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Health and safety officer

Health and safety is very important in the NHS. Health and safety officers aim to minimise risks to patients, staff and visitors.

This page has information on the role of a health and safety officer in the NHS, including entry requirements and skills needed.

Working life

They are responsible for the health and safety of everyone who works in, or uses, the NHS in hospitals, health centres and headquarters buildings.



Working as a health and safety officer, you will look at all aspects of health and safety including

- infection control
- safeguarding children and vulnerable adults
- dealing with hazardous substances
- violence and abusive behaviour

- manual handling (lifting, carrying, etc)
- food hygiene

Health and safety officers

- inspect buildings
- draw up health and safety policies and procedures
- train staff
- ensure that staff follow procedures
- investigate health and safety incidents and accidents

Where will I work?

You will be based in an office which may be in a hospital or in a headquarters building. You will spend a lot of time around hospital wards, departments and clinics. You may also visit other NHS sites such as health centres.



Who will I work with?

You'll often work in a team with a health and safety manager and one or more health and safety advisers (or technicians). Your team is supported by assistants, clerks [1] and other admin staff.

You will work closely with fire safety officers [2] and security staff [3] as well as estates managers [4]. You may have contact with healthcare and other staff at all levels. You will usually have little or no contact with patients.

Entry requirements

Health and safety officers have a qualification in health and safety. To join the NHS as a health and safety officer you often need a degree level qualification. This could be, for example,

- the International Diploma in Occupational Health and Safety from NEBOSH [5]. There are no set entry requirements but you are expected to have some knowledge of health and safety and/or the NEBOSH General Certificate
- the National Compliance and Risk Qualifications (NCRQ) [6] level 6 Diploma in Applied Health and Safety. You'll usually need level 3 qualifications to get onto this degree-level programme
- a relevant degree such as environmental health or occupational safety and health
- a postgraduate diploma or Masters

Degree courses are three years full time. To get onto a relevant degree course you usually need

- two or three A levels along with up to five GCSEs (grades A-C [7]), including English, maths and

science

or alternative qualifications, including

- BTEC, HND or HNC
- relevant NVQ
- access course
- equivalent Scottish or Irish qualifications

To get onto a postgraduate course you usually need an honours degree, a NEBOSH [5] qualification or professional experience.

You will look at all aspects of health and safety

However, each institution sets its own entry requirements, so it's important to check carefully.

Skills needed

Health and safety officers need to be

- interested in health and safety
- willing to follow procedures
- able to train staff at all levels
- able to prioritise
- willing to work under pressure
- calm in stressful situations
- report writing skills
- time management skills
- good planning and organisational skills

Training and development

When you join the NHS as a health and safety officer you will have training to introduce you to the department and its systems and procedures. Your employer will expect you to keep your skills and knowledge up to date by attending short courses on particular topics such as accident investigation or risk management.

You may be encouraged to take further qualifications and may have the opportunity to do an apprenticeship.

Health and safety officers can become members of the Institution of Occupational Health and Safety [8] (IOSH). They can apply for chartered status with IOSH. Chartered safety and health practitioners have to keep their skills and knowledge up to date with annual CPD (continuing professional development). IOSH runs courses, conferences and seminars where staff can update their skills and network with others.

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Pay and conditions

Health and safety officers working in the NHS are paid on the Agenda for Change (AfC) [9] pay system. You would typically start on AfC [10] band 5. With further training and experience, you could apply for more senior positions at bands 6 and above.

Health and safety officers in the NHS work standard hours of around 37.5 a week. The job may involve some evening and weekend working. Health and safety officers may be on call [11] if there is an incident.

Terms and conditions will usually be different for health and safety officers working outside of the NHS.

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Where the role can lead

With experience, a health and safety officer can become a manager, with a team of staff and responsible for the health and safety in a hospital, area or trust.

There are opportunities outside the NHS.

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Job market and vacancies

Most NHS trusts advertise their vacancies on NHS Jobs [12]. Some advertise on their own websites. You can find a list of NHS organisations on NHS Choices [13].

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 [14].

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Further information

- British Occupational Hygiene Society [15]
- Chartered Institute of Environmental Health [16]
- Institute of Food Safety Integrity and Protection [17]
- Institution of Occupational Safety and Health [18]
- National Compliance and Risk Qualifications [19]
- NEBOSH (National Examining Board in Occupational Safety and Health) [20]
- Professional Organisations in Occupational Safety and Health [21]

Other roles that may interest you

- Environmental health professional [22]
- Fire safety officer [23]
- Medical device risk management and governance [24]
- Occupational health nurse [25]

Source URL:<https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/wider-healthcare-team/roles-wider-healthcare-team/support-services/health-and-safety-officer?career=ahp&page=1>

Links

- [1] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/administration/clerk>
[2] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/support-services/fire-safety-officer>
[3] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/support-services/security-staff>
[4] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/estates-and-facilities-management/estates-manager>
[5] <http://www.nebosh.org.uk/> [6] <https://www.ncrq.org.uk/dip-health-safety.php>
[7] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Grades_A-C [8] <http://www.iosh.co.uk/>
[9] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/about/careers-nhs/nhs-pay-and-benefits/agenda-change-pay-rates>
[10] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#AfC> [11] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#On_call
[12] <http://www.jobs.nhs.uk/>
[13] <http://www.nhs.uk/aboutnhs/howthenhsworks/authoritiesandtrusts/Pages/Authoritiesandtrusts.aspx>
[14] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/about/working-health/nhs-constitution> [15] <http://www.bohs.org>
[16] <http://www.cieh.org> [17] <http://www.ifsip.org> [18] <http://www.iosh.co.uk> [19] <https://www.ncrq.org.uk>
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[23] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/wider-healthcare-team/roles-wider-healthcare-team/support-services/fire-safety-officer> [24] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/healthcare-science/roles-healthcare-science/physical-sciences-and-biomedical-engineering/medical-device-risk-management-and-governance> [25] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/public-health/roles-public-health/occupational-health-nurse>