Welcome to the NHS

The NHS offers a huge range of exciting and challenging opportunities for people who are passionate about making a difference.

With more than 350 different careers on offer, there is a job for you no matter what your skills, interests or qualifications.

What’s more, you’ll be given every opportunity to build on your skills and learn new ones as part of the Career Framework – a system that demonstrates our commitment to skills development. See pages 10 and 11 for more information about this.

Scientists, accountants, porters, psychologists, nurses, information technologists and estate managers, to name but a few, are all needed to ensure the smooth running of the NHS. These people, and many more, work together as a team to deliver the very best care for our patients.

To find out more about becoming a member of the NHS team, call 0345 60 60 655, email advice@nhscareers.nhs.uk or visit www.nhscareers.nhs.uk

We look forward to hearing from you!
Foreword

If you want to work in an environment that's interesting, rewarding and challenging, a career in nursing will give you plenty of scope to do exactly that.

Nurses form the largest group of staff in the NHS and are a crucial part of the healthcare team. Nurses work in every sort of health setting from accident and emergency to working in patients’ homes, with people of all ages and backgrounds. So, if you've got an interest in caring for people, you'll find a role that suits you in nursing.

Some nurses begin their career by working their way up from support roles, which require no set qualifications, and go on to train for a registered nursing degree or diploma, which qualifies them to work as a nurse. Others apply straight to university to undertake their studies. Whatever route you take, you'll need to gain a degree or diploma in nursing, during which the NHS will support you. For instance, your tuition fees will usually be paid and you may be eligible for a bursary.

Once you are part of the NHS, you’ll benefit from flexible working arrangements, excellent benefits and a wealth of opportunities to help you fulfil your ambitions and progress up the career ladder. There are few professions that offer so much in terms of job satisfaction and support, while giving you the chance to enhance people's lives during their times of need.

The NHS Careers team

For more information about working in nursing, please visit
www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/working

If you have any questions, call our helpline on 0345 60 60 655 or email advice@nhscareers.nhs.uk
The NHS – a rewarding place to work

There are very few careers as rewarding as one in the NHS, or that give you the opportunity to work with such a wide variety of people.

We actively recruit people of all ages, backgrounds and levels of experience. This helps us understand the different needs of the patients we serve every day and provide the best possible service.

Whichever area you join, you become part of a talented, passionate team of people – committed to providing the best care and treatment to patients. You will also enjoy one of the most competitive and flexible benefits packages offered by any employer in the UK.

Benefits of working in the NHS
Everyone who joins the NHS is guaranteed a salary that matches their ability and responsibilities, and given every opportunity to increase it through training and development.

You will receive at least 27 days’ holiday each year, plus a range of other benefits, including occupational health and counselling services.

Join one of the UK’s best pension schemes
The NHS Pension Scheme is one of the most generous and comprehensive in the UK. Every new employee automatically becomes a member and you will get an excellent package of pension benefits, fully protected against inflation and guaranteed by the government.

For more information about the pension, and a full list of the benefits included, please visit www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/payandbenefits

PAY AND CONDITIONS

The NHS pay system, known as Agenda for Change, offers real benefits for all directly employed staff except doctors, dentists and very senior managers, including:
- a standard working week of 37.5 hours
- holiday entitlement of 27 days a year, plus eight general and public holidays, rising to 33 days after 10 years of service
- pay enhancements to reward out of hours, shift and overtime working
- better career and pay progression based on the application of knowledge and skills
- annual personal development reviews to support career aspirations.

Other benefits of working in the NHS include training, occupational health services, automatic membership of the NHS Pension Scheme (unless you choose to opt out) and study leave for sponsored courses.

To find out more about the different Agenda for Change pay bands and to see the most up-to-date starting salaries for each one, visit www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/payandbenefits
The NHS is committed to offering development and learning opportunities for all full-time and part-time staff.

No matter where you start within the NHS, you’ll have access to extra training and be given every chance to progress within the organisation.

You will receive an annual personal review and development plan to support your career progression.

You will be encouraged to extend your range of skills and knowledge and take on new responsibilities through the Knowledge and Skills Framework.

See pages 10 and 11 for more on the Career Framework and examples of how other employees have progressed through the NHS.
CASE STUDY

Name: Chris Dzikiti

Job title: modern matron, East London NHS Foundation Trust

Entry route: nursing diploma

Chris decided to leave his career in banking after being inspired by his cousin’s enthusiasm for nursing. He now works as a modern matron and manages a budget of over £2 million.

After I decided to leave banking, I started doing my nursing diploma. My first placement in elderly care was fascinating – the patients were as interested in me as I was in them. Midwifery was exciting, as I knew nothing about childbirth. Before I finished my diploma I was already planning my career.

I wanted a challenging specialty where I’d really get to know my patients. Mental health seemed perfect: the patients love to talk, and the nurses don’t wear uniforms. I like people knowing who I am purely by the way I handle myself.

To gain the right skills, I studied part time for my nursing degree and then took a masters in Transcultural Psychiatry, which gave me an insight into how mental disorders and their treatment can be influenced by cultural and ethnic factors.

