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Getting experience

Get some work experience ideas, how to find them and how to make the most of them.

Getting experience can put you on the road to an NHS career. Many NHS jobs and training courses, such as university degrees and apprenticeships, need some level of experience. While for others, you'll need to demonstrate that you've looked into the role you're interested in and have some understanding of what it involves.

Can't see the video? You'll need to accept all cookies [1]. Alternatively, visit our YouTube Channel to view our videos [2]

Ways of getting experience

Getting some experience can be really important in finding an NHS career. Here are some of the different things you can do.

- **work experience placements.** The placement could be a day or two, a week or fortnight or a few hours each week. It is worth remembering that during and since the COVID-19 pandemic, you might find it more difficult to find them.
- **volunteering.** Volunteers work alongside staff doing worthwhile tasks. Although you're not paid, any expenses may be reimbursed. You don't have to volunteer full time. It could be a one-off project or a weekly commitment that you could fit around your work or studies. It could form part of your gap year either in the UK or overseas.
- **paid part- or full-time work.** Any paid experience in the right sort of environment can be valuable, particularly if you receive training.
- **a supported internship.** Supported internships (such as with Project Choice) provide a mix of work placements and study days at college, usually for people aged between 16 and 24
- **other ways** in which you can gain relevant experience include caring for a friend or relative who is sick or disabled

The greater and more varied the experience you have the better, so you could, for instance, do a placement as well as some volunteering.

Alex Townsend

Podiatrist

> I started looking at degrees when I was about 16 and knew I wanted to do something in healthcare so I set about doing work experience in various different settings including physiotherapy, dentistry and orthopaedics.

Read Alex's story [3]

> Getting some relevant experience is one of the most important things you can do to help you find a career in health.

Relevant experience

Ideally you should try to gain experience in the area of health that interests you. However, any experience can be useful because just being in a health environment can give you an insight into the work. If you're considering a university course [4], make sure you find out what sort of experience they're looking for. Contact them or visit their website. It's best not to assume!

Thousands of organisations provide healthcare in one way or another. You could consider gaining experience at:

- an NHS or private hospital, clinic or health centre
- a charity or social enterprise (such as one that supports people with long-term health conditions, disabilities or older people, or that provide first aid, eg St John Ambulance or the Red Cross)
- a residential care home or day care centre

Your role could be to support patients or clients directly, or staff in general, or it may be behind the scenes.

- ## Finding an opportunity

  If you're looking for a work experience placement:

  - if you're a student, find out whether your school or college has a list of suitable employers that have taken on work experience students in the past

- ask your teachers or specialist staff at your school or college if they know of any suitable opportunities
- contact suitable employers yourself (you could telephone, email or write)
- ask any contacts you have who work for suitable employers to find out whether you could do a placement at their workplace
- if you live in the north east, find out who to contact at the NHS trusts offering work experience opportunities [5]
- if you're 16-30-years-old, register with The King's Trust [6]who run regular courses with the NHS, including work placements

If you want to volunteer, you could find an opportunity through:

- take a look at the NHS Volunteering website [7]
- NHS Jobs [8] - you can also find some of the current volunteering opportunities below
- an organisation you belong to, such as your school or college, Guides or Scouts
- a scheme, such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award
- a specific charity or voluntary organisation
- the National Citizen Service [9] (if you are aged 16 or 17)

You can ask about suitable volunteering opportunities at:

- local organisations that provide NHS healthcare [10] services
- your local volunteer centre [11]

You can also search online for suitable volunteering opportunities through:

- Do-it [12]
- TimeBank [13]
- Volunteering Matters [14]
- The National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) [15]
- NHS Jobs [16]

Just some of the current volunteering opportunities are below.

Find a vacancy

Enter your location or postcode

Show results within

Search

- **Chaplaincy Volunteer**

Barnsley, S75 2EP

Salary:
Negotiable
Type:
Voluntary
Employer:
Barnsley Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
Apply now on NHS Jobs for Chaplaincy Volunteer job (opens in a new window) [17]

- ### Daytime Volunteer

Cambridge, CB2 0QQ

Salary:
Negotiable
Type:
Voluntary
Employer:
Cambridge University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
Apply now on NHS Jobs for Daytime Volunteer job (opens in a new window) [18]

- ### VOLUNTEER-Charity

Reading, RG1 5AN

Salary:
Negotiable
Type:
Voluntary
Employer:
Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust
Apply now on NHS Jobs for VOLUNTEER-Charity job (opens in a new window) [19]

- ### Volunteer Car Driver

Redhill, RH1 5YP

Salary:
Negotiable
Type:
Voluntary
Employer:
Emed Group
Apply now on NHS Jobs for Volunteer Car Driver job (opens in a new window) [20]

- ### Volunteer Car Driver

Gloucester, GL4 3SN

Salary:
Negotiable
Type:
Voluntary
Employer:
Emed Group
Apply now on NHS Jobs for Volunteer Car Driver job (opens in a new window) [21]

- ## Volunteer Car Driver

Lydney, GL15 4PA

Salary:
Negotiable
Type:
Voluntary
Employer:
Emed Group
Apply now on NHS Jobs for Volunteer Car Driver job (opens in a new window) [22]

