

Estates services

Estates services staff look after NHS buildings and the grounds around them so they are a safe and pleasant environment for our staff and patients.

Like any buildings, NHS sites need repairs and regular maintenance. As the needs of the NHS change, existing buildings need to be extended or renovated and new sites built. The fabric of the building needs to be looked after – walls, floors and windows – as well as the systems inside them – heating, power and ventilation. All this work needs skilled staff, often from the construction sector.



Mainly inside

Hospitals, health centres and other NHS buildings need to be safe and welcoming for staff and patients. Any repairs need to be carried out to a high standard by skilled tradespeople. Although some estates staff are multi-skilled, the main roles are:

- [carpenter/joiner](#) ^[1]
- [electrician](#) ^[2]
- [painter and decorator](#) ^[3]
- [plumber](#) ^[4]
- [tiler](#) ^[5]
- [estates technician](#) ^[6]

Mainly outside

The outsides of NHS buildings and the grounds around them have to be kept tidy and in good repair. Walls and windows must be maintained and kept clean. Grounds can include gardens, paths and car parks. Working outside, your role could be:

- [bricklayer](#) ^[7]
- [window cleaner](#) ^[8]
- [gardeners and grounds staff](#) ^[9]

Inside or out

Some jobs involve being inside or out, working at different levels. You could be organising the people who do the maintenance and repairs or looking after all aspects of a smaller NHS building. Roles include:

- caretaker ^[10]

Technical and buildings

Professionals in the corporate services team look after the technical aspects of the NHS. Buildings have to be managed professionally so the NHS can be a good landlord or tenant. New building projects need professional advice to meet the needs of a modern, expanding healthcare service. Roles include:

- surveyor ^[11]

Estates staff must be prepared to travel. Some work across several sites or are called to work wherever repairs are needed. They may use NHS transport or their own van. Some estates staff work for companies that provide services to the NHS.

Many estates staff join the NHS with qualifications and experience from working and training elsewhere. If you have an interest in practical work and GCSEs in English and maths, there may be opportunities to train in one of the estates services roles. However you join the NHS, you will be encouraged to take further qualifications and progress. You could become a team leader and there may be chances to become a manager.

As a member of estates services staff, you may not have direct contact with patients, but if you are working in or around an NHS building, patients may be there. Some estates staff work evenings, nights or weekends so they can do repairs or maintenance work when hospitals are quiet or when health centres are closed. It's important that services such as water and electricity are available in hospitals at all times so, in emergencies, repairs have to be done straightaway. Some estates staff, plumbers and electricians for example, may be on call ^[12] for emergencies.

If you've got practical skills and like doing a good job on a building then a role in estates services could suit you.

• **Working inside**

Carpenters/joiners ^[1] work with wood and wood products. They help to repair and maintain parts of buildings. A carpenter could be fitting or replacing locks, hanging doors or assembling parts on a workbench, using power or hand tools.

Electricians ^[2] repair, maintain and test electric power supplies and equipment. The NHS relies on electric power supplies for much of the equipment used to treat patients as well

as for lighting, IT systems etc. Electricians have to be fully qualified and may be on call ^[12] for emergency cover.

Painters and decorators ^[3] make sure walls are smooth, protected and hygienic. They may do small repairs as well as plastering, painting and wallpapering. Painters may work on small areas or large building projects.

Plumbers ^[4] repair, maintain and install water and drainage systems. Hospitals and other NHS sites rely on clean water supplies. Plumbers may work out of hours or be on call ^[12] for emergencies such as leaks.

Tilers ^[5] apply tiles to walls and floors to provide smooth, hygienic surfaces. Tilers may work on repairs to small areas or on larger projects to retiling an area or in a new building. They work in a team on larger projects.

Estates technicians ^[6] repair and maintain systems which hospitals rely on. This can include medical gas supplies, lifts, alarms, heating and refrigeration. Some technicians specialise and others are multi-skilled. As the NHS relies on these systems, estates technicians are often on call ^[12] and have to be prepared to work quickly and carefully under pressure.

• **Working outside**

Bricklayers ^[7] repair and maintain the walls of NHS buildings. They could work on small repairs or large construction projects such as renovations or new buildings. They may work in a team on large projects. Bricklayers may also work with other estates team staff such as electricians or plumbers.

Window cleaners ^[8] may use buckets or water-fed poles to clean windows. On high buildings they use ladders, scaffolding or cradles and ropes. Window cleaners usually travel between sites in a van with their equipment.

Gardeners or grounds staff ^[9] keep the areas around NHS buildings tidy and safe. They may be mowing lawns, weeding or planting borders, trimming trees or sweeping car parks and paths. Some gardeners create garden areas for patients to relax or have some quiet time. In bad weather, grounds staff may clear snow and ice.

• **Working inside or out**

Caretakers ^[10] have to be flexible and multi-skilled. They could be moving furniture, disposing of waste, taking deliveries or unlocking and locking the building. A caretaker may work at one site or at several different sites.

Links

[1] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/estates-services/carpenterjoiner> [2]
<https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/estates-services/electrician> [3]
<https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/estates-services/painter-and-decorator> [4]
<https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/estates-services/plumber> [5]
<https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/estates-services/tiler> [6]
<https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/estates-services/estates-technician> [7]
<https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/estates-services/bricklayer> [8]
<https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/estates-services/window-cleaner> [9]
<https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/estates-services/gardeners-and-grounds-staff> [10]
<https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/estates-services/caretaker> [11]
<https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/wider-healthcare-team/roles-wider-healthcare-team/estates-services/surveyor/surveyor> [12] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#On_call