I also spent a year as unit manager in a private hospital, which really opened my eyes to financial management.

Two years later, these skills helped bring me to my current position as modern matron for a mental health unit. Our team includes ward managers, nurses, psychologists and psychiatrists, and my budget is just over £2 million. I never imagined I’d be responsible for so much, but I’ve become an astute budget manager who gets value for money.

As my career has developed, I’ve been careful to maintain my patient focus and I still get involved with new admissions. People lose so much when they suffer from mental illness: jobs, relationships, physical health, even the ability to look after themselves. It’s incredibly satisfying to help someone get their life back, watch them regain their skills and give them hope and aspirations.

I also do lots of training on mental health issues. I presented at a conference hosted by the National Association of Psychiatric Intensive Care Units, and was recently appointed honorary lecturer at City University. It’s amazing how much confidence this career can give you. Ten years ago I never thought I’d give a lecture to 200 people. Now, I feel I can do anything and talk to anyone.

Friends of mine in accounting and banking say they’ve never changed someone’s life for the better. I have. On Sundays, they dread going to work the next day. I can’t wait.
Helping you find the right work-life balance

The NHS is committed to maintaining a healthy work-life balance for all NHS staff. There is a real focus on specific areas that are designed to make your life easier at certain times during your career. These include:

- flexible working and retirement
- childcare provision and support for carers in the workplace
- coping with stress
- training and development
- tackling discrimination, bullying and harassment.

Manage your commitments in and out of work

The size and diversity of the NHS means we can offer you a range of flexible working opportunities.

Part-time roles and jobshare opportunities are often available, as well as term-time only, evening and weekend positions. We will do everything we can to help you combine your work for us with commitments in your life outside work – whether you’re studying for a new qualification, raising a family or juggling other responsibilities.

Many people in the NHS take an extended break to look after young children or other dependents who need special care, or to study full time.

We will help you combine your work for us with commitments in your everyday life.

As well as advice and support for people looking after sick or elderly relatives, we provide a range of childcare services for NHS employees, including:

- nursery care
- after-school and breakfast clubs
- holiday play schemes
- emergency care.

Get more information about the benefits and opportunities offered by the NHS at [www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/payandbenefits](http://www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/payandbenefits)

You can find more information on health and well-being at work at [www.nhsemployers.org/healthyworkplaces](http://www.nhsemployers.org/healthyworkplaces)
Your career as a nurse

Patients from all walks of life and with all types of health problems depend on the professional skills and care of the nurses who work in the NHS.

Whether working in the community or in a hospital environment, nurses at all levels are relied upon to listen to patients, recognise their needs and respond in a way that puts the individual first.

It’s a highly responsible job, and challenges will be part of your career, making each day different. Knowing how to deal with the unexpected comes with experience, training and the support of colleagues including doctors, therapists, assistants and healthcare scientists, who form dynamic teams where learning never stops. A combination of people skills and initiative is essential for the hands-on care that nurses are required to provide.

Healthcare is continuously changing as new drugs and treatments are developed. You’ll need to keep up to date with research and evidence, especially if you choose to take on additional prescribing duties.

Nursing is a varied and deeply satisfying career. You could be running a vaccination clinic, treating a car crash victim in A&E or just chatting to a nervous patient. One of the most rewarding aspects of nursing is working with older people and helping them retain the independence that is so important to them. Whichever branch of nursing you choose, you’ll be making a significant difference to people’s lives.

Communication skills are vital
To relate to patients and colleagues, you’ll need to enjoy communicating with people of all backgrounds. It’s important to see beyond a patient’s medical problem and relate to the individual.
CASE STUDY

Name: Suzanna Cousin

Job title: student district nurse, Milton Keynes Primary Care Trust

Entry route: degree in nursing, now completing a district nursing qualification

Suzanna’s ambition to be a nurse began in childhood. She is now part of a district nursing team, providing care to patients in their own homes and she cherishes the autonomy of community nursing.

I had wanted to be a nurse since I was a child and during the various placements on my degree course I realised that working in the community came closest to my idea of what nursing is about. In my last community placement as a student, I was given my own caseload to work with under supervision. I really loved it.

After qualifying, I worked in A&E for a short period. Then I got a job as a community nurse with a primary care trust (PCT). After two years I moved here and am now being sponsored by the PCT to study for a community specialist practitioner degree. I’m learning more about management and team leadership, and about the implications of the policy shift towards more community-based care. I will leave with a district nurse qualification and will be a team leader, which is quite special for someone of my age!

Why do I like nursing in the community? I like the greater autonomy you have in the way you treat and manage patients, the fact that your patients feel less stressed and anxious than in hospital wards and the close teamwork with a wide range of other professionals in health and social care. The regular hours are also a plus point – I might work one weekend in four or five but otherwise it’s a normal working day.

You need very good interpersonal skills and a wide knowledge base. In the community, you have the opportunity to look at people holistically; you have to be aware of their whole home situation, not just their condition. It’s my job to assess and support patients, then co-ordinate a care package to give them the help they need. In future, it’s going to be more and more important that people are well looked after in their own homes.
There are various specialty branches within nursing; mental health, children’s, adult and learning disabilities. This allows you to focus on the needs of a particular client group during your nursing career.

