Health play staff

Health play staff bring joy and happiness to children who might be in hospital for a long time.

Working life

You'll use play as a therapeutic tool to help children understand their illness and treatment. You'll lead play activities with children and young people who are in hospital or attending a hospital or clinic.

You could work as a play assistant or a health play specialist.

Depending on your role and level of responsibility, you would
organise daily play and art activities in the playroom or at the bedside
use play to maintain a child’s level of development during illness
help children deal with their anxieties and feelings
use play to prepare children for hospital procedures
observe children while playing to help healthcare staff monitor their progress
encourage peer group friendships
organise parties and special events

Where would I work?

Most health play staff work in hospitals, either in outpatient or inpatient departments. Some work in hospices and other community-based settings. Some health play specialists work with children in their homes.

Entry requirements

You could enter a role as a play assistant with a relevant childcare qualification at level 3. Experience of working with children will be an advantage.

- Find out more about volunteering and gaining experience [1]

Most employers expect health play specialists to be registered with the Healthcare Play Specialist Education Trust [2]. To register, you need a foundation degree in healthcare play specialism. This is a two-year part-time course. To get onto the course, you usually need

- a childcare qualification at level 3 or above
- GCSEs (or equivalent) in maths and English
- at least two years' experience of working with children (paid or voluntary)

Courses are a mix of practical work and theory. If you are not already working in healthcare play, you need to arrange a placement during the course.

A level 5 apprenticeship standard for health play specialists has been approved for delivery. To get onto a degree apprenticeship, you will need to apply for an apprentice position with a health care provider. You can search for vacancies on the NHS Jobs website [3] and Find an Apprenticeship website [4]

You could work as a play assistant or a health play specialist.
Personal characteristics and skills needed

Health play specialists need to be

- interested in working with children
- imaginative and fun
- caring and kind
- approachable and reassuring
- able to deal with other people’s emotions (both children and adults)
- willing to work with parents and carers
- health and safety conscious
- aware of child protection and safeguarding

You'll also need

- excellent communication skills, including listening, with adults and children
- good organisational skills
- good observational skills

Training and development

Play specialists who are registered with the Healthcare Play Specialist Education Trust [2] have to keep their skills and knowledge up to date.

Play specialists can join the National Association of Health Play Specialists [5]. The Association runs conferences and training events so members can keep their skills up to date and network with others in the same field.

Pay and conditions

Most staff working in the NHS are paid on the Agenda for Change (AfC) [6] pay system. As a play assistant, you will typically be on AfC [7] band 3. As a health play specialist, you will be on band 4 or 5 (as a senior health play specialist) and with further training and experience, you could apply for more senior positions.

Health play staff in the NHS work standard hours of around 37.5 a week.

Terms and conditions will usually be different for health play staff working outside of the NHS.

Where the role could lead

You could become a senior play specialist, responsible for a team. You could apply to train as a healthcare professional such as a nurse [8] or occupational therapist [9].
If you're applying for a role either directly in the NHS or in an organisation that provides NHS services, you'll be asked to show how you think the NHS values apply in your everyday work. Find out more about NHS values [10].


- View Vacancy [12]

**Play Specialist**

Norwich, NR14 7PX

- **Salary:**
  
  £25000.00 to £30700.00 a year

- **Type:**
  
  Permanent

- **Employer:**
  
  Central Advertising - Social Enterprises

  - View Vacancy
  - View Vacancy [13]

**Play Coordinator**

Woodford Green, IG8 9LB

- **Salary:**
  
  £13443.60 a year

- **Type:**
  
  Fixed term
**Employer:** 
Haven House Childrens Hospice

- View Vacancy
  - View Vacancy [14]

**Play Specialist**

Ipswich, IP3 8NS

- **Salary:**
  
  £25000.00 to £30700.00 a year

- **Type:**
  
  Permanent

- **Employer:**
  
  Central Advertising - Social Enterprises

- View Vacancy
  - View Vacancy [15]

**Play Therapist**

Northwick Park Hospital, Harrow, HA1 3UJ

- **Salary:**
  
  £25,676 - £27,941 pa inc HCAS

- **Type:**
  
  Permanent

- **Employer:**
  
  London North West University Healthcare NHS Trust

- View Vacancy
  - View Vacancy [16]
Play Leader
Margate, CT9 4AN

- **Salary:**
  £19737.00 to £21142.00 a year

- **Type:**
  Permanent

- **Employer:**
  East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation Trust

  - View Vacancy
  - View Vacancy [17]

Play Leader
East Grinstead, RH19 3DZ

- **Salary:**
  £21892.00 to £24157.00 a year

- **Type:**
  Permanent

- **Employer:**
  Queen Victoria Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

  - View Vacancy

Further information
- Healthcare Play Specialist Education Trust [18]
- National Association of Health Play Specialists [19]

Other roles that may interest you
- Children's nurse [20]
- Neonatal nurse [21]
- Newborn hearing screener [22]
- Paediatrics [23]

Source URL: https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/wider-healthcare-team/roles-wider-healthcare-team/corporate-services/health-play-staff

Links
[1] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/i-am/secondary-school-or-fe-college/gaining-experience
[7] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#AfC
[10] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/about/working-health/nhs-constitution
[12] https://www.jobs.nhs.uk/ix/vacancy/916438250
[16] https://www.jobs.nhs.uk/ix/vacancy/916455112
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