Anaesthesia

Anaesthetists are the largest group of hospital-based specialists and give anaesthetics for surgical, medical and psychiatric procedures.

They facilitate pain-free childbirth, resuscitate acutely unwell patients, run chronic pain services and lead intensive care [1] units.

Life as an anaesthetist

It’s your responsibility to choose the appropriate anaesthetic for your patient. Typically, you’ll offer four stages of patient care for a routine anaesthetic:

- preparation – you’ll assess your patient’s fitness for anaesthesia and agree on an anaesthetic plan
- induction – you’ll initiate the anaesthesia
- maintenance – you’ll continue the anaesthesia while monitoring your patient’s condition, including checking the activity of the heart, blood pressure, oxygen and carbon dioxide levels, breathing, body temperature, depth of anaesthesia and the body fluid balance
- recovery – you’ll reverse the anaesthesia and support the patient’s recovery

Most of your time will be spent in operating theatres, but anaesthetists perform numerous roles in many different areas of a hospital. On any given day, you’ll facilitate pain free childbirth, resuscitate acutely unwell patients, run chronic pain services and lead intensive care [1] units.

You can expect to work in areas such as:

- obstetric units
- critical care services for intensive care [1] and high dependency patients
- resuscitation services
- emergency departments
- chronic pain management
- acute pain teams
- dentistry
- perioperative [2] clinics
• research
• psychiatry – for patients receiving electro-convulsive therapy (ECT) [3]
• radiology – anaesthesia for CT scans [4] and MRI [5], especially in children
• inter-hospital transfers of critically ill patients

You’ll also work closely with patients, understanding their condition and treatment. It’s your responsibility to care for a patient for the duration of their operation. Being prepared for the unexpected can be exciting but also challenging at times.

Dr Sarah Plummer

Consultant anaesthetist

Seeing patients wake up safely and with good pain relief after any surgery always makes my job worthwhile.

Read Sarah’s story. [6]

How much can I earn?

You’ll first earn a salary when you start your foundation training [7] after medical school. The basic salary ranges from £32,398 to £37,303. Once you start your specialty training in the NHS, you can expect to earn a salary of at least £43,923, which can increase to between £93,666 and £126,281 as a consultant.

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

**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.

**What are my chances of starting a career as an anaesthetist?**

In 2020, there were 1,479 applications for 569 places for anaesthetic specialty training.

**How to become an anaesthetist**

- After medical school, you’ll join the paid two-year foundation programme where you’ll work in six placements in different settings.
- After your foundation programme, you can apply for paid specialty training to become an anaesthetist which will take a minimum of 7 or 8 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 an anaesthetist can take you**
You could:

- specialise or conduct research in areas such as pain medicine
- teach medical students or postgraduate students in training
- get involved in research at universities, the NHS or private sector?

Find your degree in medicine

Region
- Any -

Type of qualification
- Any -

Full or part time
- Any -

Search

Displaying 1 - 5 of 76 matches

**Medicine with Foundation Year**

University of Plymouth

View course [Opens in a new window]

Qualification
- Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery - BMBS

Study mode
- Full-time

Duration of the course
- 6 Years

Leading to a career in
- Medicine

Contact details
- meddent-admissions@plymouth.ac.uk
- +44 (0)1752 437333

Region
- South West

Admissions address
- Drake Circus
- Plymouth
**Medicine (Graduate Entry) (4 years)**

University of St Andrews

View course [Opens in a new window]

- Qualification
  - Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery - MB ChB
- Study mode
  - Full-time
- Duration of the course
  - 4 Years
- Leading to a career in
  - Medicine
- Contact details
  - scotgem-admissions@st-andrews.ac.uk
  - 01334 463619
- Region
  - Scotland
- Admissions address
  - 16 St Katharine's West
  - St Andrews
  - KY16 9AX
  - United Kingdom

**Medicine (Graduate Entry)**

Cardiff University

View course [Opens in a new window]

