

Orthoptist

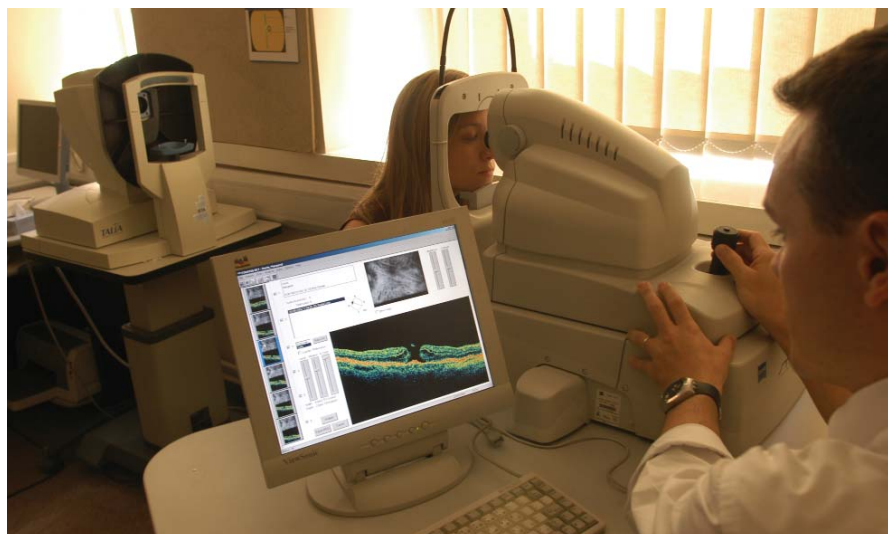
Join the team and
make a difference

Orthoptists assess and manage conditions associated with eye movement and co-ordination, such as a squint or lazy eye. Much of their work is with children to detect and correct vision problems at an early stage. Other patients may have problems associated with strokes, injuries or nerve disorders.

What will you do?

You will be a key part of the eyecare team, liaising with ophthalmologists, who diagnose and treat eye diseases, and opticians or optometrists who prescribe and dispense glasses or lenses. Your specialism will be eye movement and field of vision, assessing how well someone's eyes are working together. You'll be working in an eye hospital or regional centre, using precision assessment aids. You could often go out to schools to assess young children as they start primary education.

Your skills and knowledge will enable you to make accurate assessments of vision and visual field, even in babies. From the results, you will recommend treatment – a



programme of eye exercises, special glasses or an eye patch or, in some cases, surgery. It's important that you can advise and support children and their families through the course of treatment, so a friendly, sympathetic manner is essential.

Adult patients will come to you as a result of injury or a condition such as diabetes, which can cause vision defects. You'll be looking to discover how well the different eye muscles

Where will you work?

As an orthoptist in the NHS, you are likely to work in hospitals and clinics that specialise in eye care.

You might also work in schools, checking vision in new starters.

What skills and qualities will you need?

- precision and accuracy in your work
- the ability to relate to a wide range of people – colleagues, children and families
- good communication skills
- the ability to use precision equipment and interpret test results carefully
- a responsible, professional approach

and nerves are working and making a first diagnosis as a basis for treatment. In the case of injury, this may involve liaison with emergency and surgical departments to establish how much eye movement is being restricted by damage to the face.

What entry routes are available?

To practise as an orthoptist in the NHS you will need a degree in orthoptics recognised by the Health Professions Council (HPC). Before applying, it's important that you visit an orthoptics department to see the work for yourself.

The degree course takes three years, combining learning and study with block clinical placements. A minimum of 30 weeks' practical clinical experience is required before you can achieve professional qualification. Once you have the degree, you will need to register with the HPC to practise as an orthoptist.

How can you develop your career?

As your clinical experience grows you can move into more senior posts and clinical management, heading a team of orthoptists. You will have the opportunity to carry out further study and research, and you can become involved in teaching. As well as moving to more senior and specialised roles within this area, you will also have the chance to take on additional



responsibilities and progress within the organisation, as part of the Career Framework. For more information about this initiative please see the *Careers in the allied health professions* booklet.

Pay

The national pay system in the NHS is called Agenda for Change (AfC). This applies to all staff in the allied health professions except the most senior managers. These are examples of roles and the AfC bands at which they may be paid: orthoptist (Band 5); orthoptist specialist (Band 6); orthoptist advanced (Band 7). To find out more about pay bands, and to see the most up-to-date salary information, visit

[www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/
list/payandbenefits](http://www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/payandbenefits)

For more information on the range of opportunities available in the allied health professions, please visit www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/qualifications. This gives more specific details about what qualifications are necessary for each role. You can search for current vacancies and download job descriptions at www.jobs.nhs.uk

To find out more about careers in the allied health professions, please visit www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/working

For more information on the professional bodies relevant to the allied health professions, visit www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/contacts