Medical secretary/personal assistant

NHS medical secretaries make sure that our frontline staff are able to dedicate their time to patient care while our personal assistants support our senior leaders.

Working life

As a medical secretary or personal assistant, you'll usually work for a senior member of staff or group of staff. You'll support the work of a department by taking on administrative and secretarial tasks. For example:

- typing
- arranging meetings and taking minutes
- managing diaries
- arranging travel
- dealing with enquiries
- taking phone calls
- ordering stationery
- dealing with post and emails
- creating and updating spreadsheets and databases

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You could be based in clinical areas such as:

- hospital departments of all types
- specialist clinics, including cancer centres or accident and emergency units
- GP surgeries and health centres

You may have contact with patients and their families as well as with healthcare staff and other admin staff.

Apprenticeships logo

Personal assistants may also be based in non-clinical areas such as NHS headquarters buildings where there is little or no contact with patients.

Medical secretaries/personal assistants may supervise a team of admin/secretarial staff such as clerks [1] or typists [2].

Entry requirements, skills and interests

Medical secretaries/personal assistants have usually worked elsewhere in the NHS so they have experience of medical terminology and NHS ways of working.

There are no set entry requirements for a medical secretary/personal assistant. However, employers expect excellent keyboard skills. They may ask for qualifications in typing or word processing. Employers also expect a good standard of literacy, numeracy and IT skills. They may ask for GCSEs or equivalent qualifications. You may be able to enter an apprenticeship [3] through an administrative role and through further training and qualifications, progress to more senior roles as a medical secretary or personal assistant.

They support the work of a department.

Personal characteristics

As a medical secretary or personal assistant, you'll need to:

- work accurately and methodically
- meet deadlines
- use medical terminology
- pay attention to detail
- work in a team but use their own initiative
- work with all types of people
- be helpful and reassuring if dealing with patients and their families

Skills required

- excellent keyboard skills
- IT skills
- good spelling and grammar
- organisational skills

Training and development

You will get the training you need to do the job. This includes an introduction to the department, how to use the IT and phone equipment and the procedures to follow. You may also have training in customer care.

You may be offered the chance to take qualifications such as NVQs or those from:

- the Association of Medical Secretaries, Practice Managers, Administrators and Receptionists [4] (AMSPAR)

- the British Society of Medical Secretaries and Administrators [5] (BSMSA)

Some medical secretaries/personal assistants become members of AMSPAR or BSMSA. Both AMSPAR and BSMSA offer training, online forums and newsletters so staff can network with others doing the same type of work

- ## Pay and conditions

Medical secretaries and personal assistants in the NHS are paid on the Agenda for Change [6] (AfC [7]) pay system. You'd typically be on a salary at AfC [7] band 3 or 4 and could progress, with further training and qualifications to posts at band 5. Terms and conditions will be different for administrative staff working outside of the NHS. Medical secretaries/personal assistants work standard hours of around 37.5 a week. In some jobs, this could involve early starts, evenings and weekends.

- ## Where the role can lead

With experience, you could become a manager, responsible for an admin or secretarial department. Some medical secretaries/personal assistants move into other areas such as finance [8], HR [9] or health records [10]. You may also have the opportunity to move into informatics, [11] specialising in electronic data or into IT.

- ## Job market and vacancies

If you're applying for a role either directly in the NHS or in an organisation that provides NHS services, you'll be asked to show how you think the NHS values apply in your everyday work. Find out more about NHS values. [12]

Most NHS trusts advertise their vacancies on NHS Jobs [13]. Some of the current vacancies are below.

Find a vacancy

Enter your location or postcode

Show results within

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- **Further information**

  - Association of Medical Secretaries, Practice Managers, Administrators and Receptionists [14]
  - British Society of Medical Secretaries and Administrators [15]

Other roles that may interest you

- Health records staff [16]
- Finance staff [17]
- Human resources staff [18]
- Administrative management [19]

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[1] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/administration/clerk [2] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/administration/secretarytypist [3] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/i-am/secondary-school-or-fe-college/apprenticeships-traineeships-and-cadet-schemes [4] http://www.amspar.com/ [5] http://www.bsmsa.org.uk/ [6] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/about/careers-nhs/nhs-pay-and-benefits/agenda-change-pay-rates [7] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#AfC [8] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/corporate-services/finance-staff [9] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/corporate-services/human-resources-staff [10] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/administration/health-records-staff [11] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/health-informatics [12] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/about/working-health/nhs-constitution [13] http://www.jobs.nhs.uk/ [14] http://www.amspar.com [15] http://www.bsmsa.org.uk [16] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/Explore-roles/wider-healthcare-team/roles-wider-healthcare-team/health-records-staff [17] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/wider-healthcare-team/roles-wider-healthcare-team/corporate-services/finance-staff/finance-staff [18] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/wider-healthcare-team/roles-wider-healthcare-team/corporate-services/human-resources-staff/human-resources-staff [19] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/management/roles-management/operational-management/administrative-management