Similarly, nurses can choose to work in a general nursing environment or choose a role working in a school or prison, for example. Nurses can also combine a clinical career in education or research. Whatever branch of nursing appeals, there is plenty of scope to move around the NHS, to work in different settings and progress up the career ladder if you wish.

**More opportunities in the community**

As healthcare increasingly moves away from hospital, the settings in which you can work will expand. Nurses are central to this change and future career options are likely to include a greater amount of community-based roles for specialist nurses working to support patients with long-term conditions at home.

Some nurses will work in GP practices and in locations such as care homes, clinics, community hospitals, surgeries and schools as well as in health promotion to encourage people to live healthily and prevent illness. Others may choose to work in hospitals. Some of these roles will be outside of the NHS, as more organisations help to provide NHS services to patients.

As hospital stays become shorter, demand for district and other community-based nurses will increase. New opportunities are emerging for nurses, including those who are newly qualified, to work in general practice and the community, coupled with more roles for senior nurses to lead and manage multidisciplinary teams.

Whatever your chosen speciality, you will be able to benefit from the flexibility, support and learning opportunities offered by the NHS throughout all stages of your career.

For information about the qualifications needed to work in nursing, see the ‘Getting started’ section on page 19 or visit www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/qualifications
Name: Clare Barton

Job title: advanced neuroscience nurse practitioner, North Bristol NHS Trust

Entry route: degree in adult nursing

Clare started her career as a dental nurse in a hospital but soon realised she enjoyed the challenges found in neuroscience and now works as an advanced neuroscience nurse practitioner.

While at school I hadn’t really considered doing a degree, but training and working as a hospital dental nurse showed me I could achieve more than I realised. This encouraged me to study for my degree in adult nursing.

After qualifying, I worked on an adult neurosurgery department and high dependency unit, caring for patients with spine or brain problems. The thought of nursing patients like this seemed scary at first, as they seemed so complex, but I was soon enjoying the challenge. It’s fast-paced, with so much to learn.

While in my first role, I helped set up a nurse-led clinic aimed at getting the best pain relief possible for patients with long-term back and leg problems. We were the first nurses to set up something like this in the area and the data we collected at the clinic was published in a medical journal. I hadn’t thought I’d be published so soon after qualifying.

After three years of working on the neurosurgery ward, I was promoted and asked to develop a brand new role: neuroscience nurse practitioner. I started to take on some of the responsibilities previously handled by other healthcare professionals such as doctors, including assessing patients before an operation.

Three years later, I was promoted again to advanced neuroscience nurse practitioner. Now I lead a 14-strong team of specialised nurse practitioners and work as a senior manager. While I still see patients every day, I also look at other issues, such as ways to reduce how long patients have to stay and how to improve patient outcomes. I work with everyone from anaesthetists and surgeons to specialist nurses and GPs.

Probably the best thing about a nursing degree is how it opens up career paths. As a graduate nurse you can quickly specialise in some really exciting roles, if you put the work in. The opportunities I’ve had have been amazing; I’ve already taken two postgraduate degrees.
The Career Framework has been designed to improve career development and job satisfaction for NHS employees.

It encourages individuals to learn new skills and take on extra responsibilities that enable them to progress within the organisation. Many people take on additional responsibility within their own area, while others retrain and move in to different roles.

The case study on page 9 describes how Clare Barton has progressed in her nursing career. You can follow

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ambulance service professions</th>
<th>Allied health professions</th>
<th>Dental care professions</th>
<th>Healthcare science</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>9 More senior staff</strong></td>
<td>Clinical director of service</td>
<td>Director of therapies</td>
<td>Director of regional genetics services</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>8 Consultant practitioners</strong></td>
<td>Consultant paramedic</td>
<td>Consultant occupational therapist</td>
<td>Consultant clinical scientist (medical physics)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>7 Advanced practitioners</strong></td>
<td>Advanced paramedic</td>
<td>Specialist speech and language therapist</td>
<td>Specialist respiratory physiologist</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>6 Senior practitioners/ specialist practitioners</strong></td>
<td>Specialist paramedic</td>
<td>Senior occupational therapist</td>
<td>Senior dental technologist</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>5 Practitioners</strong></td>
<td>Paramedic</td>
<td>Dietitian</td>
<td>Dental technician</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>4 Assistant practitioners/ Associate practitioners</strong></td>
<td>Control room manager</td>
<td>Assistant clinical psychologist</td>
<td>Dental therapist</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>3 Senior healthcare assistants/technicians</strong></td>
<td>Emergency medical dispatcher</td>
<td>Rehabilitation assistant</td>
<td>Dental hygienist</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>2 Support workers</strong></td>
<td>Patient transport service driver</td>
<td>Therapy clinical support worker</td>
<td>Dental nurse</td>
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<td><strong>1 Initial entry level jobs</strong></td>
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her career path in the white boxes on the diagram below, alongside other potential paths in the different areas of the NHS.

The diagram below gives an illustration of a variety of NHS careers and where they may fit on the Career Framework. It is not exhaustive; details on other careers can be found in the relevant booklets and on the NHS Careers website.

