Theatre support worker

Theatre support workers are part of an operating department team who support the surgical team.

This page has information on the role of the theatre support worker, including entry requirements and skills needed.

Working life

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

As a member of the theatre support staff, you may also
• 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

Who will I work with?

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]. Your work will include some aspects of the role done by porters [6], operating department practitioners and theatre nurses.

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 [7] or other clinical support role. [8]?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

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

• 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

Training and development

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 Health - Perioperative Support (Intermediate, Advanced and Higher levels) may be available.

Pay and conditions

Clinical support staff in the NHS are paid on the Agenda for Change (AfC) pay system. As a member of the theatre support staff, you will typically start on AfC band 2 or 3. With further training and experience, you could apply for more senior positions at band 4.

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.

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. With the qualifications necessary for university study, they can also apply to train as a theatre nurse, operating department practitioner or other healthcare professional.

Job market and vacancies

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

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.

Further information
For further information about working in theatres, contact your local hospital or visit the NHS Jobs website [15] to search for vacancies and view job descriptions.

**Other roles that may interest you**

- Operating department practitioner [16]
- Porter [17]
- Experienced paramedic [18]
- Emergency care assistant [19]

**Source URL:** https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/wider-healthcare-team/roles-wider-healthcare-team/clinical-support-staff/theatre-support-worker

**Links**
[8] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/clinical-support-staff
[10] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#AfC