- ## Volunteer Car Driver

Chichester, PO20 2FR

Salary:
Negotiable
Type:
Voluntary
Employer:
Emed Group
Apply now on NHS Jobs for Volunteer Car Driver job (opens in a new window) [23]

- ## Chaplaincy Volunteer - Carlisle

Carlisle, CA2 7HY

Salary:
Negotiable
Type:
Voluntary
Employer:
North Cumbria Integrated Care NHS Foundation Trust
Apply now on NHS Jobs for Chaplaincy Volunteer - Carlisle job (opens in a new window) [24]

- ## Volunteer Car Driver

Woking, GU23 7LN

Salary:

Negotiable
Type:
Voluntary
Employer:
Emed Group
Apply now on NHS Jobs for Volunteer Car Driver job (opens in a new window) [25]

- ### Volunteer Co-ordinator

Sheffield, S11 9NE

Salary:
£25000.00
Type:
Permanent
Employer:
St Luke’s Hospice
Apply now on NHS Jobs for Volunteer Co-ordinator job (opens in a new window) [26]

- ### Chaplaincy Volunteer Whitehaven

Whitehaven, CA28 8JG

Salary:
Negotiable
Type:
Voluntary
Employer:
North Cumbria Integrated Care NHS Foundation Trust
Apply now on NHS Jobs for Chaplaincy Volunteer Whitehaven job (opens in a new window) [27]

- ### Volunteer Horticulture Support

Exeter, EX2 5AF

Salary:
Negotiable
Type:
Voluntary
Employer:
Devon Partnership NHS Trust
Apply now on NHS Jobs for Volunteer Horticulture Support job (opens in a new window) [28]

- ### Volunteer Car Driver

Reading, RG30 1DZ

Salary:
Negotiable
Type:
Voluntary
Employer:
Emed Group
Apply now on NHS Jobs for Volunteer Car Driver job (opens in a new window) [29]

- ## Volunteer Development Coordinator

Harlow, CM17 9JX

Salary:
£21411.00 to £21945.00
Type:
Permanent
Employer:
St Clare Hospice
Apply now on NHS Jobs for Volunteer Development Coordinator job (opens in a new window) [30]

- ## Volunteer Car Driver

Farnborough, GU14 8EH

Salary:
Negotiable
Type:
Voluntary
Employer:
Emed Group
Apply now on NHS Jobs for Volunteer Car Driver job (opens in a new window) [31]

- ## Volunteer Car Driver

Bristol, BS31 1SX

Salary:
Negotiable
Type:
Voluntary
Employer:
Emed Group
Apply now on NHS Jobs for Volunteer Car Driver job (opens in a new window) [32]

- ## Volunteer Car Driver

Salisbury, SP2 8NW

Salary:

Negotiable
Type:
Voluntary
Employer:
Emed Group
Apply now on NHS Jobs for Volunteer Car Driver job (opens in a new window) [33]

- ## Volunteer Car Driver

  Bristol, BS2 0UQ

  Salary:
  Negotiable
  Type:
  Voluntary
  Employer:
  Emed Group
  Apply now on NHS Jobs for Volunteer Car Driver job (opens in a new window) [34]

- ## Volunteer Car Driver

  Littlehampton, BN17 7HE

  Salary:
  Negotiable
  Type:
  Voluntary
  Employer:
  Emed Group
  Apply now on NHS Jobs for Volunteer Car Driver job (opens in a new window) [35]

- ## Volunteer Car Driver

  Burgess Hill, BN6 9ZJ

  Salary:
  Negotiable
  Type:
  Voluntary
  Employer:
  Emed Group
  Apply now on NHS Jobs for Volunteer Car Driver job (opens in a new window) [36]

- ## Volunteer Car Driver

  Hailsham, BN27 4EL

  Salary:
  Negotiable
  Type:

Voluntary
Employer:
Emed Group
Apply now on NHS Jobs for Volunteer Car Driver job (opens in a new window) [37]

- ## Volunteer Car Driver

Bristol, BS37 5QX

Salary:
Negotiable
Type:
Voluntary
Employer:
Emed Group
Apply now on NHS Jobs for Volunteer Car Driver job (opens in a new window) [38]

- ## Charity Hub Volunteer

Rotherham, S60 2UD

Salary:
£1.00
Type:
Voluntary
Employer:
The Rotherham NHS Foundation Trust
Apply now on NHS Jobs for Charity Hub Volunteer job (opens in a new window) [39]

- ## Volunteer Car Driver

Mansfield, NG18 5BY

Salary:
Negotiable
Type:
Voluntary
Employer:
Emed Group
Apply now on NHS Jobs for Volunteer Car Driver job (opens in a new window) [40]

- ## Volunteer Car Driver

Slough, SL2 5DT

Salary:
Negotiable
Type:
Voluntary
Employer:

Emed Group
Apply now on NHS Jobs for Volunteer Car Driver job (opens in a new window) [41]

