

Orthoptic support worker

Orthoptic support workers (sometimes known as orthoptic clinical assistants) are vital members of orthoptic and ophthalmic care teams, supporting registered orthoptists and other healthcare professionals in improving patient outcomes.

They play a vital role in delivering high-quality care by undertaking clinical, administrative, and educational tasks.

It offers the opportunity to make a real difference in the lives of patients with vision-related conditions and can be a stepping stone towards a career in orthoptics or wider healthcare.



Life as an orthoptic support worker

Orthoptic support workers are employed in patient-facing roles, carrying out a range of tasks assisting registered orthoptists and other healthcare professionals.

You may work in hospital or community eye clinics or in schools supporting young people with their vision screening and educational.

You'll work with orthoptists and other allied health professionals, optometrists, nurses, and doctors such as ophthalmologist and neurologists. In schools and in the community, you could also be work with teachers and social workers.

You'll work with patients of all ages who have:

- vision problems, such as lazy eye (amblyopia) or squints (strabismus)
- double vision (diplopia)
- neurological conditions affecting vision and visual fields, such as those caused by [stroke](#)^[1] or multiple sclerosis
- rehabilitation needs following surgery or injury

Your tasks may include:

- preparing clinical rooms and equipment for appointments

- assisting orthoptists and other healthcare professionals during eye examinations
- testing visual acuity, colour vision and intraocular pressures
- performing standard visual field assessments and capturing Optical Coherence Tomography (OCT) images of the optic discs and maculae
- administering appropriate eye drops
- performing specialist tests such as coloured overlay assessments, rate of reading tests, and neurological visual fields (with appropriate training and supervision)
- supporting patients and their families with information and guidance about treatment plans
- managing patient records and writing reports on patient progress
- supporting community clinics, school vision screenings, and educational sessions

As well as working with patients, you may also:

- contribute to service improvement projects, such as improving patient communication systems
- participate in research studies, including national audits or assisting with obtaining patient consent (with appropriate supervision and training)
- support education and mentoring, such as assisting orthoptic students or new support staff

How much can I earn?

You will be paid on the [Agenda for Change \(AfC\) pay system](#) ^[2], starting at Band 2, 3, or 4, depending on your role and responsibilities.

You'll typically work 37.5 hours per week.

How about benefits?

- making a difference to people's lives
- continuous Professional Development (CPD)
- a generous NHS pension scheme
- NHS discounts including in shops and restaurants
- 27 days of annual leave, plus bank holidays, with increases based on length of service

Must-have skills

- compassion and patience particularly when working with children or individuals with additional needs
- good communication skills allowing you to explain treatments clearly and reassure patients
- well organised and an excellent attention to detail
- able to work both independently and as part of a team

You will also need:

- a willingness to learn and develop new skills
- the ability to adapt to a variety of clinical and community settings

Entry requirements

There are no fixed entry requirements to become an orthoptic support worker but employers typically look for:

- GCSEs (or equivalent) in English and maths
- qualifications or experience in health or social care, such as an NVQ or BTEC at Level 2 or 3
- relevant work experience which could include paid or voluntary roles in healthcare or social care

If applying for a role in the NHS, you will need to demonstrate how you embody the NHS values in your work.

How to apply

Visit NHS Jobs to find current vacancies.

Once you have been appointed, you'll receive training to be able to carry out your role, which may include supervised practice, competency checklists, and protocols set by registered clinicians.

Where a career can take you

You'll get opportunities to learn and progress your career. This could include:

- apprenticeships that combine practical experience with formal qualifications
- continuous Professional Development (CPD), such as webinars, presentations, and workshops to enhance your skills and knowledge
- specialised training for tasks such as research participation, mentoring, and service improvement

With experience, you could progress through roles such as:

- orthoptic clinical assistant (Band 3)
- senior orthoptic clinical assistant (Band 4)
- lead orthoptic clinical assistant (Band 5), which may include managerial responsibilities

You may even decide to train to become a registered orthoptist ^[3].

• Further information

As part of your role, you will have access to many resources and some support from the British and Irish Orthoptic Society (BIOS), including:

- Competency frameworks and training materials
- Webinars and events for professional development
- Guidance for role progression and career planning

Associate members of BIOS get additional access to resources and careers support.

Explore BIOS resources and find out more about your career pathway as an orthoptic support worker by visiting their [website](#) [4].

Other roles that may interest you

- [Orthoptist](#) [3]
- [Radiography assistants and imaging support workers](#) [5]
- [Orthotic technician](#) [6]
- [Healthcare support worker](#) [7]

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Links

[1] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Stroke> [2] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/working-health/working-nhs/nhs-pay-and-benefits/agenda-change-pay-rates> [3] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/allied-health-professionals/roles-allied-health-professions/roles-allied-health-professions/orthoptist> [4] <https://www.orthoptics.org.uk/members-area/support-workforce/> [5] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/healthcare-support-worker/roles-healthcare-support-worker/radiography-assistants-and-imaging-support-workers> [6] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/healthcare-support-worker/roles-healthcare-support-worker/orthotic-technician> [7] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/healthcare-support-worker/roles-healthcare-support-worker/healthcare-support-worker>