

Home > Explore roles > Doctors > Roles for doctors > Surgery > Cardiothoracic surgery

Cardiothoracic surgeon

Cardiothoracic surgeons specialise in operating on the heart, lungs and other thoracic (chest) organs.

They also diagnose and treat diseases of these organs.

picture of a surgeon

Life as a cardiothoracic surgeon

You'll see the immediate and life-changing results of your work, but your role will be hugely demanding. Diseases that occur in a person's chest are common killers and you'll be managing life and death scenarios every day.

Cardiothoracic surgery is a relatively young speciality that has experienced rapid growth through the introduction of new technologies.

Before surgery you'll meet with patients and their families to discuss and explain procedures and offer reassurance. Being crystal clear, empathetic and warm is vital to the success of your role.

The main areas of cardiothoracic surgery are:

- cardiac surgery
- thoracic surgery
- congenital cardiac surgery
- heart and lung transplant surgery

Monitoring patients in intensive care [1] after surgery is a vital part of your work. Although cardiothoracic surgery is very safe, complications can occur and you'll need to be prepared to deal with a host of conditions including arrhythmias (heart-beat irregularity), post-operative bleeding, stroke [2], pleural effusion (fluid around the lungs), wound infection or thrombosis [3].

As well as performing surgery, you'll be involved in the treatment and management of many different conditions within your speciality. You'll need to attend outpatient clinics, multidisciplinary team meetings and ward rounds.

How much can I earn?

You'll first earn a salary when you start your <u>foundation training</u> [4] after medical school. Find out details of current salary ranges for foundation and specialty training, <u>SAS doctors</u> [5] and consultants on the 'Pay for doctors' [6] page.

How about the benefits?

- make a difference
- flexible and part-time working
- high income early in your career
- work anywhere in the world
- excellent pension scheme
- good holiday entitlement
- NHS discounts in shops and restaurants

Must-have skills

- excellent communication skills to manage a wide range of relationships with colleagues, and patients and their families
- emotional resilience, a calm temperament and the ability to work well under pressure
- teamwork and the capacity to lead multidisciplinary teams
- · problem-solving and diagnostic skills
- outstanding organisational ability and effective decision-making skills
- first-class time and resource management for the benefit of patients
- a high degree of manual dexterity
- superb hand-eye co-ordination, excellent vision, and visuospatial awareness
- physical stamina to cope with the demands of surgery

Entry requirements

Your first step is medical school. Typically, you'll need excellent GCSEs and three A or A* passes at A level including chemistry for a five-year undergraduate degree in medicine. Many medical schools also ask for biology and others may require maths or physics.

If you already have a degree, you could study for a four-year postgraduate degree in medicine.

You'll need to pass an interview and admissions test. You'll be asked to show how you demonstrate the NHS values such as compassion and respect.

Some medical schools look to recruit a mix of students from different backgrounds and geographical areas, so your educational and economic background and family circumstances could be considered as part of your application.

"I had some great mentors who gave me the opportunity to operate on patients with supervision, and to look after very sick patients on the intensive care [1] unit after cardiac surgery."

Read Omar's story [7].

What are my chances of starting a career as a cardiothoracic surgeon?

There are currently approximately 400 cardiothoracic surgeons working in the NHS in England. In 2020, there were between 5.86 and 9.92 applications for every specialty training place.

How to become a cardiothoracic surgeon

After medical school, you'll join the paid two-year <u>foundation programme</u> [8] where you'll work in six placements in different settings.

After your foundation programme, you can apply for paid <u>specialty training</u> [9] to become a cardiothoracic surgeon, which will take a minimum of six or seven years.

You may be able to train part time, for example for health reasons or if you have family or caring responsibilities.

Where a career as a cardiothoracic surgeon can take you

Working as a cardiothoracic surgeon, you'll have the opportunity to specialise in cardiac, thoracic or congenital surgery.