- ## Volunteering for Health Coordinator

Darlington, DL3 7UA

Salary:
£24049.00 to £24975.00
Type:
Fixed-Term
Employer:
Darlington & District Hospice Movement
Apply now on NHS Jobs for Volunteering for Health Coordinator job (opens in a new window) [42]

- ## Pets As Therapy Volunteer

Exeter, EX2 5AF

Salary:
Negotiable
Type:
Voluntary
Employer:
Devon Partnership NHS Trust
Apply now on NHS Jobs for Pets As Therapy Volunteer job (opens in a new window) [43]

- ## Meet and Greet Volunteers

Rotherham, S60 2UD

Salary:
£1.00
Type:
Voluntary
Employer:
The Rotherham NHS Foundation Trust
Apply now on NHS Jobs for Meet and Greet Volunteers job (opens in a new window) [44]

- ## Charity Book & Merchandise Stall Volunteer

Rotherham, S60 2UD

Salary:
£1.00
Type:
Voluntary

Employer:
The Rotherham NHS Foundation Trust
Apply now on NHS Jobs for Charity Book & Merchandise Stall Volunteer job (opens in a new window) [45]

- **Administration Support Volunteer - Safeguarding Team**

  Doncaster, DN4 8QN

  Salary:
  Negotiable
  Type:
  Voluntary
  Employer:
  Rotherham Doncaster and South Humber NHSFT
  Apply now on NHS Jobs for Administration Support Volunteer - Safeguarding Team job (opens in a new window) [46]

- **Volunteering in the NHS Event – Rotherham**

  Rotherham, S61 1AJ

  Salary:
  Negotiable
  Type:
  Voluntary
  Employer:
  Rotherham Doncaster and South Humber NHSFT
  Apply now on NHS Jobs for Volunteering in the NHS Event – Rotherham job (opens in a new window) [47]

- ## How experience will benefit you

No matter how you gain experience, there are many benefits. It will, for example:

- provide you with the experience needed for entry to training in certain health careers
- allow you to find out more about a career that interests you and decide whether or not it’s right for you
- give you the opportunity to develop some transferable skills (ie skills that are useful in any job, such as communication and teamwork)
- develop your self-confidence, empathy and respect for others
- give you something to put on your applications and to talk about in interviews to show your commitment, motivation and potential
- give you the satisfaction of making a difference to patients or clients and staff

- ## Making the most of your experience

When undertaking your experience opportunity:

- if you’re unsure about anything, ask
- make sure you turn up on time
- look clean and tidy
- follow health and safety procedures
- offer to help people out
- ask people questions about their roles (only when they have time, of course)
- make some notes so that you will be able to recall what you have done and learned

When you come to submit applications and go for interviews for courses and jobs, make the most of any experience you’ve gained. Explain:

- what role you have performed and the kind of tasks undertaken
- what you have learned from the experience
- any relevant skills you have developed
- how the experience has reinforced your commitment to your chosen career

- ## But I can’t find suitable experience

If you can’t find the kind of experience you would like or there are limits on what you are able to do for the career you are interested in (because of health and safety, patient privacy etc), other options include:

- **shadowing** someone in a health career. This would give you the chance to see what they do on a day-to-day basis and ask questions
- **talking to someone** in a health career. Prepare questions in advance to find out what they do, how they got started and what qualifications they needed and so on
- **seek alternatives.** See whether experience has to be gained in a health setting. For example, would experience of customer care in another sector be acceptable for the course or career you’re considering?

Source URL:https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/career-planning/career-planning/getting-experience

Links
[1] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/privacy-and-cookies/#CookieDeclarationChangeConsentChange [2] https://www.youtube.com/NHSCareers [3] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/allied-health-professionals/roles-allied-health-professions/podiatrist/real-life-story-alex-townsend/real-life-story-alex-townsend [4] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/i-am/considering-or-university [5] https://hee.nhs.uk/hee-your-area/north-east/education-training/trust-work-experience [6] https://www.kingstrust.org.uk/ [7] https://volunteering.england.nhs.uk/volunteer [8] https://www.jobs.nhs.uk/ [9] http://www.ncsyes.co.uk/ [10] http://www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/thenhs/about/Pages/authoritiesandtrusts.aspx [11] https://www.ncvo.org.uk/ncvo-volunteering [12] https://doit.life/ [13] https://timebanking.org/ [14] http://volunteeringmatters.org.uk/ [15] https://www.ncvo.org.uk/get-involved/volunteering/#/ [16] http://www.jobs.nhs.uk/ [17] https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/C9163-chvol-06-25 [18]

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https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/E0473-25-0015 [24]
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https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/C9262-25-0706 [28]
https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/C9369-25-0464 [29]
https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/E0473-25-0018 [30]
https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/B0175-25-0008 [31]
https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/E0473-25-0019 [32]
https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/E0473-25-0005 [33]
https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/E0473-25-0007 [34]
https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/E0473-25-0008 [35]
https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/E0473-25-0014 [36]
https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/E0473-25-0012 [37]
https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/E0473-25-0013 [38]
https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/E0473-25-0009 [39]
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https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/C9165-25-06-000c [46]
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