

# 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 <sup>[1]</sup>

Most employers expect health play specialists to be registered with the Healthcare Play Specialist Education Trust <sup>[2]</sup>. 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 <sup>[3]</sup> and Find an Apprenticeship website <sup>[4]</sup>

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 <sup>[2]</sup> have to keep their skills and knowledge up to date.

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

•



Most staff working in the NHS are paid on the Agenda for Change (AfC) <sup>[6]</sup> pay system. As a play assistant, you will typically be on [AfC](#) <sup>[7]</sup> 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**

**Expand /  
collapse**

You could become a senior play specialist, responsible for a team. You could apply to train as a healthcare professional such as a nurse <sup>[8]</sup> or occupational therapist <sup>[9]</sup>.

- 

**Job market and  
vacancies**

**Expand /  
collapse**

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 <sup>[10]</sup>.

Most NHS trusts advertise their vacancies on NHS Jobs <sup>[3]</sup>. Some advertise on their own websites. You can find a list of NHS organisations NHS Choices <sup>[11]</sup>.

- [View Vacancy](#) <sup>[12]</sup>

## **Play Specialist**

Leicester Royal Infirmary, Leicester, LE15WW

- 

**Salary:**

£22,549 - £24,882 per annum (pro-rata if Part-Time)

- 

**Type:**

Permanent

- **Employer:**

University Hospitals of Leicester

- View Vacancy
- View Vacancy <sup>[13]</sup>

## **Play Worker**

Newham University Hospital, Plaistow, E13 8SL

- **Salary:**

£24,228 - £25,675 per annum

- **Type:**

Permanent

- **Employer:**

Barts Health NHS Trust

- View Vacancy
- View Vacancy <sup>[14]</sup>

## **Health Play Specialist**

John Radcliffe Hospital, Oxford, OX3 9DU

- **Salary:**

£21,089-£23,761

- **Type:**

Permanent

-

**Employer:**

Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

- [View Vacancy](#)
- [View Vacancy](#) <sup>[15]</sup>

**Play Specialist Band 5**

Croydon University Hospital NHS Trust, Croydon, CR7 7YE

■

**Salary:**

£29,553 - £36,265 £28,691- £35,207 pa inc of HCAS

■

**Type:**

Permanent

■

**Employer:**

Croydon Health Services NHS Trust

- [View Vacancy](#)
- [View Vacancy](#) <sup>[16]</sup>

**Play Therapy Assistant**

Wichester and Basingstoke, RG24 9NA

■

**Salary:**

£20337.00 to £21777.00 a year

■

**Type:**

Permanent

■

**Employer:**

Hampshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

- [View Vacancy](#)

- View Vacancy [17]

## Health Play specialist

Children's Hospital JR, Oxford, OX39DU

- **Salary:**  
Band 4
- **Type:**  
Fixed term
- **Employer:**  
Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
- View Vacancy

**Further  
information**

**Expand /  
collapse**

- 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]
- Paediatrician [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>
- [2] <http://www.hpset.org.uk/>
- [3] <http://www.jobs.nhs.uk/>
- [4] <https://www.findapprenticeship.service.gov.uk/apprenticeshipsearch>
- [5] <http://www.nahps.org.uk/>

- [6] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/about/careers-nhs/nhs-pay-and-benefits/agenda-change-pay-rates>
- [7] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#AfC>
- [8] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/nursing>
- [9] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/allied-health-professionals/occupational-therapist>
- [10] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/about/working-health/nhs-constitution>
- [11] <http://www.nhs.uk/aboutnhs/howthenhsworks/authoritiesandtrusts/Pages/Authoritiesandtrusts.aspx>
- [12] <https://www.jobs.nhs.uk/xi/vacancy/916746276>
- [13] <https://www.jobs.nhs.uk/xi/vacancy/916744105>
- [14] <https://www.jobs.nhs.uk/xi/vacancy/916743790>
- [15] <https://www.jobs.nhs.uk/xi/vacancy/916711012>
- [16] <https://www.jobs.nhs.uk/xi/vacancy/916740074>
- [17] <https://www.jobs.nhs.uk/xi/vacancy/916743862>
- [18] <http://www.hpset.org.uk>
- [19] <http://www.nahps.org.uk>
- [20] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/nursing/roles-nursing/childrens-nurse>
- [21] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/nursing/roles-nursing/neonatal-nurse>
- [22] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/wider-healthcare-team/roles-wider-healthcare-team/clinical-support-staff/newborn-hearing-screener>
- [23] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/doctors/roles-doctors/paediatrics/paediatrician>