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Chef/cook [1]

Chefs and cooks are responsible for cooking food in NHS hospitals and other services making sure our patients and staff have highly nutritious, high quality food.

> **Training and qualifications required**

To enter the NHS as a cook or chef, you need a catering qualification, usually at level 2 or 3. Employers also expect catering experience. Some cooks or chefs enter the NHS as catering assistants and take qualifications while they are working. There are no set entry requirements for catering assistants. Employers expect a good standard of numeracy and literacy and may ask for GCSEs in English and maths. It would be an advantage to have some experience of catering or customer service. If you join the NHS as a cook or chef you are likely to have opportunities to take further qualifications. You may also be expected to go on short courses in particular topics such as cooking for special diets. As a catering assistant, you will be trained in food hygiene, health and safety and manual handling. You will be encouraged to take qualifications in catering and customers service.

> **Expected working hours and salary range**

Cooks, chefs and assistants working in the NHS are paid on the Agenda for Change (AfC) pay system. As an assistant/catering support worker, you would typically start at the bottom of AfC band 2 and higher points of band 2 as a cook or chef. With further training and experience, you could apply for team leader positions at bands 3 and above. Cooks, chefs and assistants in the NHS work standard hours of around 37.5 a week. They may work shifts including early starts, evenings, nights and weekends. Terms and conditions will usually be different for cooks, chefs and assistants working outside of the NHS.

> **Desirable skills and values**

Chefs, cooks and assistants need to be interested in food and cooking, willing to work in hot, noisy conditions, physically fit for standing, moving and lifting, flexible and adaptable and keen to provide good customer service. They also need awareness of food hygiene and food safety, team working and organisational skills.

> **Prospects**

With experience, catering assistants can become team leaders, supervising the work of a team of assistants. With further experience and qualifications, they can progress to become catering managers. They could move into other areas such as facilities management or housekeeping. Chefs and cooks can progress by working in larger kitchens. With experience, they could become assistant head chefs or cooks, supervising the work of a team in the kitchen. They could progress further to become a head chef or cook running a kitchen.

Related roles

- Catering manager [2]
- Domestic services staff [3]
- Housekeeper [4]
- Cellular sciences [5]

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Links

[1] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/wider-healthcare-team/roles-wider-healthcare-team/domestic-services/chef-and-cook [2] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/wider-healthcare-team/roles-wider-healthcare-team/domestic-services/catering-manager
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