

Estates services

Join the team and
make a difference

The estates team works together to make sure the hospital environment is a safe, welcoming place. From making sure that all waste is quickly and properly disposed of to keeping the grounds restful and attractive, estates team members are active in making the hospital as pleasant as possible for patients, visitors and staff. If you enjoy practical, hands-on work or you like design planning and technology, then a career in NHS estates could be for you.

What will you do?

Architect

The NHS owns a huge number of buildings, some of historic value. As an architect you will design extensions and renovations to these buildings, as well as build new ones. Your expertise will be particularly important for the many listed buildings. You will take up the twin challenge of providing modern surroundings for cutting-edge healthcare while preserving our heritage. You will be based in a central office but will move between locations and spend time on site.

Bricklayer

You will work on new buildings, and on extensions and repairs to existing buildings, under the direction of the maintenance or estates manager. You'll be involved in the day-to-day work of keeping the hospital exterior in good condition. You might also have the satisfaction of being involved in a major construction project lasting several months. You might work on your own, with one or two colleagues or as part of a large construction or decorating team.



Caretaker

As caretaker you will have a varied working life in the security and maintenance field. For example, you might dispose of clinical and other waste, move furniture and equipment as needed, supervise car parks and help the skilled maintenance team with their work. You might be the only caretaker on the site but you'll have a lot of contact with other staff. You might work some nights and/or weekends. Depending on your role, you might also have a small amount of paperwork to complete.

Carpenter

Under the direction of the maintenance or estates manager you will use your skills in the upkeep of the interior and exterior of hospital buildings. You will be involved in regular extensions and repairs and possibly on long-term new building projects. You will probably work with other carpenters but might work on your own for smaller jobs.

Electrician

It is essential that hospital systems and machinery run smoothly at all times. As an electrician in the NHS, you will be responsible for vital maintenance and repair work, some of it on specialist and life-saving equipment. You might also be called out in an emergency to repair a device at a patient's home. You could work on your own, or together with other electricians or with people from other technical or building trades, depending on the job in hand.

Engineer

As an engineer in the NHS, you will be part of a highly skilled technical workforce. Whatever your grade, there are huge opportunities in helping to design and maintain our massive range of specialist buildings, systems and equipment.

Estates manager

In this very senior position, you will be in charge of all aspects of the maintenance of hospital buildings, machinery and grounds, heading a large team and controlling a large budget. You will take major decisions on a regular basis. You will work directly with professional staff such as architects and engineers and with senior managers from other hospital departments.

Estates technician

You will use your expert skills to test and maintain certain types of essential equipment such as fire alarms and the sterilisers used to decontaminate surgical equipment after use. You might also be called out to a patient's home to test a vital medical device or to carry out an emergency repair. You'll work on your own on smaller jobs, but with colleagues when required.

Gardener and grounds staff

Pleasant, attractive grounds make all the difference to a hospital. As a gardener you could gain great satisfaction by, for example, designing a quiet garden where patients could relax. Your daily role might include looking after plants growing outside of buildings and in and around car parks, lopping trees, mowing lawns and planting and weeding borders.

Painter

The first impression of a hospital is important to patients and their relatives and painters help ensure a fresh, clean appearance, inside and outside. Your work will mainly involve redecorating existing buildings although you might have the chance to help shape a new development. You might have the wider job title of decorator, also doing wallpapering and small plastering and tiling jobs. You might work on your own, with one or two colleagues or as part of a large construction or decorating team, depending on the size of the job.

Plumber

Hospitals must have efficient plumbing to help prevent infection and to keep frail and sick patients warm and comfortable. You will install plumbing and heating systems into new buildings, and maintain and repair existing systems and equipment. You could work on your own, with other plumbers or with a team from the other technical or building trades, depending on the job.

Surveyor

As a surveyor you will be a key member of the estates team, working alongside architects and engineers on one of our exciting new construction projects or on major renovations and extensions to existing buildings. Your skills will be essential to the challenge of helping preserve the many wonderful listed buildings belonging to the NHS, while at the same time providing the right environment for cutting-edge healthcare. You could be based at a hospital or trust headquarters, but will also move around the site or between sites. You might spend some of your time outside in all weathers.

Tiler

As with painters, your work will make an important contribution to patients' impression of the hospital. You might work on new buildings but more usually you'll be redecorating existing buildings, both inside and out. You might have the wider job title of decorator, carrying out a variety of related tasks. You might work on your own, with one or two colleagues or as part of a large construction or decorating team, depending on the size of the job.

