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Theatre support worker

Theatre support workers are the glue keeping the surgical team together. They make sure each member of the team is able to do their job effectively.

Working life

Theatre support staff also have an important role in making sure patients, who may be anxious about going into the operating theatre, feel as calm and comfortable as possible.



You'll work with other members of the theatre team, including theatre nurses [1], anaesthetists [2], surgeons [3], operating department practitioners [4], and administrative staff [5]. As a member of the theatre support staff, you'll:

- move patients on trolleys
- reassure family members
- prepare patients for anaesthetic
- set out instruments and equipment ready for surgery
- make sure the department has stocks of items needed
- clean and tidy theatre areas after surgery

- dispose of waste

Entry requirements

There are no set entry requirements. Employers expect a good standard of numeracy and literacy and may ask for GCSEs (or equivalent) in English and maths. Theatre support workers have experience of healthcare. Most have worked in the NHS in another healthcare role such as healthcare assistant [6] or other clinical support role. [7] You could gain experience of healthcare by securing a healthcare-related apprenticeship, and then applying for a permanent position as a healthcare assistant or other clinical support role.



Skills and personal characteristics

Theatre support workers need to be:

- willing to be in operating theatre areas during surgery
- calm and reassuring
- health and safety aware
- able to follow procedures
- part of a team but responsible for their own work

You'll also need:

- organisational skills
- communication skills
- good team working skills

Pay and benefits

As a member of the theatre support staff, you will typically be on AfC [8] band 2 or 3. With further training and experience, you could apply for more senior positions. Theatre support staff work standard hours of around 37.5 a week. Some may work shifts including early starts, evenings and weekends. Terms and conditions will usually be different for clinical support staff working outside of the NHS.

An important part of the work is reassuring patients, who may be anxious about going into the operating theatre.

Training

When you start as a theatre support worker you will be trained. Your training will include:

- health and safety
- infection control
- an introduction to the department and its systems and procedures

You will be encouraged to take relevant vocational qualifications. Apprenticeships in Perioperative [9] Support at Intermediate, Advanced and Higher levels may be available.

Where the role can lead

With experience, a theatre support worker can become a senior theatre support worker, supervising the work of a team.

Theatre support workers can apply for other roles in the wider healthcare team such as healthcare assistant [6]. With the qualifications necessary for university study, they can also apply to train as a theatre nurse [1], operating department practitioner [10] or other healthcare professional.

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[8] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#AfC> [9] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Perioperative>

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