

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](#) ^[3] (ECT)
- 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.

How much can I earn?

You'll first earn a salary when you start your [foundation training](#) ^[6] after medical school. The basic salary ranges from £29,384 to £34,012. Once you start your specialty training as an anaesthetist employed by the NHS, you can expect to earn a salary of at least £40,257, which can increase to between £84,559 and £114,003 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.

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

Read Sarah's story [\[7\]](#).

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 [\[8\]](#) programme [\[8\]](#)?where you'll work in six placements in different settings.?
- After your foundation programme, you can apply for paid specialty training [\[9\]](#) 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?

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Live vacancies

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Specialist Anaesthetist

Kings Lynn, PE30 4ET

Salary:

£80693.00 to £91584.00 a year per annum

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

The Queen Elizabeth Hospital King's Lynn NHS Foundation Trust

Apply now on NHS Jobs for Specialist Anaesthetist job (opens in a new window)

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Consultant Anaesthetist

Shepton Mallet, BA4 4LP

Salary:

£95,000 - £105,000 per annum

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Practice Plus Group

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Consultant Anaesthetist

Plymouth, PL6 5XP

Salary:

Up to £113,300 per annum

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Practice Plus Group

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Consultant Anaesthetist

Southampton, SO14 0YG

Salary:

£105,000

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Practice Plus Group

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Consultant Anaesthetist

Emersons Green, BS16 7FH

Salary:

£120,000 per annum

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Practice Plus Group

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Consultant Anaesthetist

Huntingdon, PE29 6NT

Salary:

£84559.00 to £114003.00 a year per annum

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

North West Anglia NHS Foundation Trust

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**Further
information**

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

The Royal College of Anaesthetists [16]

The Association of Anaesthetists of Great Britain and Ireland [17]

Association of Cardiothoracic Anaesthetists [18]

The National Institute of Academic Anaesthesia [19]

And hear from people already working as an anaesthetist:

Starting in anaesthetics (BMJ) [20]

The secret life of an anaesthetist (The Guardian) [21]

About anaesthesia (HEWM) [22]

Dr Zulfi Sadiq, anaesthesia (HEEM) [23]

Other roles that may interest you

- Emergency medicine [24]
- Acute internal medicine [25]
- General surgery [26]
- General practitioner [27]

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

Links

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

[2] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Perioperative>

[3] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Electro-convulsive_therapy

[4] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#CT_scans

[5] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#MRI>

[6] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Foundation_training

[7] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/doctors/roles-doctors/anaesthesia/real-life-story-dr-sarah-plummer>

[8] <https://foundationprogramme.nhs.uk/>

[9] <https://specialtytraining.hee.nhs.uk/>

[10] <https://www.jobs.nhs.uk/xi/vacancy/917354566>

[11] <https://www.jobs.nhs.uk/xi/vacancy/917381126>

[12] <https://www.jobs.nhs.uk/xi/vacancy/917377963>

[13] <https://www.jobs.nhs.uk/xi/vacancy/917375840>

[14] <https://www.jobs.nhs.uk/xi/vacancy/917388432>

[15] <https://www.jobs.nhs.uk/xi/vacancy/917346693>

[16] <http://www.rcoa.ac.uk/careers-training>

[17] <http://www.aagbi.org/>

[18] <http://www.acta.org.uk/home/welcome.asp>

[19] <http://www.niaa.org.uk/>

[20] <http://careers.bmj.com/careers/advice/view-article.html?id=2239>

[21] https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/sep/12/secret-life-anaesthetist-surgery-doctor?CMP=tw_t_gu

[22]

<http://www.westmidlandsdeanery.nhs.uk/SpecialtySchools/PostgraduateSchoolofACE/Anaesthesia.aspx>

[23]

https://www.eastmidlandsdeanery.nhs.uk/video_popup.php?videoUrl=media/webcasts_nov09/anaesth&autoPla

[24] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/doctors/roles-doctors/emergency-medicine>

[25] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/doctors/roles-doctors/medicine/acute-internal-medicine>

[26] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/doctors/roles-doctors/surgery/general-surgery>

[27] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/doctors/roles-doctors/general-practitioner-gp/general-practitioner>