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.

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*
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.

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, 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 [3]
○ if you’re 16-30-years-old, register with the Prince’s Trust [4] who run regular courses with the NHS, including work placements

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

○ NHS Jobs [5] - 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 [6] (if you are aged 16 or 17)

You can ask about suitable volunteering opportunities at:

○ local organisations that provide NHS healthcare [7] services
○ your local volunteer centre [8]

You can also search online for suitable volunteering opportunities through:

○ Do-it [9]
○ TimeBank [10]
○ Volunteering Matters [11]
○ The National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) [12]
○ NHS Jobs [13]

Just some of the current volunteering opportunities are below.

Find a vacancy

Enter your location or postcode

Show results within

Volunteer

Upton/Clatterbridge, CH49 5PE

Salary:
  Negotiable

Type:
  Voluntary

Employer:
Wirral University Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust
Apply now on NHS Jobs for Volunteer job (opens in a new window)  [14]

**Chaplaincy Volunteer**

Plymouth, PL4 7PY

Salary: Negotiable  
Type: Voluntary  
Employer: Livewell Southwest  
Apply now on NHS Jobs for Chaplaincy Volunteer job (opens in a new window)  [15]

**Companion Volunteer**

Stoke on Trent, ST5 1AG  
Stoke-on-trent, ST6 7AG

Salary: Negotiable  
Type: Voluntary  
Employer: Midlands Partnership NHS Foundation Trust  
Apply now on NHS Jobs for Companion Volunteer job (opens in a new window)  [16]

**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)  [17]

**Chaplaincy Volunteer**

Carlisle, CA2 7HY

Salary: Negotiable  
Type: Voluntary  
Employer:
Volunteer - Patient Leader

Reading, RG1 5AN

Salary:
  Negotiable

Type:
  Voluntary

Employer:
  Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust

Apply now on NHS Jobs for Volunteer - Patient Leader job (opens in a new window)

Experience Administrator

Hatfield, AL10 8YE

Salary:
  £22816.00 to £24336.00

Type:
  Permanent

Employer:
  Hertfordshire Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust

Apply now on NHS Jobs for Experience Administrator job (opens in a new window)

ECHOCARDIOGRAPHER- WEEKEND WORK

Mansfield, NG18 5RN

Salary:
  £60.00

Type:
  Locum

Employer:
  Medicare Insourcing Services Limited

Apply now on NHS Jobs for ECHOCARDIOGRAPHER- WEEKEND WORK job (opens in a new window)

SONOGRAPHER- WEEKEND WORK

Taunton, TA1 1QW

Salary:
  £60.00 to £80.00

Type:
SONOGRAPHER-WEEKEND WORK

Bath, BA2 3JB

Salary: £60.00 to £80.00
Type: Locum

SONOGRAPHER-WEEKEND WORK

Swansea, SA1 1NU

Salary: £60.00 to £80.00
Type: Locum

Patient Safety Partner Volunteer

Barnsley, S75 2EP

Salary: Negotiable
Type: Voluntary

Volunteer, Day Therapy Unit

Doncaster, DN48JS
Volunteer Patient Safety Partner

Portsmouth, PO6 3LY

Salary: Negotiable
Type: Voluntary
Employer: Portsmouth Hospitals University NHS Trust
Apply now on NHS Jobs for Volunteer Patient Safety Partner job (opens in a new window) [27]

Patient Support Volunteer-Whitehaven

Whitehaven, CA28 8JG

Salary: Negotiable
Type: Voluntary
Employer: North Cumbria Integrated Care NHS Foundation Trust
Apply now on NHS Jobs for Patient Support Volunteer-Whitehaven job (opens in a new window) [28]

League of Friends Volunteer

Maidstone, ME16 9QQ

Salary: Negotiable
Type: Voluntary
Employer: Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust
Apply now on NHS Jobs for League of Friends Volunteer job (opens in a new window) [29]
Volunteer Military Community Befriender

