

Assistant practitioner

Assistant practitioners are experienced staff working in support roles, alongside qualified healthcare professionals.

This page has information on the role of assistant practitioners, including entry requirements and skills needed.

Working life

Assistant practitioners (sometimes known as associate practitioners) have skills and experience in a particular area of clinical practice. Although they are not registered practitioners they have a high level of skill through their experience and training.



Assistant practitioners work across the NHS in most departments so you could be working in:

- [respiratory](#) ^[1] medicine, testing and assessing lung function

- occupational therapy, assessing people's need for aids and equipment at home
- an operating theatre area, scrubbing and assisting in surgical and other procedures, or monitoring patients recovering from surgery
- providing personal, social, therapeutic and rehabilitative care (e.g. bowel care and management, [catheter](#) [2] insertions etc.)
- dietetics, encouraging people to make healthier food choices
- biomedical science, analysing samples in a lab
- mental health services, supporting adults or young people with mental health issues
- [stroke](#) [3] rehabilitation, helping people recover in their own homes
- emergency medicine, treating patients so they can return home as soon as possible
- radiography, helping to diagnose or treat a patient's illness
- a health centre or GP surgery, changing dressings and monitoring medication
- hearing services, as a [hearing aid dispenser](#) [4]

As an assistant practitioner, you'll always work under the direction of a health professional such as a [nurse](#) [5], [dietitian](#) [6], [physiotherapist](#) [7], [podiatrist](#) [8] or [biomedical scientist](#) [9]. Your level of training and experience means you can often work alone, without supervision. You'll carry out agreed procedures, referring to a professional for guidance when necessary.

Assistant practitioners work across the NHS in most departments.

You could work in hospitals, clinics or in the community eg GP surgeries. You may visit patients in their homes or in residential care. You'll work closely with other healthcare staff and have a lot of contact with patients.

You may mentor [healthcare assistants](#) [10], trainee assistant practitioners and student [nurses](#) [11]

Entry requirements

To train as an assistant practitioner, you have to be working in the NHS, often in a clinical support role such as [healthcare assistant](#) [12], [dietetic assistant](#) [13] or [maternity support worker](#) [14].

As well as healthcare experience, trainee assistant practitioners have a healthcare qualification, usually at level 3, such as the CACHE Diploma in Clinical Healthcare Support.

Your skills and responsibilities will vary, depending on the care setting you work in. You'll need to demonstrate the values and behaviours of the [NHS Constitution](#) [15] and a knowledge of physical health, mental health and illness prevention, as well as more advanced knowledge, depending on your care setting.

Personal characteristics and skills needed

Assistant practitioners need to be:

- caring and kind

- confident with using lifting equipment
- willing to be hands-on with patients
- able to follow instructions and procedures
- able to work in a team but use their own initiative
- able to explain procedures to patients
- careful and methodical

You'll also need effective:

- communication skills, including listening
- organisational skills
- observational skills

Training and development

You will be given the training you need for the job, including an introduction to the department and its procedures. Assistant practitioners usually follow a therapy or nursing training pathway and undertake a level 5 two-year foundation degree in health or social care, which may be available as an apprenticeship programme.

Assistant practitioners have to keep their skills and knowledge up to date with regular training.

Assistant practitioners can become members of the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) ^[16] or the professional association for their speciality.

- Pay and conditions

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Clinical support staff working in the NHS are paid on the Agenda for Change (AfC) ^[17] pay system. As an assistant practitioner, you would usually be on AfC ^[18] band 4. There are sometimes opportunities for trainee assistant practitioners at AfC ^[18] band 3.

Assistant practitioners usually work standard hours of around 37.5 a week. They may work shifts, which could involve nights, early starts, evenings and weekends.

Terms and conditions will usually be different for clinical support staff working outside of the NHS.

- Where the role can lead

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With experience and training you could become a senior assistant practitioner, supervising the work of other clinical support staff.

With experience, and as long as you can demonstrate that you have the academic ability to study at degree level, you could apply to train as a healthcare professional such as a [nurse](#) [5], [dietitian](#) [6], [physiotherapist](#) [7], [podiatrist](#) [8], [healthcare science practitioner](#) [19], etc.

- Job market and vacancies

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Most NHS trusts advertise their vacancies on [NHS Jobs](#) [20]. Some advertise on their own websites. You can find a list of NHS organisations [NHS Choices](#) [21].

If you're applying for a role either directly in the NHS or in an organisation that provides NHS services, you'll be asked to show how you think the NHS values apply in your everyday work.

[Find out more about NHS values](#) [22].

- Further information

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- [Royal College of Nursing](#) [23]
- [Society for Cardiological Science and Technology](#) [24]
- [UNISON](#) [25]

Other roles that may interest you

- [Healthcare assistant](#) [10]
- [Healthcare science assistants and associates](#) [26]
- [Experienced paramedic](#) [27]
- [Emergency care assistant](#) [28]

Source URL: <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/wider-healthcare-team/roles-wider-healthcare-team/clinical-support-staff/assistant-practitioner>

Links

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- [10] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/wider-healthcare-team/roles-wider-healthcare-team/clinical-support-staff/healthcare-assistant>

- [11] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/EXPLORE-ROLES/nursing/studying-nursing>
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- [14] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/clinical-support-staff/maternity-support-worker>
- [15] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#NHS_Constitution
- [16] <http://www.rcn.org.uk/>
- [17] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/about/careers-nhs/nhs-pay-and-benefits/agenda-change-pay-rates>
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- [19] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/i-am/considering-or-university/studying-healthcare-science>
- [20] <http://www.jobs.nhs.uk>
- [21] <http://www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/thenhs/about/Pages/authoritiesandtrusts.aspx>
- [22] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/about/working-health/nhs-constitution>
- [23] <http://www.rcn.org.uk>
- [24] <http://www.scst.org.uk/pages/default.asp>
- [25] <https://www.unison.org.uk/about/>
- [26] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/wider-healthcare-team/roles-wider-healthcare-team/clinical-support-staff/healthcare-science-assistant-and-associate>
- [27] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/ambulance-service-team/roles-ambulance-service/experienced-paramedic>
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