Visit the NHS Careers website at [www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/working](http://www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/working)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Health informatics</th>
<th>Management</th>
<th>Midwifery</th>
<th>Nursing</th>
<th>Wider healthcare team</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Director of information management and technology</td>
<td>Director of human resources</td>
<td>Director of maternity services</td>
<td>Director of nursing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pictures archiving communication manager</td>
<td>Modern Matron</td>
<td>Consultant midwife</td>
<td>Lead advanced neuroscience nurse practitioner: clinical leadership and management of service delivery models in neurological nursing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clinical researcher</td>
<td>Head of accounts</td>
<td>Head of midwifery</td>
<td>Advanced neuroscience nurse practitioner: assessing patients with neurological conditions before an operation</td>
<td>Head of estates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systems analyst</td>
<td>Project manager</td>
<td>Community midwife</td>
<td>Senior staff nurse: caring for patients with spine and brain conditions on an adult neurosurgical ward</td>
<td>Chaplain</td>
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<tr>
<td>Librarian</td>
<td>Payroll manager</td>
<td>Midwife</td>
<td>Staff nurse: providing nursing care to patients in hospital</td>
<td>Catering manager</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clinical coder</td>
<td>General office manager</td>
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<td>Enrolled nurse</td>
<td>Medical secretary</td>
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<td>Medical records clerk</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Auxiliary nurse</td>
<td>Security officer</td>
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<td>Support desk assistant</td>
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<td>Healthcare assistant (maternity)</td>
<td>Maintenance assistant</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health records assistant</td>
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<td>Healthcare assistant (nursing)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Nurse cadet</td>
<td>Porter</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Name: Sarah Trute

Job title: community behaviour specialist – learning disabilities, Surrey and Borders Partnership NHS Foundation Trust

Entry route: diploma in learning disability nursing

Sarah sees patients in the community with learning disabilities and enjoys helping people reach their full potential.

On leaving school with GCSEs, I got a job as a PA, then as a project manager, working in the health and social care sectors. I worked for global drug companies, social services and the World Health Organisation. My career was strategic and interesting, but I never saw how my work directly affected people.

Going from senior project manager to newly qualified nurse involved a drop in pay, but it has definitely been worth it. Given my interest in autism and special needs, I chose to study for a learning disability nursing diploma at Kingston University, supported by a bursary and holiday temping jobs.

Learning disability nursing is quite different to other branches of nursing. The people you work with are differently abled – and may have social, mental, physical or sensory impairments – so the focus is not on ‘making people better’. It’s about enabling each person to reach their full potential, increase their independence and enjoy an improved quality of life.

I decided that community work was definitely for me, so I took further training to become a community behaviour specialist. The role lets you manage your own caseload and really get to know your clients.

Community behaviour specialists spend time assessing the whole person and their challenging behaviours. Interventions can be quite creative, like designing picture sequences to support skill learning, or making personalised reward charts. I’ve helped one client who self-harms to learn a safer way to express her feelings, which has been very effective.

My role is very people-oriented. I train and support residential staff teams, clients and parents, and work jointly with lots of health and social care practitioners. Working with staff teams and managing risk can be challenging at times but it’s very rewarding to see a client benefit from their positive behaviour support plan.

What I love most is helping a client achieve something that’s really important to them. Whether that’s teaching a new skill, preventing self-harm, or enabling them to access their local community.
What opportunities are available?

On the following pages you will find information of some of the many types of nursing that exist within the NHS.

To work as a nurse in the NHS, you must be registered with the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC), which means you’ll need a degree or diploma in nursing. From 2013, new entrants will need to enter through an approved degree in nursing, as the diploma route will no longer be available.

However, there are many ways in which you can become a registered nurse. For instance, you can work your way up from being a healthcare assistant (which may not require any qualifications), and progress to apply for a place on a degree or diploma course, or you can begin your professional study after gaining your A levels. (See the ‘Getting started’ section on page 19 for more information).

Depending on experience and training, there are plenty of opportunities for you to rise up the ranks to manage teams, run wards and even reach consultant level, if desired.

**Adult nursing**

Adult nurses work with adults of all ages with all types of health conditions. They juggle numerous priorities and use caring, counselling, managing, teaching and all aspects of interpersonal skills to improve the quality of patients’ lives, sometimes in difficult situations. Work may be based in hospital wards, clinics or, increasingly, community settings and you may do shift work to provide 24-hour care.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your work as an adult nurse will involve:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• being part of a busy, multidisciplinary team that includes doctors, radiographers, physiotherapists and many others</td>
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<tr>
<td>• the use of initiative and high levels of observation</td>
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<tr>
<td>• working in a fast-changing, demanding environment</td>
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<tr>
<td>• assessing what is best for the patient and acting on your decision</td>
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<tr>
<td>• a willingness to take responsibility for people’s well-being</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• a commitment to continued learning throughout your career</td>
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**Mental health nursing**

As many as one in four people will have a mental health problem at some point in their life, regardless of their age or background. Conditions range from personality and psychological disorders to neuroses and psychoses.

