

What is a Health Visitor?

A health visitor is a qualified nurse who has undertaken further training and education in order to be able to work as a member of the primary healthcare team. The role of the health visitor is about the promotion of health and the prevention of illness in all age groups.

Health visitor roles are varied, this could include assessing an elderly person to assist them living at home, or supporting a family with a new born child. Whilst working in a team, a health visitor works on his/her own with clients. They would be required to be very good managers and accountable for their actions.

Your responsibilities

A health visitor will undertake a range of work - primarily with families with pre-school children (from post-midwife care until they are ready to start school) as well as working with elderly people.

As a health visitor, you would be supporting mothers of young babies - advising on such areas as feeding, safety, physical and emotional development and other aspects of health and childcare. You might also work with people of any age who suffer from a chronic illness or live with a disability. Your role here will include helping them to overcome difficulties they may face in coping with their illness or disability.

Skills required

You may find yourself working with people from any background. Working within a community setting - in people's own homes, as well as clinics, doctors' surgeries and other medical centres - you will need to be well organised, confident and able to cope with potentially challenging situations - such as working with a homeless family.

(continued overleaf)

Entry requirements

In order to train as a health visitor, you must first qualify as a registered nurse and have gained ideally at least 2 years practice. To train as a nurse, you will need to complete a degree or diploma. At least 5 GCSEs grades A-C or equivalent are required for a Diploma course and at least 2 GCE A levels or equivalent are required for degree courses.

Experience of working with children and/or the elderly is advantageous.

Training programme

Programmes are at degree level and are normally no less than 1 academic year (32 Weeks) full-time, or part-time equivalent. They may be completed in a shorter period of time where credit is given for prior learning or experience.

Programmes comprise of 50% theory and 50% practice and concentrate on four broad areas: clinical nursing practice; care and programme management; clinical practice development and clinical practice leadership.

Career prospects

Further courses are available for health visitors. Some staff will go on to manage a team of health visitors or enter other management opportunities within the NHS.

Although you will work as a part of a healthcare team (including doctors, nurses, pharmacists and dietitians), you will need to be able to work independently for most of your time.

Working in the NHS

Every year the NHS provides healthcare for millions of people across the UK. In order to deliver the most up-to-date treatments and services, it relies upon many different highly skilled professionals, each with a vital part to play.

Quality care

Standards and expectations of healthcare continue to rise, supported by increases in Government spending. These will create further opportunities for people working in the NHS, with the aim of improving the quality of patient care and improving public health.

Staff conditions

At the same time, safer and more hygienic systems of working are being developed and the NHS is committed to finding more flexible and family-friendly ways of working that help people to keep their work and personal lives in balance as their careers unfold.

And providing security at the other end of working life, there is an excellent pension scheme.

It's a unique organisation. If you'd like to be part of a team with a common aim of improving people's health and delivering high quality treatment to everyone who needs it, the new NHS has much to offer.

Support Role

Health visitors' assistants and health care assistants may work with health visitors. The actual role undertaken will vary depending upon the employer.

Funding

Most health visitor students are seconded onto the programme by their employer, although a few people may fund themselves. In addition, information about funding may be available from the local NHS Workforce Development Confederation or Union.

How to Apply

For degree courses in nursing, apply through:

The Universities and Colleges Admission Services, PO Box 28, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire GL50 3SH
Tel: 01242 223707 www.ucas.com

For diploma courses in nursing, apply through:

Nursing and Midwifery Admissions Service, Rosehill, New Barn Lane, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire GL52 3LZ
Tel: 01242 223707 (application package)
Tel: 01242 544949 (general enquiries)

You can also get information from:

The Community Practitioners' and Health Visitors' Association (CPHVA), 40 Bermondsey Street, London SE1 3UD
Tel: 020 7939 7000
Fax: 020 7403 2976 www.msfcphva.org

For information about health visitor courses, or further copies of this factsheet contact:

NHS Careers,
PO Box 376, Bristol BS99 3EY
Tel: 0845 60 60 655 www.nhs.uk/careers