

# Support services

Join the team and  
make a difference

Today's healthcare trusts often consist of many buildings, on one or more sites. Patients, staff and clinical items often need to be moved efficiently between sites and this is a key role of the support services team. Support staff are also responsible for important areas such as security, fire safety and supplies.

## What will you do?

### Audiovisual (AV) technician

In this multimedia age, attractive presentations are an increasingly important part of conferences, study days and workshops. Working with a wide range of media, you will produce lively, creative material, both clinical and non-clinical, for training sessions and other events, as well as helping to stage them. You might work on your own or with other AV technicians, depending on the size of your department.

### Driver

Drivers ensure that vital supplies and essential NHS staff arrive when and where they are needed. As part of the transport team, you might also be involved in a patient transport service, taking patients who might be frail or disabled to and from important clinic appointments or home from hospital after discharge. You might also deliver pathology samples, blood supplies and drugs.

### Fire safety officer

In this highly responsible role, you will ensure that the entire hospital site is as safe as possible from the risk of fire. You'll make



sure that electrical systems are safe, fire-fighting equipment is well maintained and fire doors and escape routes meet requirements. You will also give staff training sessions in fire prevention and emergency procedures, particularly in evacuating large numbers of very ill patients. You might work on your own or with a colleague but you will have a lot of contact with other staff, including the estates team.

### Messenger

As a messenger in the NHS, you will need to develop a sound knowledge of trust premises and the local area in general. You will be relied on for speed and efficiency in urgent situations. You'll work as part of a team and will have a lot of contact with other staff.

## Support services

### Porter

Patients often need to be moved safely and comfortably around the hospital and this will be your responsibility as a porter. You'd need to be able to move bulky beds expertly while treating patients with respect, reassuring them when necessary. You will be part of a team, trained to transport equipment around the site, some of which needs expert handling.

### Security staff

In this role, you will need to combine vigilance with a thorough knowledge of the premises. The safety of patients, visitors and staff will be your responsibility, as will the protection of valuable equipment. You will know when and how to diffuse potentially difficult situations and be able to react appropriately in an emergency. At a large hospital, you will be part of a major 24-hour security operation. You will have constant contact with patients and staff.

### Sterile services staff

Good hygiene and preventing cross-infection are top priorities for hospital managers, so sterile services staff carry out vital work. Working as part of a specialist team, you will decontaminate a wide range of different medical devices and equipment, such as those used in the operating theatre, and reassemble them for safe re-use.

### Storekeeper

In this role, you will make sure that the huge number of supplies essential to healthcare are delivered on time and reach the right wards and departments as they are needed. You will also be responsible for stocktaking so your job will involve some paperwork. You will probably work with several storekeepers.



### Theatre support worker

In this role you will be an essential part of the operating department team. You will transfer patients, who might be very ill or anxious, between the wards and the operating theatre. You'll also look after vital theatre equipment, such as oxygen cylinders, and ensure that the operating area stays clean and tidy. You'll work with orderlies and with other members of the team, such as theatre nurses.

The safety of patients, visitors and staff will be your responsibility, as will the protection of valuable equipment

Role	Where will you work?	What skills and qualities will you need?
Audiovisual (AV) technician	As an audiovisual technician, you will probably be based in an editing suite at a teaching hospital or postgraduate education centre.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• attention to detail</li> <li>• technical aptitude</li> <li>• organisational ability</li> </ul>
Driver	As a driver, you will probably be one of a team based at a hospital or central depot. You might work shifts, including some evenings and weekends.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reliability</li> <li>• friendly, sympathetic manner</li> <li>• driving experience and clean driving licence</li> </ul>
Fire safety officer	As a fire safety officer, you will work at a hospital or other trust premises.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• awareness of health and safety issues</li> <li>• vigilance</li> <li>• communication skills</li> </ul>
Messenger	As a messenger, you will work at a hospital. You might work shifts, depending on your employer.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reliability</li> <li>• local knowledge</li> </ul>
Porter	As a porter, you will work at a hospital site. You will probably work shifts, including evenings and weekends.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reliability</li> <li>• reassuring manner</li> <li>• understanding of patients' right to privacy and dignity</li> </ul>
Security staff	As a member of the security staff, you could be based at a hospital or in the community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• alert, responsible approach</li> <li>• conflict resolution skills</li> <li>• calm, confident manner</li> </ul>
Sterile services staff	As a member of the sterile services staff, you will work normal hours in a central decontamination unit within a hospital.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• responsible approach</li> <li>• awareness of health and safety issues</li> <li>• attention to detail</li> </ul>
Storekeeper	As a storekeeper you might be based in a hospital or at one of our distribution centres around the country.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reliability</li> <li>• attention to detail</li> </ul>
Theatre support worker	As a theatre support worker or operating department orderly you will be based in a hospital theatre, working shifts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• awareness of health and safety issues</li> <li>• reassuring manner when transporting patients</li> <li>• understanding of patients' right to privacy and dignity</li> </ul>

### What entry routes are available?

If you want to join the NHS as an audiovisual technician, you will need a City and Guilds certificate in audiovisual techniques or the equivalent. Fire safety officers are usually fire-fighters who have completed a recognised course on fire safety. You can join the sterile services staff as a technician and train on the job.

For the other roles in the support services team, there are no formal entry requirements. Employers will instead look for a responsible, mature approach and reliability.

For more information on the range of opportunities available in the wider healthcare team, please visit [www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/qualifications](http://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](http://www.jobs.nhs.uk)

### How can you develop your career?

Wherever you start in the support services team you will find plenty of opportunities and support to make the most of your career. Studying for a BTEC or NVQ could, for example, allow you to join the estates services or domestic services teams. Further experience and training can lead to management and supervisor roles.

The cadet scheme offered by some employers allows you to train to be a nurse or other healthcare professional, or as a healthcare assistant.

If you come in as a qualified audiovisual technician, you could study for a foundation degree in media. Further study and training could lead to a management role in health informatics or general healthcare.

## Further study and training could lead to a management role in health informatics or general healthcare

Find out more about what training is open to you, and how you can develop your career, at

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

A new national pay system – Agenda for Change (AfC) – was introduced across the NHS in October 2004. 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: porter (Band 1); security officer (Band 2); fire safety officer (Band 5).

For more information, visit [www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/payandbenefits](http://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](http://www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/working)

**For contact details including professional bodies, visit**  
[www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/contacts](http://www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/contacts)