Nurses who choose to specialise in the mental health branch of nursing – a complex and demanding area – work with GPs, psychiatrists, psychologists, and others, to help care for patients with mental illnesses. Increasingly, care is given in the community, with mental health nurses visiting patients and their families at home, in residential centres, in prisons or in specialist clinics or units. You may do shift work to provide 24-hour care. This is a valuable role that provides much reward and satisfaction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your work as a mental health nurse will involve:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• a great deal of autonomy in planning and delivering patient care within the healthcare team</td>
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<tr>
<td>• opportunities to specialise in areas such as alcohol and drug misuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• the use of excellent communication skills and an ability to empathise with people and understand their problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• liaising with a patient’s family and listening to and advising those who live with or care for the patient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• dealing with occasional aggression in a sensitive and effective way</td>
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Children’s nursing

This branch of nursing involves working with children of all ages with many conditions. Children's nurses deal with a range of situations, including babies born with heart complications, teenagers who have sustained broken limbs, and child protection issues.

Health problems can affect a child's development and it's vital to work with the child's family or carers to ensure that he or she does not suffer additionally from the stress of being ill or in hospital. Children's nursing takes place in hospitals, day care centres, child health clinics and in the child's home. Like other branches of nursing, care is becoming more community-based. You may do shift work to provide 24-hour care.

Your work as a children's nurse will involve:
- the ability to respond to the challenges posed by caring for someone who is sick but may be too young to express what's wrong
- a keen awareness that a child’s health can rapidly take a turn for the worse – and the knowledge to deal with this
- using sensitivity and the ability to communicate without words
- having the confidence to work in partnership with the patient’s parents or carers and any siblings
- teaching the child’s parents or carers what may need to be done to carry on with treatment at home.

Learning disability nursing

Learning disability nurses work with patients, and often with their family carers, to provide specialist healthcare to people with a learning disability and help them to pursue a fulfilling life. For example, teaching someone the skills to find work can be significant in helping them to lead a more independent, healthy life where they can relate to others on equal terms.

Learning disability nursing is provided in settings such as adult education, residential and community centres, as well as in patients' homes, workplaces and schools. You could specialise in areas such as education, sensory disability or the management of services. Learning disability nurses work as part of a team alongside GPs, psychologists, therapists, teachers and social workers. If you work in a residential setting, you may do shifts to provide 24-hour care.

Your work as a learning disability nurse will involve:
- the use of a great deal of patience, sensitivity and excellent interpersonal skills
- willingness to be adaptable, flexible and prepared to act as an advocate for those you support to ensure that they do not suffer discrimination
- the ability to work in a demanding and stressful environment, where at times progress can be slow
- great satisfaction when someone has learned a new skill or can demonstrate new confidence in themselves thanks to your intervention.
District nursing
District nurses visit people of all ages, often in their own homes, GP surgeries or a residential home. Many patients are elderly; others may have disabilities, be recovering after a hospital stay, or have a terminal illness. You may do shift work to provide 24-hour care.

You’ll need to qualify and work as a registered nurse (see page 19) and then complete a degree-level specialist practitioner programme, which usually lasts at least one academic year, before you can become a district nurse. Funding or sponsorship may be available from your employing trust.

This is a rewarding role as you can work one-to-one with patients on an ongoing basis, which enables you to develop a trusting relationship while you improve their quality of life.

Your work as a district nurse will involve:
- working with a variety of people as part of a team that includes GPs, social services, voluntary organisations and NHS bodies, as well as working alone
- the capacity to be adaptable and put individuals at ease
- good organisational skills so you can plan your day to provide care for all those who need it
- visits to patients, some daily, some more frequent, to administer medication and monitor health
- teaching patients or their families how to carry out procedures such as administering injections
- helping patients with personal hygiene
- carrying out annual health checks and delivering health promotion programmes.

Neonatal nursing
Neonatal nurses work with newborn babies who are born sick or prematurely. Often, premature newborns have respiratory problems, which can be life-threatening if they are not treated promptly and monitored. Also, ill babies need to be fed in a specialised way in a highly controlled environment that is kept warm. You may do shift work to provide 24-hour care.

Neonatal nursing training programmes are part of continuing professional development and are normally studied as modules by registered adult and children’s nurses and midwives. As with other types of nursing, there are opportunities to progress to management, research and education, as well as nurse consultancy.

Your work as a neonatal nurse will involve:
- being a source of support to the baby’s family at a stressful and emotional time
- taking an active role in the multidisciplinary team looking after the child
- a strong degree of empathy
- the competence to operate in a busy, technical environment.
Health visiting

Health visitors are registered nurses or midwives who have done further training to work as vital members of the primary healthcare team, covering a specific geographical area.

They work with a network of organisations concerned with health and can be based in settings as diverse as people’s homes, schools, GP surgeries, shelters for the homeless and medical centres.

This is a role that will appeal to those who enjoy one-to-one nursing and want to work with autonomy while remaining part of a healthcare team. You’ll have opportunities to progress to manage a team of health visitors or to other NHS management roles.

You’ll need to qualify and be a registered nurse (see page 19) or midwife to start the degree-level training programme, which usually lasts a minimum of one year, full-time (there are also some part-time courses available), before you can become a health visitor.