Role	Where will you work?	What skills and qualities will you need?
Architect	Registration with Royal Institute of British Architects, which requires a recognised degree and higher diploma.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • flair for design • mathematical ability • interest in building heritage • problem-solving skills
Bricklayer, carpenter, painter, tiler	As a bricklayer, carpenter, painter or tiler you will work on a hospital site or move between sites.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • attention to detail • awareness of safety issues • respect for patients' privacy and dignity • ability to work alone or as part of a team
Caretaker	As a caretaker, you might be based at a hospital, head office, staff accommodation block or community health centre, and move between buildings as needed. You might work some nights and/or weekends.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • alert, responsible approach • discretion – if you're working in or near wards or treatment areas • adaptability – you might be expected to do a range of different jobs
Electrician	As an electrician, you will probably be based in a workshop but will move anywhere on the site as needed. You might work shifts or be on call in case of equipment failure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • awareness of safety issues • respect for patients' privacy and dignity • ability to work quickly under pressure – you might be relied on to repair emergency equipment
Engineer	Technicians need a BTEC/HND/NVQ level 3/4 or equivalent. For more senior roles you will need to be qualified as an incorporated engineer. For the most senior roles you will be a chartered engineer.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • flair for technology • practical ability • accuracy • problem-solving skills
Estates manager	As an estates manager, you will be based in a central office at the trust headquarters, probably a hospital, but will spend much of your time moving between buildings or sites.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • organisational ability • leadership skills • excellent communication skills
Estates technician	As an estates technician, you will probably spend some of your time in a workshop but will also need to move around the hospital site. You might do shift work and be on call.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • awareness of safety issues • respect for patients' privacy and dignity • speed – in some roles you will be on call in case of emergency equipment failure
Gardener/grounds staff	As a gardener or member of the grounds staff, you'll work anywhere in the grounds, either at one site or at several, as part of a dedicated team.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ability to work outside in all weathers • adaptability – you might be expected to do a range of different jobs • ability to work as part of a team
Plumber	As a plumber you will move around on the hospital site as needed. You will work normal hours but might sometimes be on call in case of emergency.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • awareness of safety issues • respect for patients' privacy and dignity • ability to work quickly under pressure – you may be on call in case of emergency equipment failure
Surveyor	Usually you will need to be a chartered surveyor, but some opportunities exist to join with a degree accredited by the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors and then work towards chartered status.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mathematical ability • problem-solving skills • technical skills

What entry routes are available?

If you want to join the NHS as an estates manager, you will need to be a chartered engineer, chartered surveyor or registered architect. Estates technicians will need a BTEC, HND or NVQ level 3 or 4. For more information about the Architects Registration Board, see www.arb.org.uk

If you are joining as a craftsman or craftswoman you will usually need a specific vocational qualification (City and Guilds or NVQ), although previous experience or proven ability may be accepted. Gardeners and grounds staff will usually need a Royal Horticultural Society certificate, NVQ or BTEC. Again, though, proven experience may be accepted instead. In all these roles, it may be possible to join with no qualifications and learn on the job.

For more information on the range of opportunities available in the wider healthcare team, 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

How can you develop your career?

Wherever you start in the estates team you will find plenty of opportunities and support to make the most of your career. If you join with no qualifications, you can learn on the job alongside a technician. You might then decide to study part time for a City & Guilds certificate or NVQ that will set you on the path to a skilled career. Some NHS trusts offer apprenticeships in building skills combining practical learning with college study.

If you come in as a qualified craftsman or craftswoman, you could study for a BTEC in engineering and then for an HNC/HND. You

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could then go on to take a degree and a postgraduate qualification. All the time, you would be moving up the career ladder.

Eventually you could move into estates management or you could specialise in a technical field, such as systems design. Find out more about what training is open to you, and how you can develop your career, at www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/training. 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 wider healthcare team* booklet.

Pay

The national pay system in the NHS is called Agenda for Change (AfC). This applies to all staff in the wider healthcare team except the most senior managers. These are examples of roles and the AfC bands at which they may be paid: estate maintenance worker (Bands 3-5); estates officer – entry level (Band 5); estates manager – operations (Band 7). For more information, visit www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/payandbenefits

To find out more about careers in the wider healthcare team, please visit www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/working

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