

Audiology

Join the team and make a difference

Audiologists are professionals whose work includes diagnosing hearing loss, tinnitus and balance disorders, developing care plans for patients and helping to improve their quality of life.

What will you do?

Audiology is an extremely varied area and your work will range from testing, treating and counselling patients to researching and developing new and improved techniques.

The main objective of your work will be to assess and evaluate patients' hearing and balance problems, recommending ways to resolve or manage them.

The majority of people you see in your daily work will be young children or elderly people. However, loss of hearing, intrusive tinnitus and balance disorder are common symptoms so you will see people of all ages. You might see someone with a mild hearing disorder on the same day as someone who has a neurological condition that affects their balance. It's important to discuss with each patient what your findings mean for them.



You will work in a multidisciplinary team with other professionals within the NHS, including ear, nose and throat doctors, neurologists, clinical psychologists, paediatricians and speech and language therapists.

As well as carrying out the tests, you will explain the results to patients. It's important to understand their concerns and what impact these results might have on their lives.

| Where will you work? | What skills and qualities will you need? |
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| <p>You will typically work normal office hours in a hospital outpatient department, surgical theatre, hospital ward or a community setting.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an interest in the application of science |
| <p>Some audiologists also work in universities, research facilities, care homes or schools.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a caring and understanding attitude |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • analytical and problem-solving skills |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IT skills and ease with high-tech equipment |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • good communication skills |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to be comfortable with children and elderly people |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to work well as part of a team |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • good manual dexterity |

What entry routes are available?

To become a qualified audiologist, you will need to complete a BSc, MSc or postgraduate diploma in audiology. The BSc is a four-year undergraduate vocational course. The MSc and diploma are open to students who have a BSc in another science subject, such as biological sciences or physics. The NHS provides financial support to eligible students on NHS-funded courses. For more information, visit www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/students Either as part of these courses or through on-the-job training, you will also need to acquire assessed clinical skills. You will then be eligible to join the voluntary register of the Registration Council for Clinical Physiologists.

If you are currently employed in the field of audiology you can enter a foundation degree programme which will allow you to register and practise as an associate practitioner. The minimum entry requirements are GCSE Maths and English (minimum grade C) and two good A Levels, one a science.

If you have a first-class or upper second-class degree in a relevant subject, you may be eligible to join the NHS Clinical Scientists Training Scheme. This is a four-year programme of in-depth training in a specialist area, usually leading to an MSc or specialist postgraduate diploma and registration with the Health Professions Council. For more information, visit www.nhsclinicalscientists.info

With GCSEs or an equivalent NVQ and/or previous work experience it is often possible to start work as a trainee or assistant in healthcare science, combining on-the-job training with study so that you learn as you earn. These roles include healthcare assistant in audiology and hearing screeners for newborn babies. See also the *Clinical support worker* factsheet.

Some NHS organisations also offer apprenticeships, which involve a two-year training programme that gives you experience of different jobs within healthcare science.

For more information on the range of opportunities in healthcare science, please go to www.nhs Careers.nhs.uk/list/qualifications.

This gives more specific details about what qualifications are necessary for each type of role. You can search for current vacancies and download job descriptions at www.jobs.nhs.uk

How can you develop your career?

Once qualified, audiologists will often start to specialise in areas such as hearing loss and tinnitus management, paediatrics, balance disorders, or in advanced hearing devices like cochlear implants. You could also move into research or teaching and training audiologists as they come into the NHS.

With training, responsibility and experience, you could reach the highest level in the profession, attaining consultant status.

To find out what training is available in this area, please visit

www.nhs Careers.nhs.uk/list/training

You will have the opportunity to take on additional clinical, teaching, research and management responsibilities as part of the Career Framework. For more information about this initiative, please see the *Careers in healthcare science* booklet.

Pay

Agenda for Change (AfC) is the national pay system for the NHS. This applies to all staff except doctors, dentists and very senior managers. These are examples of roles and the AfC bands at which they may be paid: healthcare science support worker (Band 2); clinical support worker – healthcare science (Band 3); healthcare science assistant (Band 4); healthcare science practitioner (Band 5); healthcare science specialist (Band 6); healthcare science advanced (Band 7); healthcare science consultant (Band 8a-c). For more information, visit www.nhs Careers.nhs.uk/list/payandbenefits

To find out more about careers in healthcare science, please go to
www.nhs Careers.nhs.uk/list/working

For contact details including professional bodies, visit
www.nhs Careers.nhs.uk/list/contacts