You may receive financial support from your employer although this can depend on what course you take and where you live.

Health visitor recruitment in the NHS is currently taking place across England, with 4,200 being recruited between now and 2015.

For information about health visitor recruitment, visit www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/healthvisiting

Practice nursing

Practice nurses work in GP surgeries as part of a primary care team that is likely to include doctors, nurses, therapists and pharmacists. In smaller practices, you may be the sole nurse, whereas in larger surgeries, you may share duties with practice nurse colleagues. You may be required to work one or two evenings a week. As the range of healthcare services provided in the community increases, the role of the practice nurse is likely to expand. For example, you might get involved in prison nursing, which may mean doing shifts to provide 24-hour care.

To become a practice nurse, you need to qualify and have gained experience as a registered nurse (see page 19).

This role offers much scope and variety for those who have highly developed communication skills, enjoy working flexibly and are organised. Depending on your experience, you could be organising and running clinics, which will demand attention to detail, initiative and plenty of confidence. You’ll be employed by GP practices and may be able to work part-time. As a practice nurse, you will be able to apply for senior positions such as nurse practitioner, where you can manage your own caseload.

Your work as a practice nurse will involve:
- treating small injuries
- assisting with minor operations carried out under local anaesthetic
- health screening
- family planning
- running vaccination programmes (such as to protect against flu)
- managing well woman clinics
- supporting the healthcare team in its monitoring of conditions such as diabetes, high cholesterol and high blood pressure.
Prison nursing

Prison nurses are registered nurses based in prison. They are either employed by the prison service or, increasingly, by the NHS. Many prisoners suffer from substance abuse or have a mental health problem, making nursing in this environment challenging. By improving mental and physical health, the care provided by prison nurses may help to lower re-offending rates, and therefore have a positive impact on prisoners, their families and the wider public.

A background in mental health nursing may help. You may have opportunities to move between the NHS and the prison service through job share, job swap and secondment schemes, and, as in other types of nursing, you can undertake further training and apply for management roles. As a prison nurse, you may do shift work to provide 24-hour care.

Your work as a prison nurse will involve:
- delivering care and treatment within a custodial setting
- developing positive relationships with prisoners and treating them with compassion
- the use of excellent interpersonal skills
- dealing with individuals with substance abuse or mental health problems
- the need to understand the particular problems faced by your patients and those working in prisons.

School nursing

School nurses are usually employed by a primary care trust, local health authority, community trust or by individual schools. It is possible to go straight into this role after qualifying as a registered nurse. Experience of working with children, in child protection or health promotion will be beneficial.

Staff working as school nurses will usually work towards the Specialist Practitioner – School Nursing/Specialist Community Public Health Nurse qualification at degree and masters level.

Your work as a school nurse will involve:
- carrying out screening programmes
- providing information on drug and alcohol abuse
- administering immunisations
- providing health and sex education
- running health promotion or drop-in surgeries
- the use of excellent communication skills
- a non-judgemental approach.

For more information on working in your chosen career, visit
www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/working

To search for jobs, visit www.jobs.nhs.uk
Pat trained as a nurse in her 30s and gained experience during 12 years in the cardiac intensive care unit.

I started nursing initially as a cadet when I was 16, and started my nurse training when I was 18 but I didn’t complete the course at that time because I went to Australia and worked in different industries.

I came back to England, and in 1986, I answered an advertisement in the local paper for an auxiliary school nurse/health visitor. While I was in that post, my nurse manager encouraged me to do more training, as she said I had plenty of potential.

I completed my nurse training in 1993 and during the next 12 years, I went from being a novice nurse to an expert nurse in the cardiac intensive care unit at Blackpool, going from a newly qualified staff nurse to sister.

I progressed to practice development sister for the cardiac ward areas, covering the cardiothoracic and the cardiology wards. I enjoy the whole concept of working with the heart – it’s fascinating. There are very few days that go by where I don’t learn from something that’s happened.

No days are typical but I mainly support student nurses in the area. I orientate and organise training programmes for new starters to the ward clinical area; I support and assess staff on post-registration courses, cardiology courses and high-dependency courses. Teamwork is critical – you have to be able to fit in and learn from one another. I find it rewarding when, not only patients, but also the staff say that I’ve supported them and that it is obvious I care about them.

You need to have faith in yourself that you can do the job. Between 1981 and 1986 I was a cleaner at a local government building and it wasn’t until I was 37 that I went on to do my training – I qualified when I was 40.
Getting started

To work as a nurse in the NHS, you must hold a degree or diploma in nursing (a ‘pre-registration’ programme), which allows you to register with the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC). You can start your career at various levels, and be assured of practical and possibly financial support as you progress.

Work placements and volunteering
For those with no experience of working in the health service, or whose careers have been based in non-nursing environments, it is a good idea to spend some time making sure that it is the right career for you.

Securing a work placement or volunteering for your local trust, voluntary organisation or St John Ambulance can be beneficial. As well as showing universities that you are committed, this will give you opportunities to see what working life as a nurse may be like and talk to people in the profession. As openings for work placements and voluntary roles vary around the country, it’s best to speak to your local NHS or voluntary organisations to see what’s available.