Portsmouth, PO6 3LY

Salary: Negotiable
Type: Voluntary
Employer: Portsmouth Hospitals University NHS Trust
Apply now on NHS Jobs for Volunteer Military Community Befriender job (opens in a new window) [30]

Patient Experience Administrator

Oxford, OX3 9DU

Salary: £25147.00 to £27596.00
Type: Permanent
Employer: Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
Apply now on NHS Jobs for Patient Experience Administrator job (opens in a new window) [31]

Patient Experience Lead

Telford, TF3 2BF

Salary: £30500.00
Type: Permanent
Employer: Teldoc
Apply now on NHS Jobs for Patient Experience Lead job (opens in a new window) [32]

Patient Experience Officer

Middlesbrough, TS4 3BW

Salary: £25147.00 to £27596.00
Type: Fixed-Term
Employer:
Patient Experience Officer

Derby, DE22 3LZ

Salary: £25147.00 to £27596.00
Type: Permanent
Employer: Derbyshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

VASCULAR SONOGRAPHER-WEEKEND WORK

Harlow, CM19 5EQ

Salary: £70.00
Type: Locum
Employer: Medicare Insourcing Services Limited

Social Work Apprentice OCC613859

Oxford, OX1 1ND

Salary: £32076.00
Type: Apprenticeship
Employer: Oxfordshire County Council

Volunteer Driver St John's Hospice

Doncaster, DN4 8JS

Salary: Negotiable
Type: Voluntary
Employer: Rotherham Doncaster and South Humber NHSFT
Apply now on NHS Jobs for Volunteer Driver St John's Hospice job (opens in a new window) [37]

Patient Transport Service (PTS) Volunteer
Yorkshire and North Lincolnshire, WF2 0XQ

Salary: Negotiable
Type: Voluntary
Employer: Yorkshire Ambulance Service NHS Trust
Apply now on NHS Jobs for Patient Transport Service (PTS) Volunteer job (opens in a new window) [38]

Optometrist - Hospital Experience Essential
Rochdale, OL16 2UP

Salary: £56000.00
Type: Permanent
Employer: Practice Plus Group
Apply now on NHS Jobs for Optometrist - Hospital Experience Essential job (opens in a new window) [39]

Patient Experience Programme Manager
Manchester, M13 9WL

Salary: £43742.00 to £50056.00
Type: Permanent
Employer: Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust
Apply now on NHS Jobs for Patient Experience Programme Manager job (opens in a new window) [40]

Casual work for Student Nurses
Advanced Social Work Practitioner - Kinship

Hillingdon, UB8 1UW

Salary: £50031.00 to £54129.00
Type: Permanent
Employer: London Borough of Hillingdon

Apply now on NHS Jobs for Advanced Social Work Practitioner - Kinship job (opens in a new window) [42]

Health, Work and Wellbeing Coach

London, SE6 1QD

Salary: £28000.00 to £30000.00
Type: Permanent
Employer: Sevenfields PCN

Apply now on NHS Jobs for Health, Work and Wellbeing Coach job (opens in a new window) [43]

Casual work for Medical Students

Jarrow, NE32 5NN

Salary: £10.52
Type: Bank
Employer: XL Team LTD

Apply now on NHS Jobs for Casual work for Medical Students job (opens in a new window) [44]
- **Work Based Learning Co-ordinator**
  Gillingham, ME7 5NY
  Salary: £25147.00 to £27596.00
  Type: Fixed-Term
  Employer: Medway NHS Foundation Trust
  Apply now on NHS Jobs for Work Based Learning Co-ordinator job (opens in a new window) [45]

- **Casual work for Student Paramedics**
  Jarrow, NE32 5NN
  Salary: £10.52
  Type: Bank
  Employer: XL Team LTD
  Apply now on NHS Jobs for Casual work for Student Paramedics job (opens in a new window) [46]

- **Practice Nurse with Diabetes Experience**
  Market Harborough, LE16 9BX
  Lutterworth, LE17 6PU
  Salary: Negotiable
  Type: Permanent
  Employer: Market Harborough & Bosworth Partnership
  Apply now on NHS Jobs for Practice Nurse with Diabetes Experience job (opens in a new window) [47]

