

Optometrist

Optometrists are at the frontline of eye care. By carrying out detailed examinations, they are helping to improve eye health across the country.

By making a detailed examination of the eye, optometrists may be able to identify whether a patient has conditions such as diabetes or high blood pressure.

optometrist with patient

Working life

As an optometrist your role is to detect defects in vision, signs of injury, ocular diseases (diseases of the eye) or abnormality, and problems with general health.

As part of your role in a high street practice, you'll:

- make detailed examination of the health of the eyes
- offer clinical advice regarding eye health and vision correction
- prescribe spectacles or contact lenses. You might also dispense, fit and supply spectacles or contact lenses
- make a referral for a specialist's advice if required – for example if a patient needs surgery or specialist treatment
- you may supervise trainee optometrists, dispensing opticians, and/or medical students during their training.

If you work in a hospital or an eye clinic you'll be involved in more specialised areas of optometry such as treating and managing patients with:

- glaucoma (an eye disease more common in black people and among the elderly) or
- macular degeneration, which is the most common cause of blindness in western society

Where would I work?

Optometrists work in a variety of settings, including hospitals, high street optometrists, research, teaching, and other health settings. If you work in a hospital or clinic, you'll be seeing and treating those most in need of urgent attention. You might also work in local health centres and community clinics. You might also undertake some related work in a laboratory or industry

setting.

Who will I work with?

Most optometrists work in high street practices which may be independent or part of a regional or national chain, and may be a small or large team depending on practice size.

In a hospital or clinic setting, you'll be part of a large team of eye-specialists, typically including ophthalmologists ^[1] (medical doctors specialising in the eye), orthoptists ^[2], and healthcare science staff specialising in ophthalmic and vision science ^[3]. You will usually work as part of a wider team that also includes specialist nurses ^[4] and administrative staff ^[5].

The future of optometry

Optometry may well change over time with some functions becoming more automated, so the role may move further towards interpreting test results and making clinical decisions. Increasingly, there are opportunities to manage certain eye conditions and prescribe for them and there may be more multi-disciplinary working.

Working as a professional in a field such as optometry means that you will never stop learning and continuing professional development is an important part of the role.

Want to learn more?

- Find out more about the entry requirements, skills and interests to enter a career as an optometrist ^[6]
- Find out more about the training you'll receive to become an optometrist ^[7]

• Pay and conditions

Most jobs in the NHS are covered by the Agenda for Change (AfC) ^[8] pay scales. This pay system covers all staff except doctors, dentists and the most senior managers. Staff in the NHS will usually work a standard 37.5 hours per week. They may work a shift pattern.

As a trainee optometrist in a hospital, you would typically start on band 4. As a qualified and registered optometrist, you would start on band 6. With further training, education and experience, you could apply for more senior posts such as specialist optometrist at band 7 or principal optometrist at bands 8a-8b. As a consultant optometrist or head of service, you could be on band 8d.

Terms and conditions of service can vary for employers outside the NHS. The starting salary for newly qualified optometrists in high street practice is typically around £30,000

(2021), but this depends upon supply and demand, so you can expect to earn more in areas where there are fewer optometrists.

- **Where the role can lead**

With further training and/or experience, you may be able to develop your career further and apply for vacancies in areas such as further specialisation, management, teaching (e.g. students studying for optometry at university) or research (for example, you could be involved in developing cutting-edge contact lenses or spectacle lenses).

If you have the right skills, you could be running your own business or your department one day.

- **Job market and vacancies**

According to the General Optical Council, as at March 2020, there were 16,670 registered optometrists in the UK.

When you're looking for job vacancies, there are a number of sources you can use, depending on the type of work you're seeking.

Most optometrists work in the community in a high street practice or equivalent. Jobs are generally advertised in the optical journals such as Optician or Optometry Today. Some may be advertised online.

- Pre-registration vacancies can be found on the [College of Optometrists' website](#) ^[9]

There are also vacancies in NHS organisations which can be found on the [NHS Jobs website](#) ^[10]. Just some of the current vacancies are below.