As a cardiac surgeon, you'll perform various kinds of surgery including:

- coronary artery bypass surgery restoring blood flow to the heart by bypassing the narrowed coronary arteries
- heart valve surgery repairing and replacing narrowed or leaking heart valves
- aortic surgery replacing an enlarged or damaged blood vessel leaving the heart

If you choose to specialise as a thoracic surgeon, you'll perform a wide range of surgery including:

- surgery for lung cancer, tumours and cysts
- surgery on collapsed or infected lungs
- keyhole thoracic surgery (video assisted thoracoscopic surgery (VATS))
- chest-wall deformities (pectus surgery)

If you choose congenital cardiac surgery, you'll treat babies and children with heart diseases that have been present from birth. These conditions include:

- septal defects (a hole between two of the heart's chambers)
- aortic and pulmonary valve stenosis (where the valve is narrower than normal)
- transposition of the arteries

You could specialise or conduct research, teach medical students or postgraduate students in training and get involved in research at universities, the NHS or private sector.

Live vacancies

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Cardiothoracic Radiology Fellowship

London, W2 1NY

Salary:

Negotiable

Type:

Fixed-Term

Employer:

Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust

Apply now on NHS Jobs for Cardiothoracic Radiology Fellowship job (opens in a new window) [10]

Consultant in Cardiothoracic Anaesthesia

London, EC1A 7BE

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Barts Health NHS Trust

Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant in Cardiothoracic Anaesthesia job (opens in a new window) [11]

Consultant in Cardiothoracic Anaesthesia

Sheffield, S5 7AU

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Sheffield Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant in Cardiothoracic Anaesthesia job (opens in a new window) [12]

Cardiothoracic Anaesthesia & Critical Care Fellow

Headington, OX3 9DU

Salary:

£61825.00 to £70425.00

Type:

Fixed-Term

Employer:

Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

Apply now on NHS Jobs for Cardiothoracic Anaesthesia & Critical Care Fellow job

(opens in a new window) [13]

Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon (Hip/Knee surgeon)

Torquay, TQ2 7SS

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust

Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon (Hip/Knee surgeon) job (opens in a new window) [14]

Trainee Advanced Clinical Practitioner - Cardiothoracic Surgery

Hull, HU165JQ

Salary:

£46148.00 to £52809.00

Type:

Training

Employer:

Hull University Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust

Apply now on NHS Jobs for Trainee Advanced Clinical Practitioner - Cardiothoracic Surgery job (opens in a new window) [15]

Senior Clinical Fellow in Cardiothoracic Critical Care

Cambridge Bio Medical Campus, CB2 0AY

Salary:

£70425.00

Type:

Fixed-Term

Employer:

Royal Papworth Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

Apply now on NHS Jobs for Senior Clinical Fellow in Cardiothoracic Critical Care job (opens in a new window) [16]

Consultant Colorectal Surgeon

Bournemouth & Poole, BH7 7DW

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

University Hospitals Dorset NHS Foundation Trust

Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Colorectal Surgeon job (opens in a new window) [17]

Consultant Breast Surgeon

Swansea, SA2 8QA

Salary:

£106000.00 to £154760.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Swansea Bay University Health Board

Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Breast Surgeon job (opens in a new window) [18]

Consultant Urological Surgeon

Torquay, TQ2 7AA

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust

Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Urological Surgeon job (opens in a new window) [19]

Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon

Cramlington, NE23 6NZ

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon job (opens in a new window) [20]

Consultant - Urological Surgeon

Slough, SL2 4HL

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Frimley Health NHS Foundation Trust

Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant - Urological Surgeon job (opens in a new window) [21]

Consultant Oculoplastic Surgeon

Maidstone, ME16 9QQ

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust

Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Oculoplastic Surgeon job (opens in a new window) [22]

Consultant Dermatology Surgeon

Canterbury, CT1 3NG

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation Trust

Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Dermatology Surgeon job (opens in a new window) [23]

Consultant Vascular Surgeon

Sheffield, S5 7AU

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Sheffield Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Vascular Surgeon job (opens in a new window) [24]

