

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.

Healthcare assistant [1]

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.

Training and qualifications required

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 and may ask for a vocational qualification in healthcare, such as a BTEC. They may 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. Your training as a healthcare assistant will include basic nursing skills. You may be offered the chance to study for qualifications such as the NCFE CACHE level 2 Certificate in Healthcare Support Services or the NCFE CACHE level 3 Diploma in Healthcare Support.

Expected working hours and salary range

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) pay system. You'd typically start at AfC band 2. With further training and experience, you could apply for posts at bands 3 and 4 (as an assistant practitioner). Terms and conditions will vary outside of the NHS.

Desirable skills and values

As a healthcare assistant, you need to be caring and kind, cheerful and friendly, physically strong (for pushing trolleys, lifting, etc), 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 your own initiative. You also need good communication, organisational and observational skills.

Prospects

With experience and further training, you could become a senior healthcare assistant. You could apply to train as an assistant practitioner, nursing associate or as a healthcare professional such as a nurse, podiatrist,

midwife or occupational therapist for example.

Related roles

- Assistant practitioner [2]
- Nursing associate [3]
- Occupational therapy support worker [4]
- Healthcare science assistants and associates [5]

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