I have a MBA, which I took with a view to going into general management, but I have decided my heart is in clinical care. I could also go on to become a consultant nurse.



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 service.

If you need a degree, UCAS can advise on which universities offer the relevant courses. They will also 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 diploma or 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 or visit www.nhscareers.nhs.uk

To search for nursing jobs in the NHS, visit www.jobs.nhs.uk, and for more information about professional bodies please visit www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/contacts



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Here are some other 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"> • Visit www.stepintothens.nhs.uk and register for more information on chosen careers. • 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? Can you start as an assistant? • 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. 	Subject teachers Your careers advisor/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"> • Investigate which universities offer the degree course you want. • 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. • Enquire about volunteering or work experience. 	Subject teachers Your careers advisor/Connexions service UCAS NHS Careers Professional bodies NHS Jobs
At university	As A levels, plus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take advice on whether it's a good idea to switch your degree course. • Complete your current degree and look for post-graduate courses. 	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 advisor/Connexions service (you may have to pay to use these services) NHS Careers Jobcentre Plus Professional bodies NHS Jobs UCAS

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