Consultant Hand Surgeon

Bristol, BS7 8SA

Bristol, BS11 0QE

Bristol, BS9 3AA

Bristol, BS10 6AF

Bristol, BS34 6BQ

Bristol, BS15 4EJ

Salary:

Negotiable

Type:

Locum

Employer:

HealthHarmonie

Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Hand Surgeon job (opens in a new window)

Consultant Breast Surgeon

Ilford, IG3 8YB

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Barking, Havering and Redbridge University Hospitals NHS Trust Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Breast Surgeon job (opens in a new window) [26]

Consultant in General Radiology (Interest in Cardiothoracic Imaging)

Salisbury, SP2 8BJ

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Salisbury NHS Foundation Trust

Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant in General Radiology (Interest in Cardiothoracic Imaging) job (opens in a new window) [27]

Band 5 Staff Nurse, Cardiothoracic Surgery, Cedar Ward

Harefield, UB9 6JH

Salary:

£34521.00 to £41956.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust

Apply now on NHS Jobs for Band 5 Staff Nurse, Cardiothoracic Surgery, Cedar Ward job (opens in a new window) [28]

Consultant Oral & Maxillofacial Surgeon

Northampton, NN1 5DB

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Northampton General Hospital

Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Oral & Maxillofacial Surgeon job (opens in a new window) [29]

Locum Consultant Thoracic Surgeon

Cambridge Bio Medical Campus, CB2 0AY

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Royal Papworth Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

Apply now on NHS Jobs for Locum Consultant Thoracic Surgeon job (opens in a new window) [30]

Consultant Colorectal/Peritoneal Surgeon

Manchester, M20 4BX

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

The Christie NHS FT

Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Colorectal/Peritoneal Surgeon job (opens in a new window) [31]

Locum Consultant Plastic Surgeon

Sheffield, S10 2TH

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Locum

Employer:

Sheffield Children's NHS Foundation Trust

Apply now on NHS Jobs for Locum Consultant Plastic Surgeon job (opens in a new window) [32]

ENT Consultant Surgeon (General)

Middlesbrough, TS4 3BW

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Fixed-Term

Employer:

South Tees Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

Apply now on NHS Jobs for ENT Consultant Surgeon (General) job (opens in a new window) [33]

o Consultant Paediatric Orthopaedic Surgeon

London, E1 1FR

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Barts Health NHS Trust

Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Paediatric Orthopaedic Surgeon job (opens in a new window) [34]

Locum Consultant Thoracic Surgeon

Liverpool, L14 3PE

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Fixed-Term

Employer:

Liverpool Heart and Chest Hospital

Apply now on NHS Jobs for Locum Consultant Thoracic Surgeon job (opens in a new window) [35]

Orthopaedic Surgeon Hip & Knee

Sutton Coldfield, B75 5BL

Salary:

£7200.00

Type:

Bank

Employer:

Medinet Clinical Services Limited

Apply now on NHS Jobs for Orthopaedic Surgeon Hip & Knee job (opens in a new window) [36]

Fixed Term Consultant Spinal Surgeon

Brighton and Hove, BN2 5BE

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Fixed-Term

Employer:

University Hospitals Sussex NHS Foundation Trust (279)

Apply now on NHS Jobs for Fixed Term Consultant Spinal Surgeon job (opens in a new window) [37]

Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon (Hip & Paediatric)

Swansea, SA6 6NL

Salary:

£106000.00 to £154760.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Swansea Bay University Health Board

Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon (Hip & Paediatric) job (opens in a new window) [38]

Locum Consultant Colorectal & General Surgeon

Blackpool, FY3 8NR

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Locum

Employer:

Blackpool Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

Apply now on NHS Jobs for Locum Consultant Colorectal & General Surgeon job (opens in a new window) [39]

Locum Consultant Spinal Deformity Surgeon

Northfield, Birmingham, B31 2AP

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Fixed-Term

Employer:

The Royal Orthopaedic Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

Apply now on NHS Jobs for Locum Consultant Spinal Deformity Surgeon job

(opens in a new window) [40]