Find a vacancy

Enter your location or postcode

Show results within

Search

- **Optometrist**

Nottingham, NG2 1RT

Salary:

£60000.00

Type:

Fixed-Term

Employer:

New Medical Systems Ltd

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Optometrist job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[11]

- **Optometrist**

Rochdale, OL16 2UP

Salary:

Negotiable

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Practice Plus Group

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Optometrist job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[12]

- **Optometrist**

Darlington, DL3 6HX

Durham, DH1 5TW

Bishop Auckland, DL14 6AD

Salary:

£38682.00 to £46580.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

County Durham & Darlington NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Optometrist job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[13]

- **Senior Optometrist**

Sutton-In-Ashfield, NG17 4JL

Salary:

£38682.00 to £46580.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Sherwood Forest Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Senior Optometrist job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[14]

- **Specialist Optometrist**

317 02 Royal Victoria Infirmary, NE1 4LP

Salary:

£47810.00 to £54710.00

Type:

Fixed-Term

Employer:

The Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Specialist Optometrist job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[15]

- **Specialist Optometrist**

Middlesbrough, TS4 3BW

Salary:

£38682.00 to £54710.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

South Tees Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Specialist Optometrist job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[16]

- **Sessional Clinical Optometrist**

Worthing, BN11 3BN

Salary:

Negotiable

Type:

Bank

Employer:

CHEC

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Sessional Clinical Optometrist job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[17]

- **Advanced Clinical Optometrist**

Ipswich, IP4 5PD

Salary:

£55690.00 to £62682.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

East Suffolk and North Essex NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Advanced Clinical Optometrist job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[18]

- **Glaucoma Practitioner Optometrist/Orthoptist/Nurse**

London, SE1 7EH

Salary:

£56276.00 to £63176.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Glaucoma Practitioner Optometrist/Orthoptist/Nurse job \(opens in a new window\)](#) [19]

• Further information

For further information about a career in optometry, please contact:

- [Association of Optometrists](#) [20]
- [College of Optometrists](#) [21]
- [General Optical Council](#) [22]

Other roles that may interest you

- [Ophthalmic and vision science](#) [23]
- [Orthoptist](#) [24]
- [Ophthalmology](#) [25]
- [Audiology](#) [26]

Source URL: <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/wider-healthcare-team/roles-wider-healthcare-team/clinical-support-staff/optometrist>

Links

[1] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/ophthalmology> [2]
<https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/allied-health-professionals/orthoptist> [3]
<https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/physiological-sciences/ophthalmic-and-vision-science> [4]
<https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/nursing> [5] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/administration> [6] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/clinical-support-staff/optometrist/entry-requirements-skills-and-interests-optometrist> [7]
<https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/clinical-support-staff/optometrist/training-development-and-registration-optometrist> [8] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/about/careers-nhs/nhs-pay-and-benefits/agenda-change-pay-rates> [9] <http://www.college-optometrists.org/en/qualifying-as-an-optometrist/at-university-/prereg-placement-vacancies.cfm> [10] <http://www.jobs.nhs.uk> [11]
<https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/E0325-25-0028> [12]
<https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/E0314-25-3388> [13]
<https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/C9439-2526-0303-1> [14]
<https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/C9214-25-0615> [15]
<https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/C9317-25-1073> [16]
<https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/C9328-25-0809> [17]
<https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/E0123-25-0225> [18]
<https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/C9432-25-1000> [19]
<https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/C9196-25-1390> [20] <http://www.aop.org.uk> [21]

<http://www.college-optometrists.org> [22] <http://www.optical.org> [23]
<https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/healthcare-science/roles-healthcare-science/physiological-sciences/ophthalmic-and-vision-science> [24] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/allied-health-professionals/roles-allied-health-professions/roles-allied-health-professions/orthoptist> [25]
<https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/doctors/roles-doctors/ophthalmology> [26]
<https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/physiological-sciences/audiology>