Healthcare assistant

Healthcare assistants make sure the patient experience is as comfortable and stress-free as possible. It can also be the stepping stone into many other NHS roles.

"The thing I enjoy most is providing individual patient care. Having a direct influence on a person’s health is very fulfilling and I love watching a person progress and improve from admission to discharge." — Luke Watson, Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Gateshead


Working life

You'll work under the guidance of a healthcare professional such as a nurse and your job will vary depending on where you're based. For example, in a hospital you may:

- wash and dress patients
- serve meals and help to feed patients
- help people to move around
- make beds
- make patients feel comfortable
- monitor patients' conditions by taking temperatures, pulse, respirations and weight

In a health centres and GP surgery, you may

- sterilise equipment
- do health checks
- restock consulting rooms
- process lab samples
- take blood samples
- do health promotion or health education work

As well as nurses [2], HCAs work with doctors, midwives [3] and other healthcare professionals. They have a lot of contact with patients.
Entry requirements?

There are no set entry requirements to become a healthcare assistant. Employers expect good literacy and numeracy and may ask for GCSEs (or equivalent) in English and maths. They may ask for a healthcare qualification, such as BTEC or NVQ.

Employers expect you to have some experience of healthcare or care work. This could be from paid or voluntary work. There are sometimes apprenticeships in healthcare that can give you experience to apply for HCA posts.

Find out more about volunteering and gaining experience [5]

Skills and personal characteristics needed?

To be a healthcare assistant, you'll need to be

- caring and kind
- cheerful and friendly
- willing to be hands-on with patients
- willing to do personal care tasks (washing, toileting, etc)
- able to follow instructions and procedures
- able to work in a team but use their own initiative

You'll also need

- communication skills, including listening
- organisation skills
- observational skills

Training and development

Your training as a healthcare assistant will include basic nursing skills and you'll work towards the Care Certificate, developed by Skills for Care [6], Skills for Health [7] and Health Education England [8] and launched in 2015.

Find out more about the Care Certificate [9]

You may also be offered the chance to study for qualifications such as

- the NCFE CACHE level 2 Certificate in Healthcare Support Services
- the NCFE CACHE level 3 Diploma in Healthcare Support
These could be done through an apprenticeship [4].

Some HCAs join the Royal College of Nursing [10](RCN) as health practitioner members. The RCN runs training events and conferences so HCAs can update their skills and network with others doing similar work.

- Pay and conditions
  Expand / collapse
  
  Healthcare assistants usually work standard hours of around 37.5 a week. They may work shifts, which could involve nights, early starts, evenings and weekends. In the NHS, HCAs are paid on the Agenda for Change (AfC) [11] pay system. You'd typically start at AfC [12] band 2. With further training and experience, you could apply for posts at bands 3 and 4 (as an assistant practitioner [13]). Terms and conditions will vary outside of the NHS.

- Where the role can lead
  Expand / collapse
  
  With experience and further training, you could become a senior healthcare assistant.

  You could then apply to train as an assistant practitioner [13] or nursing associate [14]. With the appropriate qualifications/evidence of academic ability, you could also train as one of the many degree-level healthcare professionals such as a nurse [2], podiatrist [15], midwife [3] or occupational therapist [16].

**Nursing careers resource**

A careers resource has been jointly developed by the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) and Health Education England (HEE) to help clinical support staff and registered nurses plan their health careers effectively. It shows different ways that you can develop your career with case studies, videos and next steps.

Visit the RCN/HEE careers resource for clinical support staff [17]

- Job market and vacancies
  Expand / collapse
  
  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 [18].

  Opportunities for HCAs are growing in hospitals and in the community. There has also been an increasing number of apprenticeship [4] opportunities in health and social care. You'll also find that HCA jobs are called a variety of names such as nursing assistants, nursing auxiliaries or auxiliary nurses.

  Most NHS trusts advertise their vacancies on NHS Jobs [19]. You can find some of the current
vacancies below.

View Vacancy [20]

**Healthcare Assistant**

Warrington, WA2 8TR

- **Salary:**
  - £18135.00

- **Type:**
  - Permanent

- **Employer:**
  - Elysium Healthcare

View Vacancy

View Vacancy [21]

**Healthcare Assistant**

Scarborough, YO12 7AS

- **Salary:**
  - Depending on experience

- **Type:**
  - Fixed term

- **Employer:**
  - Central Advertising - General Practitioners

View Vacancy

View Vacancy [22]
Healthcare Assistant
Exeter, EX1 3PZ

- **Salary:**
  - £18,135 per annum

- **Type:**
  - Permanent

- **Employer:**
  - Elysium Healthcare

  - View Vacancy
    - View Vacancy [23]

Healthcare Assistant
Blackburn, BB1 9BA

- **Salary:**
  - Depending on experience

- **Type:**
  - Permanent

- **Employer:**
  - Central Advertising - General Practitioners

  - View Vacancy
    - View Vacancy [24]

Healthcare assistant - The Chimneys Clinic
Bury St Edmunds, IP30 9LR
Salary: £18135

Type: Permanent

Employer: Elysium Healthcare

View Vacancy

Healthcare Assistant (Support Worker)

London, NW7 4HX

Salary: £20000.00 a year

Type: Permanent

Employer: Central Advertising - Other

View Vacancy

Further information

Expand / collapse

Royal College of Nursing (HCA First Steps) [26]
Royal College of Nursing [27]
Other roles that may interest you

- Assistant practitioner [28]
- Nursing associate [29]
- Occupational therapy support worker [30]
- Healthcare science assistants and associates [31]

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

Links
[12] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#AfC
[17] https://www.rcn.org.uk/nursingcareersresource
[18] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/about/working-health/nhs-constitution
[22] https://www.jobs.nhs.uk/xi/vacancy/916131455
[23] https://www.jobs.nhs.uk/xi/vacancy/916163009
[27] http://www.rcn.org.uk
[29] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/nursing/roles-nursing/nursing-associate