

Home > Explore roles > Wider healthcare team > Roles in the wider healthcare team > Clinical support staff > Medical support worker

Medical support worker

Being a medical support worker in the NHS offers international medical graduates experience of working in the NHS. Under supervision of a senior doctor, they are able to perform many essential routine clinical tasks.



Life as a medical support worker

You'll be employed in a primary, secondary and community care setting, delivering routine clinical tasks under the supervision of a doctor.

You'll work in one of the more than 50 specialty areas [1] in medicine as part of a multi-disciplinary team, forming close working relationships with patients and other members of the NHS team. You will use your considerable medical experience in a more general role, performing a range of tasks.

Your tasks may include:

- taking and recording clinical observations
- performing basic resuscitation
- taking blood samples

- inserting, flushing and managing peripheral cannulas
- performing and interpreting ECGs, spirometry and bedside diagnostic tests
- performing simple diagnostic and therapeutic procedures
- keeping confidential patient records up-to-date

You may work in a range of areas such as:

- wards
- theatres
- out-patient clinics
- vaccination centres
- mental health
- specialty areas such as ophthalmology
- primary care [2] clinics

Emmanuel Oisakede

Junior Clinical Fellow

The NHS has made me feel at home. It constantly reminds me that there is support if you want it.

Read Emmanuel's story [3]

How much can I earn

If you're employed by the NHS, you'll be on a national pay and conditions system called Agenda for Change (AfC) [4].

There are nine pay bands and you'll usually be paid at band 6. You can also work full-time or part-time as agreed with your employer.

How about the benefits?

As a medical support worker, you can make a difference to people's lives every day. If you're employed by the NHS, you'll also have good holiday entitlement and access to:

- an excellent pension scheme
- NHS discounts in shops and restaurants

You'll also get regular supervision and be able to take part education activities to support your development. This will help you in your future career and prepare you for your GMC licensing exams. You'll also be in a strong position when applying for NHS jobs as a doctor after obtaining GMC registration.

You may enjoy your medical support worker post so much it could lead to you taking a new direction in an unfamiliar specialty.

Must have skills

You'll need the basic clinical skills needed to be a doctor as well as:

- communication skills
- an interest in working with people
- the ability to work as part of a large team
- the willingness and ability to handle uncertainty and conflicting demands
- the ability to stay calm while working under pressure
- excellent organisational and time-management skills
- good IT skills

You'll also need to meet the GMC standards of "Good Medical Practice".

Entry requirements

- A medical degree from a university recognised by the GMC
- Proficiency in English to satisfy GMC requirements (Grade B OET or 7.5 IELTS for PLAB candidates)
- Post-graduate clinical experience to include an internship
- Be resident in the UK and have the right to work.

Additional entry requirements might be needed depending on the precise needs of the vacancy.

What are my chances of starting a career as a medical support worker

We are expecting to see a growing number of medical support worker vacancies as the role becomes an important part of the NHS team. The role is a priority of the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan which will ensure the NHS has the staff it needs to deliver high-quality patient care.

How to become a medical support worker

Vacancies are advertised on the NHS Jobs website [5].

Where being a medical support worker can take you

Being a medical support worker provides opportunities in a wide number of medical specialties and is an excellent introduction to the NHS.

Your next career step would be joining the GMC register, allowing you apply for specialist training or a job as a trust doctor.

Other roles that may interest you

- Obstetrics and gynaecology [6]
- General surgery [7]
- General practitioner [8]
- Acute internal medicine [9]

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Links

- [1] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/doctors/roles-doctors>
- [2] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Primary_care
- [3] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/wider-healthcare-team/roles-wider-healthcare-team/clinical-support-staff/medical-support-worker/emmanuel-oisakede>
- [4] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/working-health/working-nhs/nhs-pay-and-benefits/agenda-change-pay-rates>
- [5] <https://www.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate>
- [6] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/doctors/roles-doctors/obstetrics-and-gynaecology>
- [7] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/doctors/roles-doctors/surgery/general-surgery>
- [8] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/doctors/roles-doctors/general-practitioner>
- [9] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/doctors/roles-doctors/medicine/acute-internal-medicine>