Apprenticeships, traineeships and cadet schemes

Apprenticeships offer structured training with an employer and lead to nationally-recognised qualifications.

They provide a route into hundreds of different careers, including many in organisations that provide NHS healthcare.

Key facts and figures

- apprenticeships can take anything from one to five years to complete depending on the level and the employer
- they are open to anyone from the age of 16
- apart from learning in the workplace, you may go on day or block release to a training centre or college
- you work towards a competence qualification (based on what you can do in the workplace) and a knowledge qualification, or a qualification combining both elements
- you will develop your skills, including English and maths
- if you are aged 16 to 18 or 19+ and in your first year of an apprenticeship, you should receive at least the National Minimum Wage for apprentices (£3.90 an hour (as at April 2019). Otherwise you are entitled to the National Minimum Wage rate for your age. Many employers pay well over the minimum.

Four levels

Apprenticeships are available at four levels:

- Intermediate apprenticeships - follow work-based learning towards level 2 – equivalent to GCSEs level/level 2 qualifications
- Advanced apprenticeship - follow work-based learning towards level 3 – equivalent to A-levels/level 3 qualifications
- Higher apprenticeships - follow work-based learning towards levels 4, 5, 6 & 7 – equivalent to a foundation degree and above
- Degree apprenticeships - follow work-based learning towards levels 6 & 7 – equivalent to a full bachelor’s or master’s degree
Entry requirements

Employers will want to make sure that you can cope with the level of the work involved. So the entry requirements will depend on the employer and the type and level of apprenticeship.

For instance, for direct entry to an Advanced Level Apprenticeship, you may need four or five GCSEs at grades 9-4/A-C or equivalent, sometimes including particular subjects. You may be expected to take an entry test. To start a higher apprenticeship you are likely to need a qualification at level 3 or sufficient experience.

Types of apprenticeships

There are hundreds of different jobs covered by apprenticeships. Examples of apprenticeships in health, public services and care include:

- Apprentice ambulance practitioner (level 4)
- Care, Leadership and Management (level-5 Higher Apprenticeship)
- Allied Health Profession Support (Advanced Level)
- Assistant Practitioner (level-5 Higher Apprenticeship)
- Clinical Healthcare Support (Intermediate and Advanced Level)
- Dental Nursing (Advanced Level)
- Emergency Care Assistance (Intermediate Level)
- Informatics (Intermediate and Advanced Level)
- Maternity and Paediatric Support (Advanced Level)
- Pharmacy services assistant (level 2)
- Health and Social Care (Intermediate and Advanced Level)
- Healthcare science assistant (Intermediate - level 2)
- Healthcare science associate (Higher - level 4)
- Midwifery degree apprenticeship
- Nursing degree apprenticeships. Find out more on our studying nursing page
- Occupational therapy degree apprenticeship
- Operating department practice degree apprenticeship
- Physiotherapy degree apprenticeship
- Podiatry degree apprenticeship
- Paramedic degree apprenticeship
- Prosthetics and orthotics degree apprenticeship

Other apprenticeships offered by organisations that provide NHS healthcare are suitable for
work with other types of employers too, such as those in construction, facilities, business administration, logistics and management. There are many more.

See our handy PDF for examples of the types of apprenticeship in health available. And look out for the 'A' icon when exploring the various roles on this website to see which ones roles can be entered through an apprenticeship.

Find out more and apply

There’s often tough competition for apprenticeship places. In your application and interview you need to show that you are committed, aware of your responsibilities and able to cope with the work and study. Our career planning section has lots of information on applications, interviews etc.

After completing an apprenticeship, you may be offered a permanent job.

There has never been a better time to start an apprenticeship and applying is easy. Visit the Gov.uk website for more general information and to register, search and apply for opportunities. Apprenticeship vacancies may also be found on the NHS Jobs website. You can take a look at the 'Choose an Apprenticeship' Video produced by the National Skills Academy for Health. And check out the different healthcare apprenticeship career routes on the Skills for Health website.

Next steps after an apprenticeship

After completing an apprenticeship, you may be offered a permanent job. Most successful apprentices stay in employment, often with the same employer. Check whether you are likely to be offered work at the end of your programme.

Ask whether there are opportunities for promotion when you have completed your apprenticeship and whether you will be able to continue with your studies. You can often progress from one level of apprenticeship to another. Some apprenticeships provide you with the qualifications you need to go to university.

You can also get free and impartial careers advice from the National Careers Service. Search online for 'National Careers Service' or call an adviser on 0800 100 900.

- Traineeships

Traineeships help unlock your great potential. They give you training to prepare you for the world of work, maths and English skills and the work experience needed to get an apprenticeship or other job.
What are they?

- traineeships are education and training programmes combined with work experience
- traineeships aim to give you the skills and experience to help you find an apprenticeship or job
- they are tailored to meet your needs
- there are three core elements: a work placement, training in how to prepare for work, and support with your English and maths if you need it
- traineeships can last from six weeks to six months

Are you suitable?

You may be able to take a traineeship if you are:

- unemployed (or work less than 16 hours a week)
- have little work experience
- are aged 16-18 and don’t have a level-3 qualification, or if you are aged 19-23 and don’t have a level-2 qualification

Further information

Traineeship opportunities are advertised regularly on the Gov.uk website [26].

- Cadet schemes

Expand / collapse

Cadet schemes are a great way to learn and gain experience at the same time.

In a few areas of the country, cadet schemes provide an entry route into careers in health. Programmes and entry requirements vary widely but cadet schemes are usually offered in partnership with a local further education college.

Where available, cadet schemes involve supervised experience in a variety of settings and lead to level-2 or -3 qualifications.

Cadet schemes can help you decide on a career route to follow and can lead to work in a number of different areas, including nursing or support-level roles with or without patient contact.

It is important to note that most cadet schemes have been replaced by apprenticeship schemes, but contact the organisations providing NHS healthcare in your area [27] to see if they offer cadet schemes.
Read how Luke Watson is getting on in his cadet scheme here [28].

Partner logos

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