- Qualification
  - Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery - MB BCh
- Study mode
  - Full-time
- Duration of the course
  - 4 Years
- Leading to a career in
  - Medicine
- Contact details
  - admissions@cardiff.ac.uk
  - 029 2087 9999
- Region
  - Wales
- Admissions address
  - 30-36 Newport Road
  - Cardiff
  - CF24 0DE
United Kingdom

**Medicine North Wales**

Cardiff University

View course [Opens in a new window]
- Qualification
  - Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery - MB BCh
- Study mode
  - Full-time
- Duration of the course
  - 4 Years
- Leading to a career in
  - Medicine
- Contact details
  - admissions@cardiff.ac.uk [15]
  - 029 2087 9999
- Region
  - Wales
- Admissions address
  - Bangor University
  - Bangor
  - Gwynedd, North Wales
  - Bangor
  - LL57 2DG
  - Wales

**Medicine**

Cardiff University

View course [Opens in a new window]
- Qualification
  - Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery - MB BCh
- Study mode
  - Full-time
- Duration of the course
  - 5 Years
- Leading to a career in
  - Medicine
- Contact details
  - admissions@cardiff.ac.uk [15]
  - 029 2087 9999
- Region
  - Wales
- Admissions address
  - 30-36 Newport Road
  - Cardiff
Consultant Anaesthetist
Bristol, BS16 7FH
Salary: £126000.00
Type: Permanent
Employer: Practice Plus Group
Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Anaesthetist job (opens in a new window)

Consultant Anaesthetist
Blackpool, FY3 8NR
Salary: £93666.00 to £126281.00
Type: Permanent
Employer: Blackpool Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Anaesthetist job (opens in a new window)

Consultant Anaesthetist
Whitehaven, CA28 8JG
Salary:
£88364.00 to £119133.00
Type:
Permanent
Employer:
North Cumbria Integrated Care NHS Foundation Trust
Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Anaesthetist job (opens in a new window) [21]

Consultant Anaesthetist

Shepton Mallet, BA4 4LP

Salary:
£99275.00 to £118000.00
Type:
Permanent
Employer:
Practice Plus Group
Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Anaesthetist job (opens in a new window) [22]

Consultant Anaesthetist

Poole & Bournemouth, BH7 7DW

Salary:
£93666.00 to £126281.00
Type:
Permanent
Employer:
University Hospitals Dorset NHS Foundation Trust
Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Anaesthetist job (opens in a new window) [23]

Consultant Anaesthetist

Crewe, CW1 4QJ

Salary:
£93666.00 to £126281.00
Type:
Permanent
Employer:
Mid Cheshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Anaesthetist job (opens in a new window) [24]

Consultant Anaesthetist
Guernsey, GY4 6UU

Salary: £140126.31
Type: Permanent
Employer: States of Guernsey

Consultant Anaesthetist

Plymouth, PL6 8DH

Salary: £93666.00 to £126281.00
Type: Permanent
Employer: University Hospitals Plymouth NHS Trust

Consultant Anaesthetist

Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells, ME16 9QQ

Salary: £93666.00 to £126281.00
Type: Permanent
Employer: Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust

Consultant Anaesthetist (General)

London, NW3 2QG

Salary: £93666.00 to £126281.00
Type: Permanent
Employer: Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust

Consultant Anaesthetist (General)
Locum Consultant Anaesthetist

London, E1 1FR

Salary: £93666.00 to £126281.00
Type: Fixed-Term
Employer: Barts Health NHS Trust
Apply now on NHS Jobs for Locum Consultant Anaesthetist job (opens in a new window) [29]

Consultant Cardiothoracic Anaesthetist

London, SW17 0QT

Salary: £93666.00 to £126281.00
Type: Permanent
Employer: St George's Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust
Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Cardiothoracic Anaesthetist job (opens in a new window) [30]

Self-Employed Anaesthetist

Sheffield, S11 8UX

Salary: Negotiable
Type: Permanent
Employer: One Health Group
Apply now on NHS Jobs for Self-Employed Anaesthetist job (opens in a new window) [31]