Assistants and healthcare assistants
As a clinical support worker, also known as healthcare assistant, you’ll provide vital assistance to healthcare professionals for diagnosing, treating and caring for patients. These are all responsible and rewarding roles with a direct impact on patients’ lives. They also offer an ideal entry route to many NHS careers for people with commitment and enthusiasm rather than academic qualifications. See the Clinical support worker factsheet for further information.

Those who have worked in the NHS and have the academic ability to cope with the demands of a professional nursing course will find that their experience is an advantage when they apply for a place on a nursing degree or diploma, which will normally be part time and last for five or six years.

Cadet schemes and apprenticeships
Some trusts offer apprenticeships in healthcare, or cadet schemes. These offer placements at support worker level for around two years while providing you with an opportunity to work towards an NVQ qualification. Although many are aimed at young people, some programmes are open to people beyond school leaving age.

Apprentices and cadets are normally exposed to several areas of healthcare. Although the experience will enable you to work towards a vocational qualification, it will not count towards professional nurse training. Instead, an apprenticeship or cadet scheme aims to get you to the appropriate level so that you can apply to start a part-time pre-registration nursing programme, which usually lasts five or six years.

Professional training
When you are selecting your pre-registration degree or diploma, you will need to choose between the four branches of nursing: adult (general) nursing, mental health, learning disability and children’s (paediatric) nursing. A limited number of universities may offer the chance to train for two branches on the same course. All nursing degrees and diplomas consist of academic study (taught across all four branches of nursing) and practice learning placements, relevant to the chosen field.

If, for example, you choose to go into mental health nursing, the practice learning placements will be mainly concentrated in that environment, and will focus on patients with mental health problems. However, certain aspects of training will be common to all branches of nursing and there will often be opportunities to study alongside students on other healthcare courses.

All applicants must be numerate, literate and be of good character and health.
Full-time degree or diploma
If you have appropriate qualifications, you can apply directly to universities to undertake a full-time pre-registration degree or diploma of higher education in nursing. These courses are at least three years long and are a combination of 50 per cent academic study and 50 per cent supervised work placements in hospitals and the community. From 2013, new entrants will need to enter through an approved degree in nursing as the diploma route will no longer be available.

There is no national minimum academic entry requirement for nursing diplomas and degrees. It is up to each university to decide what they will accept but, on the whole, degree programmes usually require applicants to have at least five A-C grade GCSEs (including English language or literature and a science subject) and two A levels (or equivalent) – some universities require three A levels. For diploma courses, the requirement is generally five GCSEs at grade A-C (including English language or literature and a science subject), although you will usually need A levels as well.

Part-time study
Part-time pre-registration nursing courses are provided by some universities and normally last for five or six years.

Part-time nursing degrees and diplomas should be available to anyone working in the NHS – usually as a healthcare assistant with qualifications up to NVQ level 3 (or equivalent).

Those studying part-time courses could receive assistance from their employers in terms of time off or financial support. This varies between employers.

Accelerated diplomas for graduates with health degrees
Some universities will accredit an applicant’s previous theoretical and practice learning (such as a relevant degree or relevant practical experience) against the requirements of the pre-registration programme. This may mean that the student can complete the course in a shorter time. Up to one third of a three year programme can be accredited in this way.

Access courses
If you have no formal educational qualifications, you can take an Access to Higher Education course, which teaches skills around study and confidence in how to deal with the academic rigour of a university course. Access courses tend to be run by further education (FE) colleges around the country – and are often linked to a specific university course. In such cases, you may be interviewed by someone from the FE college as well as the university. You may be guaranteed a place on the university course on successful completion of an Access course.

Foundation degree
Another route into nursing is to study for a foundation degree. These tend to be part-time qualifications, often run in conjunction with FE colleges.

Someone on a foundation degree could secure a healthcare assistant role and work their way up to a place on a part-time nursing degree or diploma.

Speak to your careers advisor, call us on 0345 60 60 655 or email advice@nhscareers.nhs.uk to find out more.

For more information on training in the NHS visit www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/training

If you have no formal educational qualifications, you can take an Access to Higher Education course...
Funding
NHS Student Bursaries provides financial support to eligible students taking approved courses. To be eligible for financial support you must meet certain conditions.

Pay
Most jobs are covered by Agenda for Change (AfC) pay scales. This covers all NHS staff except doctors, dentists and senior managers. The NHS job evaluation system determines a points score, which is used to match jobs to pay bands and decide basic salary levels.

Each pay band has a number of pay points. Staff will normally progress to the next pay point annually until they reach the top of the pay band.

You could start your career at AfC band 2 as a clinical support worker (nursing), rising to band 5 as a registered nurse and then to nurse consultant at bands 8a–c.

Registration
You must ensure that your nursing degree or diploma course leads to registration with the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC), or you won’t be eligible to practice as a nurse in the UK. Check with your university or college.

