

Compare roles in health

Not sure where to start with the hundreds of NHS careers? Use our compare roles section to get bite-size information on the entry requirements and training, pay and conditions, prospects and skills needed of up to three roles. If there is something that you think you could do, then get more in-depth information on the role.

Don't forget, you can also save your role comparisons by registering with us.

• Telephonist/switchboard operator ^[1]

Telephonists/switchboard operators are a key point of contact for our patients in making sure they and their families can speak to relevant departments about their care.

Training and qualifications required

There are no set entry requirements to become a telephonist or switchboard operator. Employers usually expect good literacy, numeracy and IT skills. They may ask for GCSEs or equivalent qualifications and often ask for relevant work experience. Even where this is not specified, it would be an advantage if you have worked in customer service or admin. 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 and the chance to take qualifications from organisations including AMSPAR and the BSMSA.

Expected working hours and salary range

Administrative staff in the NHS are paid on the Agenda for Change (AfC) pay system. As telephonist/switchboard operator, you'll typically be on AfC band 2. With further training and qualifications, you may be able to apply for team leader or junior supervisory level posts at band 3 for example. Telephonists/switchboard operators work standard hours of around 37.5 a week. Some staff may work shifts, which could involve nights, early starts, evenings and weekends. Terms and conditions will be different for administrative staff working outside of the NHS.

Desirable skills and values

As a telephonist/switchboard operator, you'll need to be friendly and welcoming, patient and understanding, follow instructions and procedures, work accurately and methodically, work well in a team but use your own initiative, use IT/communications equipment, work with all types of people, deal with people who may be angry or upset, and be confident using the phone. You'll also need good organisational, IT and communication skills, have excellent customer service skills and a good telephone manner.

Prospects

With experience, you could become a team leader, coordinating the work of a team of staff. With further experience, you could become a manager, responsible for the staff in a department. Some telephonists/switchboard operators move into specialist roles such as medical secretary or PA. Others move into areas such as finance or HR. You may also have the opportunity to move into informatics, specialising in electronic data, or into IT.

Related roles

- Call handler/emergency medical dispatcher [2]
- Administrative management [3]
- Medical secretary/personal assistant [4]
- Practice manager [5]

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Links

[1] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/wider-healthcare-team/roles-wider-healthcare-team/administration/telephonistswitchboard-operator> [2] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/ambulance-service-team/roles-ambulance-service/emergency-medical-dispatchercall-handler> [3] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/management/roles-management/operational-management/administrative-management> [4] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/wider-healthcare-team/roles-wider-healthcare-team/administration/medical-secretarypersonal-assistant> [5] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/management/roles-management/practice-manager>