Consultant General Anaesthetist

Barnstaple, EX31 4JB

Salary: £93666.00 to £126281.00
Type: Permanent
Employer:
Locum Consultant Cardiothoracic Anaesthetist

Leeds, LS9 7TF

Salary: £93666.00 to £126281.00

Type: Locum

Employer: Leeds Teaching Hospitals

Apply now on NHS Jobs for Locum Consultant Cardiothoracic Anaesthetist job (opens in a new window)

Locum Cardiac Consultant Anaesthetist

London, SE5 9RS

Salary: £93666.00 to £126281.00

Type: Fixed-Term

Employer: King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

Apply now on NHS Jobs for Locum Cardiac Consultant Anaesthetist job (opens in a new window)

Consultant Anaesthetist - Major General

Cosham, PO6 3LY

Salary: £93666.00 to £126281.00

Type: Permanent

Employer: Portsmouth Hospitals University NHS Trust

Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Anaesthetist - Major General job (opens in a new window)

Trust Grade Anaesthetist (CT3)

Hull/ Cottingham, HU3 2JZ

Salary: £55329.00
Type: Fixed-Term
Employer: Hull University Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust
Apply now on NHS Jobs for Trust Grade Anaesthetist (CT3) job (opens in a new window) [36]

**Locum Consultant Paediatric Anaesthetist**

Nottingham, NG7 2UH

Salary: £93666.00 to £126281.00
Type: Locum
Employer: Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trusts
Apply now on NHS Jobs for Locum Consultant Paediatric Anaesthetist job (opens in a new window) [37]

**Consultant Anaesthetist and Intensive Care**

Newport, Isle of Wight, PO30 5TG

Salary: £93666.00 to £126281.00
Type: Permanent
Employer: Isle of Wight NHS Trust
Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Anaesthetist and Intensive Care job (opens in a new window) [38]

**Consultant Anaesthetist - Major General & Upper GI**

Cossham, PO6 3LY

Salary: £93666.00 to £126281.00
Type: Permanent
Employer: Portsmouth Hospitals University NHS Trust
Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Anaesthetist - Major General & Upper GI job (opens in a new window) [39]

**Consultant Anaesthetist with special interest Cardiac Anaesthesia**
Birmingham, B15 2TH

Salary: £93666.00 to £126281.00
Type: Permanent
Employer: University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust
Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Anaesthetist with special interest Cardiac Anaesthesia job (opens in a new window) [40]

Locum Consultant Anaesthetist (Paediatric or Obstetric anaesthesia)

London, SW10 9NH

Salary: £93666.00 to £126281.00
Type: Fixed-Term
Employer: Chelsea and Westminster Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
Apply now on NHS Jobs for Locum Consultant Anaesthetist (Paediatric or Obstetric anaesthesia) job (opens in a new window) [41]

Consultant Anaesthetist special interest in Vascular & Pre-assessment

Newcastle Road, ST4 6QG

Salary: £93666.00 to £126281.00
Type: Permanent
Employer: University Hospital of North Midlands NHS Trust
Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Anaesthetist special interest in Vascular & Pre-assessment job (opens in a new window) [42]

Consultant Anaesthetist with an interest in Obstetric Anaesthesia

London, SW170QT

Salary: £93666.00 to £126281.00
Type: Permanent
Employer:
St George's Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust
Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Anaesthetist with an interest in Obstetric Anaesthesia job (opens in a new window)  

Further information

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

The Royal College of Anaesthetists [44]

The Association of Anaesthetists of Great Britain and Ireland [45]

Association of Cardiothoracic Anaesthetists [46]

The National Institute of Academic Anaesthesia [47]

And hear from people already working as an anaesthetist:

Starting in anaesthetics (BMJ) [48]

The secret life of an anaesthetist (The Guardian) [49]

About anaesthesia (HEWM) [50]

Dr Zulfi Sadiq, anaesthesia (HEEM) [51]

Other roles that may interest you

- Emergency medicine [52]
- Acute internal medicine [53]
- General surgery [54]
- General practitioner [55]

Source URL: https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/doctors/roles-doctors/anaesthesia

Links
[1] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Intensive_care