For more information on pay and benefits visit
www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/payandbenefits

For more information about student funding, visit NHS Student Bursaries website at
www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/students

To get a list of approved institutions running nursing courses leading to registration, visit
www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/coursefinder
CASE STUDY

Name: Robert Dennis

Job title: ward manager, acute children’s ward, King’s College Hospital, London

Entry route: adult and children’s registered nursing diploma/degree

Robert was inspired to become a nurse in his late teens, after visiting relatives in hospital.

At first, I didn’t think about being a children’s nurse because I was visiting adults’ wards, but as it happened, my training placement at Alder Hey, Liverpool, was a year longer than normal and combined adult and children’s nursing, qualifying me to do both.

From being a staff nurse on a children’s ward, I undertook a variety of courses and worked my way up to become a ward manager. I could not over-emphasise how much support I have had within the NHS, particularly when it comes to having training to gain more skills and knowledge. Since joining King’s College Hospital, I have been given further opportunities to develop my management and leadership skills and these have given me greater confidence and opened up more options for my career path.

My ward deals with children with cystic fibrosis. We work very closely with our community children’s nurses as the NHS is increasingly moving towards more community-based care, which is a good thing.

Being ward manager is a mixture of clinical care – directing activities of the team on the ward to ensure that all patients receive the clinical care required – and being a role model, demonstrating to staff what is expected professionally, and being responsible for all aspects of a 16-bed acute ward that deals with any child who comes through the A&E department. We’ve got about 34 staff on the ward and I’m managerially responsible for them. There is also an element of having to manage finances and resources, so I look at the budget and make sure we are not overspending.

The NHS provides plenty of opportunities and there are options for career progression; I could go into a purely management role. I have a MBA, which I took with a view to going into general management, but I have decided my heart is in clinical care. I could also go on to become a consultant nurse.
What’s your next step?

We hope this booklet will have given you some idea of the many opportunities on offer for nurses in the NHS.

If you have decided that you want to join the NHS team as a nurse, your next step depends on your starting point. NHS Careers can provide further information on how to apply for training and you can also consult your local careers adviser or Connexions services.

If you need a degree, UCAS can advise on which universities offer the relevant courses. Universities will be able to tell you what qualities and characteristics they look for in applicants. For example, getting some work experience is an excellent way of showing your commitment and enthusiasm.

If you are considering a change of career, volunteering or shadowing an established professional in your spare time is a useful way to find out more about the field of work that you wish to pursue and can be invaluable in terms of making contacts.

Here is a checklist of things you should be doing, whether you’re still at school, studying for a degree or looking for a change in direction.

- Have you explored routes into your chosen career? You will need to gain a diploma or a degree in nursing but you could work your way up from healthcare assistant roles.
- Are there any particular skills or experience that will improve your chances of getting into your chosen career?
- Have you enquired about opportunities to volunteer or do relevant work experience?
- Have you investigated further qualifications you might need for your chosen role?
- Have you searched the NHS Jobs website or spoken to your local trust to get an idea of the type of vacancies available?

Whatever position you’re in right now, the NHS Careers service can help. For more information, please call 0345 60 60 655, email advice@nhscareers.nhs.uk or visit www.nhscareers.nhs.uk

To search for nursing jobs in the NHS, visit www.jobs.nhs.uk, and for more information about professional bodies please visit www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/contacts
Here are some other things you can be doing, depending on where you are right now. For all contact details, visit [www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/contacts](http://www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/contacts)

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<th>Where are you now?</th>
<th>What should you do now?</th>
<th>Who can help?</th>
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| **Studying for your GCSEs** | • Visit www.stepintothenhss.nhs.uk and register for more information on chosen careers.  
• Check what your likely exam grades/results will be.  
• Explore routes into your chosen career – will you need a degree or other qualification before you join, or will the NHS train you on the job? Can you start as an assistant?  
• Are there any particular skills or experience that will improve your chances of getting into your chosen career?  
• Enquire about volunteering or work experience.  
• Find out if you need any specific A levels, or equivalent qualifications.  
• Consider a 14-19 diploma.  
• Explore the availability of apprenticeships in nursing. | Subject teachers  
Your careers adviser/Connexions service  
Professional bodies  
NHS Careers |
| **Studying for A-levels or another course at your school or a local college** | **As GCSEs, plus:**  
• Investigate which universities offer the degree course you want.  
• Investigate any further qualifications you might need for your chosen role.  
• Search the NHS Jobs website at www.jobs.nhs.uk and speak to your local trust to get an idea of current vacancies.  
• Enquire about volunteering or work experience.  
• Explore the availability of apprenticeships in nursing. | Subject teachers  
Your careers adviser/Connexions service  
UCAS  
NHS Careers  
Professional bodies  
NHS Jobs |
| **At university** | **As A levels, plus:**  
• Take advice on whether it’s a good idea to switch your degree course.  
• Complete your current degree and look for post-graduate courses. | University careers service  
NHS Careers  
Professional bodies  
NHS Jobs |
| **Looking for a new career** | **As A levels, plus:**  
• Find out if you will need to retrain before you apply for new roles or if the NHS will train you while you are working. | Careers adviser/Connexions service (you may have to pay to use these services)  
NHS Careers  
Jobcentre Plus  
Professional bodies  
NHS Jobs  
UCAS |