

Nursery nurse and nursery assistant

Nursery nurses and nursery assistants look after pre-school age children.

This page has information on the role of a nursery nurses and assistants in the NHS, including entry requirements and skills needed.

Working life

You could work as a nursery nurse or a nursery assistant and you'll work mainly with young patients, although you may work in a nursery caring for children of NHS staff. If you're a nursery assistant, you'll work under the supervision of a qualified nursery nurse.



The work of nursery nurses and nursery assistant includes

- making sure that children are safe, happy and stimulated
- communicating information to children using play

- distracting children during clinical procedures
- encouraging children's development
- using play to maintain a child's level of development during illness
- creating a child friendly environment
- maintaining toys and play equipment
- finding ways to stimulate children particularly those with special and sensory needs
- supporting carers in the parenting of their children
- keeping records

In addition, qualified nursery nurses may

- supervise staff
- coordinate a programme of activities for children
- set up a daily routine for the nursery
- attend meetings
- work with other professionals within and outside the NHS
- support children who have been abused
- promote public health and parenting

Where will I work?

You could work in hospitals and in the community. In hospitals, this could include children's wards, nurseries and outpatients departments. In the community, you may work in health centres, community centres or children's centres. You might visit families at home, on your own or with [health visitors](#) ^[1]



Who will I work with?

As a nursery nurse or nursery assistant, you'll work closely with parents and carers. As well as [health play staff](#) ^[2], you'll work with healthcare professionals such as [nurses](#) ^[3], [health visitors](#) ^[1] and [midwives](#) ^[4]. You may also work with [social workers](#) ^[5]

Entry requirements

There are no set entry requirements for nursery assistants. Employers expect a good level of literacy and numeracy and may ask for GCSEs or equivalent qualifications. Employers may ask for a childcare qualification such as NVQ or BTEC. They usually expect some experience of childcare, which could be voluntary or paid, including experience within the family or babysitting. Apprenticeships in a childcare related role are sometimes available.

[Find out more about apprenticeships](#)

[6].

Nursery nurses have qualifications in childcare or early years. This could be, for example,

- CACHE Level 3 Diploma in Child Care and Education
- BTEC National Diploma in Children's Care, Learning and Development
- NVQ Level 3 in Children's Care, Learning and Development

To get onto a childcare course you need GCSEs, including English and maths, or equivalent qualifications.

The Department for Education's [Early Years Qualifications list](#) [7] sets out the qualifications needed at each level of childcare.

If you're a nursery assistant, you'll work under the supervision of a qualified nursery nurse

Employers may also ask for qualifications in first aid or food hygiene.

Skills and personal characteristics

Nursery nurses and nursery assistants need to be

- caring and kind
- interested in working with children
- imaginative and fun
- approachable and reassuring
- willing to work with parents and carers
- health and safety conscious
- aware of child protection and safeguarding
- excellent communication skills, including listening, with adults and children
- good organisational skills
- good observational skills

Training and development

You will get the training you need when you start the job including an introduction to the department and its procedures. Your training is likely to include food hygiene, first aid and safeguarding.

Nursery staff need to keep their skills and knowledge up to date. You will be able to attend ongoing training, sometimes on specific topics such as special needs.

Nursery assistants who do not have a childcare qualification will be encouraged to study for an NVQ, certificate or diploma. Both nursery nurses and nursery assistants may be offered the chance to study for further qualifications.

- Pay and conditions

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Nursery staff working in the NHS are paid on the [Agenda for Change \(AfC\)](#) ^[8] pay system. As a new entrant you would typically start on [AfC](#) ^[9] band 2 as a nursery assistant. As a nursery nurse, you would start at band 3 or 4. With further training and experience, you could apply for more senior positions - typically at managerial level - at band 5 or above.

Nursery nurses and nursery assistants in the NHS work standard hours of around 37.5 a week. They may work shifts including early starts and evenings.

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

- Where role can lead

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You could specialise in an area of childcare, such as special needs.

With experience and further qualifications, nursery nurses can become managers of a nursery or project. They could progress further to become responsible for childcare provision in an area or NHS trust.

Nursery assistants can apply to train as nursery nurses. Nursery nurses and nursery assistants can apply to train as a [nurse](#) ^[3] or [midwife](#) ^[4].

There are opportunities in childcare outside the NHS.

- Job market and vacancies

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Most NHS trusts advertise their vacancies on [NHS Jobs](#) ^[10]. Some advertise on their own websites. You can find a list of NHS organisations [NHS Choices](#) ^[11].

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.](#) ^[12]

- Further information

Expand / collapse

- [CACHE](#) [13]
- [Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years](#) [14]

Other roles that may interest you

- [Children's nurse](#) [15]
- [Health play staff](#) [16]
- [Paediatrics](#) [17]
- [Emergency care assistant](#) [18]

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Links

- [1] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/public-health/health-visitor>
- [2] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/corporate-services/health-play-staff>
- [3] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/nursing>
- [4] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/midwifery/midwife>
- [5] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/clinical-support-staff/social-worker>
- [6] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/i-am/secondary-school-or-fe-college/apprenticeships-traineeships-and-cadet-schemes>
- [7] <http://www.education.gov.uk/eyppd>
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- [9] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#AfC>
- [10] <http://www.jobs.nhs.uk/>
- [11] <http://www.nhs.uk/aboutnhs/howthenhsworks/authoritiesandtrusts/Pages/Authoritiesandtrusts.aspx>
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