

Clinical support staff

Clinical support staff work with nurses, midwives, doctors and allied health professionals to deliver high-quality care.

Many clinical support staff are involved in looking after the general well-being and comfort of patients. Clinical support roles also offer an ideal entry route to many careers in health, such as nursing [1] and midwifery [2], especially for people with commitment and enthusiasm rather than academic qualifications.

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Healthcare support workers

Many clinical support workers assist healthcare professionals in the delivery of patient care. They work with an individual practitioner or a team, taking on tasks such as welcoming and preparing patients, explaining treatment and updating patient records.

Roles include:

- dietetic assistant [6]
- healthcare assistant [7]
- maternity support worker [8]
- occupational therapy support worker [9]
- orthotic technician [10]
- physiotherapy assistant [11]
- podiatry assistant [12]
- prosthetic technician [13]
- radiography assistant and imaging support assistant [14]
- speech and language therapy assistant [15]

You can enter most of these roles with GCSEs. For most of them, you need maths and English, for some (such as orthotic or prosthetic technician) you may need science. You need a caring nature and the ability to follow procedures and instructions carefully. Some experience of healthcare is useful when applying for these roles. This can be from paid work, volunteering or caring for a family member.

Professional clinical support

Some clinical support staff are fully qualified and registered by a professional organisation. These include:

- nutritionist [16]
- social worker [17]

To enter the NHS in one of these roles you need qualifications (often at degree level) and experience. In these roles, you may work in the NHS, or you may work with the NHS from another organisation such as a local authority. You may even be self-employed with your own private practice.

Specialist clinical support

Some clinical support workers, with experience and further qualifications, can take on more responsibility in a clinical or technical area. Examples of these roles include:

- assistant practitioner [18]
- healthcare science associate [19]

Other support

Clinical support workers have a range of other roles too – see the list below. Some do not need particular qualifications but employers usually look for some healthcare or other relevant experience, which could be paid or voluntary. For other roles, you may need specific qualifications or experience.

- cardiographer [20]
- creative therapy support roles [21]
- donor carer [22]
- dental support worker [23]
- newborn hearing screener [24]
- orthopaedic technician [25]
- phlebotomist [26]
- support, time and recovery worker [27]
- theatre support worker [28]

Clinical support roles can be a good entry point to the NHS. If you want to become a registered healthcare professional (nurse, midwife, physiotherapist or radiographer, for example) working in clinical support can give you the experience you need to apply for training.

If you are happy staying in clinical support, you will still be able to progress. You will be encouraged to take qualifications and increase your knowledge and skills. As you gain experience, you are likely to be given more responsibility, perhaps working without direct supervision. You may become team leader, supervising other clinical support staff.

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Links

- [1] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/we-are-the-nhs/nursing-careers>
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