Treatment Doctor / Surgeon - 7.5 hours

Reading, RG1 4QA

Salary:

£101000.00 to £151000.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

British Pregnancy Advisory Service (BPAS)

Apply now on NHS Jobs for Treatment Doctor / Surgeon - 7.5 hours job (opens in a new window) [41]

Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon (Foot & ankle)

Torquay, TQ2 7AA

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust

Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon (Foot & ankle) job (opens in a new window) [42]

Locum General Surgeon - Upper GI

Stockport, SK2 7JE

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Fixed-Term

Employer:

Stockport NHS Foundation Trust

Apply now on NHS Jobs for Locum General Surgeon - Upper GI job (opens in a new window) [43]

Consultant General Surgeon (Lower GI)

Sheffield, S11 8UX

Salary:

Negotiable

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

One Health Group

Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant General Surgeon (Lower GI) job (opens in a new window) [44]

Consultant Head and Neck Surgeon

London, SW3 6JJ

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

The Royal Marsden NHS Foundation Trust

Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Head and Neck Surgeon job (opens in a new window) [45]

Treatment Doctor / Surgeon - 15 hours

Birmingham, B30 1DB

Salary:

£101000.00 to £151000.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

British Pregnancy Advisory Service (BPAS)

Apply now on NHS Jobs for Treatment Doctor / Surgeon - 15 hours job (opens in a new window) [46]

Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon - Foot and Ankle

Shepton Mallet, BA4 4LP

Salary:

Negotiable

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Practice Plus Group

Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon - Foot and Ankle job (opens in a new window) [47]

Locum Consultant Burns and Plastics Surgeon

Birmingham, B46NH

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Locum

Employer:

Birmingham Women's and Children's NHS Foundation Trust

Apply now on NHS Jobs for Locum Consultant Burns and Plastics Surgeon job

(opens in a new window) [48]

Locum Consultant Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeon

East Grinstead, RH19 3DZ

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Fixed-Term

Employer:

Queen Victoria Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

Apply now on NHS Jobs for Locum Consultant Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeon job (opens in a new window) [49]

Consultant Plastic & Reconstructive Surgeon (Head & Neck)

Swansea, SA6 6NL

Salary:

£106000.00 to £154760.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Swansea Bay University Health Board

Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Plastic & Reconstructive Surgeon (Head & Neck) job (opens in a new window) [50]

Consultant ENT Head & Neck Cancer Surgeon

Rhyl, LL18 5UJ

Salary:

£106000.00 to £154760.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board

Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant ENT Head & Neck Cancer Surgeon job (opens in a new window) [51]

Locum Consultant Paediatric Trauma and Orthopaedic Surgeon

London, SW10 9NH

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Fixed-Term

Employer:

Chelsea and Westminster Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

Apply now on NHS Jobs for Locum Consultant Paediatric Trauma and Orthopaedic

Surgeon job (opens in a new window) [52]

Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon - Specialising in Soft Tissue Knee

Stoke on Trent, ST4 6QG

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

University Hospital of North Midlands NHS Trust

Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon - Specialising in Soft Tissue Knee job (opens in a new window) [53]

Consultant Surgeon with a Special Interest in Dermatology

Kettering, NN16 8UZ

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Kettering General Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

<u>Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Surgeon with a Special Interest in Dermatology job (opens in a new window) [54]</u>

Consultant Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeon with interest in TMD

East Grinstead, RH19 3DZ

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Queen Victoria Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeon with interest in TMD job (opens in a new window) [55]

Locum Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon With An Interest In Spinal

Swansea, SA6 6NL

Salary:

£116600.00

Type:

Locum

Employer:

Swansea Bay University Health Board

Apply now on NHS Jobs for Locum Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon With An Interest In Spinal job (opens in a new window) [56]

Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon with special interest in Knee Surgery

Stockport, SK2 7JE

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Stockport NHS Foundation Trust

Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon with special interest

Consultant Urological Surgeon SI in Non-muscle-invasive bladder cancer

Dartford, DA2 8DA

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Dartford and Gravesham NHS Trust

Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Urological Surgeon SI in Non-muscle-invasive bladder cancer job (opens in a new window) [58]

Further information

These organisations have further information about being a cardiothoracic surgeon, particularly as your career progresses. Take a look.