- **OD Engagement and Experience Manager**
  Oxford, OX4 2PG
  Salary: £50952.00 to £57349.00
  Type: Permanent
Employer:
Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
Apply now on NHS Jobs for OD Engagement and Experience Manager job (opens in a new window) [48]

- **Bank Optometrist - Hospital Experience Essential**

Rochdale, OL16 2UP

Salary: £28.13
Type: Bank
Employer: Practice Plus Group
Apply now on NHS Jobs for Bank Optometrist - Hospital Experience Essential job (opens in a new window) [49]

- **Band 7 Patient Experience Manager**

Sutton Coldfield, B75 7RR

Salary: £43742.00 to £50056.00
Type: Permanent
Employer: University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust
Apply now on NHS Jobs for Band 7 Patient Experience Manager job (opens in a new window) [50]

- **Patient Experience Care Co-ordinator**

Hull, HU7 3JQ
Hull, HU8 8JS
Hull, HU3 6BX
Hull, HU6 9BX

Salary: £21597.63
Type: Permanent
Employer: Haxby Group (Hull)
Apply now on NHS Jobs for Patient Experience Care Co-ordinator job (opens in a new window) [51]

- **Expert by Experience Involvement Worker**
London, SE5 8AZ

Salary: £27948.00 to £29468.00
Type: Fixed-Term
Employer: South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust
Apply now on NHS Jobs for Expert by Experience Involvement Worker job (opens in a new window) [52]

Patient and Carer Experience Administrator

Middlesbrough, TS6 0SZ

Salary: £22816.00 to £24336.00
Type: Permanent
Employer: Tees Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust
Apply now on NHS Jobs for Patient and Carer Experience Administrator job (opens in a new window) [53]

Patient Experience Lead - HMP Preston

Preston, PR1 5AB

Salary: £30975.00 to £35175.00
Type: Permanent
Employer: Practice Plus Group
Apply now on NHS Jobs for Patient Experience Lead - HMP Preston job (opens in a new window) [54]

Practice Experience Facilitator - Mental Health

Kent, ME8 0NZ

Salary: £43742.00 to £50056.00
Type: Permanent
Employer: NELFT North East London Foundation Trust
Apply now on NHS Jobs for Practice Experience Facilitator - Mental Health job (opens in a new window) [55]
● **Parent/Carer Expert By Experience**
  Lincoln, LN1 1FS

  Salary: £22383.00
  Type: Bank
  Employer: Lincolnshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust
  Apply now on NHS Jobs for Parent/Carer Expert By Experience job (opens in a new window) [56]

● **Patient Experience and Bereavement Manager**
  Middlesbrough, TS4 3BW

  Salary: £43742.00 to £50056.00
  Type: Permanent
  Employer: South Tees Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
  Apply now on NHS Jobs for Patient Experience and Bereavement Manager job (opens in a new window) [57]

● **Communications, Engagement and Experience Manager**
  Chertsey, KT16 0PZ

  Salary: £45753.00 to £52067.00
  Type: Fixed-Term
  Employer: Ashford & St. Peter's Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
  Apply now on NHS Jobs for Communications, Engagement and Experience Manager job (opens in a new window) [58]

● **Volunteer Role Meet & Greeter Eye Unit Department**
  Bolton, BL4 0JR

  Salary: Negotiable
  Type: Voluntary
  Employer:
Bolton NHS Foundation Trust
Apply now on NHS Jobs for Volunteer Role Meet & Greeter Eye Unit Department job (opens in a new window) [59]

Volunteer – Group Treatment Assistant for SET CAMHS

Stansted, CM24 8JP

Salary: £1.00 to £1.00
Type: Fixed-Term
Employer: HCRG Care Group
Apply now on NHS Jobs for Volunteer – Group Treatment Assistant for SET CAMHS job (opens in a new window) [60]

Volunteer: MindSpace Walk Leader (Sinfin Moor Park)

