

“I’ve always had an interest in medicine from being young and I was influenced by my nan who was a nurse many years ago.”

After getting a degree in biomedical science, Liam realised he wanted a patient-facing role instead of working in a laboratory. This led to him applying for a physician associate role after working as a health associate. Find out why he enjoys his role so much.

Real life story - Liam Black

Physician associate

Salary range

£40k-£50k

Liam Black

How I got into the role

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I’ve always had an interest in medicine from being young and I was influenced by my nan who was a nurse many years ago. I initially studied biology at GCSE and then again at A-Level. During my time in college, I gained work experience in various areas of my local hospital where I was able to shadow various clinicians and learn about their roles.

I then went on to complete an undergraduate degree in biomedical science and I also worked as a healthcare assistant (HCA) in different medical specialities.

The knowledge I gained from my degree and the experience I had gained from my HCA role enabled me to apply for a postgraduate course in physician associate studies at Sheffield Hallam University.

After completing my studies, I qualified as a physician associate, and I now work in the learning disabilities service in Sheffield.

What I do

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A typical day for me begins with a good cup of coffee. This is closely followed by saying “hi” to my work colleagues before switching on my laptop to prepare for my morning clinic.

During my clinic I will review a variety of patients with often complex presentations.

The best bits and challenges

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The part of my job that I most enjoy is working with patients, families, and the multidisciplinary team to improve the health and quality of life for our service users.

As with any job, there are always various challenges to overcome. One of the first challenges for me was to raise awareness around what a physician associate is and what I could bring to the team. I found that the best way to approach this was to meet the team, discover what was already happening in the service, and then work with my clinical supervisor to identify how my knowledge/skills could be used to meet the service needs.

Life outside work

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Maintaining a healthy work-life balance is essential for me and it's one of the many reasons I applied to work as a physician associate. I am able to enjoy my weekends exploring the Peak District or one of the many beer gardens Sheffield has to offer.

By ensuring I take time for myself to do things that I enjoy I'm able to come to work refreshed, motivated and ready to deliver the high-quality care that my patients deserve.

Career plans and top tips for others

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As part of my professional development, I am keen to develop a specialist interest in emergency medicine and life support. I was able to use part of my annual study budget to complete an advanced life support course at Chesterfield Royal Hospital.

I have also been able to assist with teaching on the immediate life support mandatory training within my own trust in Sheffield.

Looking ahead, over the next five years I aspire to become a lead physician associate and I plan to continue to develop my leadership skills. One way I aim to achieve this is by applying for the Faculty of Physician Associates Leadership course running later this year

I highly recommend a career as a physician associate. If you are considering this as a career then I would advise to seek clinical / work experience before applying and to be proactive with visiting and speaking to prospective universities about their courses.

I consider the three main attributes to be a physician associate are:

1. to be self-motivated and have the ability to motivate others
2. to have strong communication skills
3. to be passionate about the role and healthcare

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