Royal College of Surgeons [59]

Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh [60]

Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow [61]

Society for Cardiothoracic Surgery in Great Britain and Ireland [62]

And hear from people working as cardiothoracic surgeons.

A career in cardiothoracic surgery (BMJ) [63]

A day in the life of a thoracic surgeon (CTSNET) [64]

A day in a heart surgeon's life (CTSNET) [65]

Other roles that may interest you

- Cardiologist [66]
- Emergency medicine [67]
- Respiratory medicine [68]
- Knowledge and library services [69]

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Links

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[1] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Intensive_care [2]
https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Stroke [3]
https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Thrombosis [4]
https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Foundation_training[5]
https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/doctors/career-opportunities-doctors/sas-doctors[6]
https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/doctors/pay-doctors [7]
https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/doctors/roles-doctors/surgery/cardiothoracic-surgery/real-
life-story-omal-jarral [8] https://foundationprogramme.nhs.uk/ [9] https://specialtytraining.hee.nhs.uk/ [10]
https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/C9290-25-0575 [11]
https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/C9259-25-1005 [12]
https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/C9190-25-0518 [13]
https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/C9321-25-0627 [14]
https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/C9388-25-0596 [15]
https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/C9356-25-0482 [16]
https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/C9175-25-0211 [17]
https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/C9153-25-0489 [18]
https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/H9130-25-0395 [19]
https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/C9388-25-0597 [20]
https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/C9319-25-0520 [21]
https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/C9151-25-0593 [22]
https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/C9359-25-0372 [23]
https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/C9344-25-0553 [24]
https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/C9190-25-0491 [25]
https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/U0024-25-0034BR [26]
https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/C9162-25-0348 [27]
https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/C9269-25-0182 [28]
https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/C9196-25-0893 [29]
https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/C9265-25-0223 [30]
https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/C9175-25-0177 [31]
https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/C9413-25-0304 [32]
https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/C9425-25-0238 [33]
https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/C9328-25-0561 [34]
https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/C9259-25-1047 [35]
https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/C9410-25-0090 [36]
https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/E0051-25-0010 [37]
https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/C9279-25-0848 [38]
https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/H9130-25-0379 [39]
https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/C9382-25-0120 [40]
https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/C9303-25-0045 [41]
https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/B0201-MED-TOPS-REA-2 [42]
https://beta.iobs.nhs.uk/candidate/iobadvert/C9388-25-0639 [43]
https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/C9362-25-0390 [44]
https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/B0103-25-0021 [45]
https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/C9282-25-0378 [46]
https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/B0201-MED-TOPS24-15-5 [47]
https://beta.iobs.nhs.uk/candidate/iobadvert/E0314-25-2223 [48]
https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/C9284-25-0303 [49]
https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/C9276-25-0104 [50]
https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/H9130-25-0374 [51]
https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/H9050-25-1327 [52]
https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/C9289-25-0074 [53]
https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/C9205-25-0611 [54]
https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/C9264-25-0174 [55]
https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/C9276-25-0113 [56]
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https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/C9362-25-0389 [58]
https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/C9362-25-0389 [58]
https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/C9252-25-0149 [59] http://www.rcseng.ac.uk/ [60]
http://www.rcsed.ac.uk [61] http://www.rcpsg.ac.uk [62] http://www.scts.org [63]
http://careers.bmj.com/careers/advice/view-article.html?id=20001067 [64]
http://www.ctsnet.org/article/day-life-thoracic-surgeon [65] http://www.ctsnet.org/article/day-heart-surgeons-life [66] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/doctors/roles-doctors/medicine/cardiology [67] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/doctors/roles-doctors/medicine/respiratory-medicine [69] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/health-informatics/roles-health-informatics/knowledge-and-library-services