Derby, DE24 9HW

Salary: Negotiable
Type: Voluntary
Employer: Derbyshire Mind
Apply now on NHS Jobs for Volunteer: MindSpace Walk Leader (Sinfin Moor Park) job (opens in a new window) [61]

Volunteer – Parent Peer Support for SET CAMHS

Colchester, CO7 7FD

Salary: £1.00 to £1.00
Type: Fixed-Term
Employer: HCRG Care Group
Apply now on NHS Jobs for Volunteer – Parent Peer Support for SET CAMHS job (opens in a new window) [62]

Volunteer – Parent Peer Support for SET CAMHS

Chelmsford, CM1 1QH

Salary: £1.00
Type: Fixed-Term
Employer: HCRG Care Group
Apply now on NHS Jobs for Volunteer – Parent Peer Support for SET CAMHS job (opens in a new window) [63]

Social Worker-Integrated Hospital Social Work Team

Braddan, IM4 4RJ

Salary: £47167.00 to £54879.00
Type: Permanent
Employer: Manx Care
Apply now on NHS Jobs for Social Worker-Integrated Hospital Social Work Team job (opens in a new window) [64]

Recovery Practitioner (CAPS, RMN, OT, Social Work)

Bath, BA1 3QE

Salary: £35392.00 to £42618.00
Type: Permanent
Employer: Avon & Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust
Apply now on NHS Jobs for Recovery Practitioner (CAPS, RMN, OT, Social Work) job (opens in a new window) [65]

Patient Experience Liaison Officer- HMP Bullingdon

Bicester, OX25 1PZ

Salary: £24600.00 to £26400.00
Type: Permanent
Employer: Practice Plus Group
Apply now on NHS Jobs for Patient Experience Liaison Officer- HMP Bullingdon job (opens in a new window) [66]

NCC Qualified/Coding Experience Clinical Coder
Blackburn, BB2 3HH
Salary: £25147.00 to £27596.00
Type: Permanent
Employer: East Lancashire Hospitals NHS Trust
Apply now on NHS Jobs for NCC Qualified/Coding Experience Clinical Coder job (opens in a new window) [67]

**Associate Director of Social Work and Social Care**

Oxford, OX4 4AN
Salary: £83571.00 to £96376.00
Type: Permanent
Employer: Oxford Health NHS Trust
Apply now on NHS Jobs for Associate Director of Social Work and Social Care job (opens in a new window) [68]

**Complex Emotional Needs (CEN) Lived Experience Practitioner**

London, SE18 3RG
Salary: £29460.00 to £31909.00
Type: Fixed-Term
Employer: Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust
Apply now on NHS Jobs for Complex Emotional Needs (CEN) Lived Experience Practitioner job (opens in a new window) [69]

**Autism Lived Experience Involvement and Engagement Facilitator**

Durham, DH1 5RD
Salary: £35392.00 to £42618.00
Type: Permanent
Employer: Tees Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust
Apply now on NHS Jobs for Autism Lived Experience Involvement and Engagement Facilitator job (opens in a new window) [70]
Volunteer – Parent Peer Support for the Key Worker Service

Chelmsford, CM1 1QH

Salary:
£1.00 to £1.00

Type:
Fixed-Term

Employer:
HCRG Care Group

Apply now on NHS Jobs for Volunteer – Parent Peer Support for the Key Worker Service job (opens in a new window) [71]

Occupational Health Clinical Lead for Fitness For Work Services

Manchester, M13 9WL

Salary:
£58972.00 to £68525.00

Type:
Permanent

Employer:
Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust

Apply now on NHS Jobs for Occupational Health Clinical Lead for Fitness For Work Services job (opens in a new window) [72]

Band 6 Clinical Nurse/Social Work Specialist - Substance Misuse

London, NW3 5BY

Salary:
£42471.00 to £50364.00

Type:
Permanent

Employer:
Camden and Islington NHS Foundation Trust

Apply now on NHS Jobs for Band 6 Clinical Nurse/Social Work Specialist - Substance Misuse job (opens in a new window) [73]

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**

[2] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/i-am/considering-or-university
[8] https://www.ncvo.org.uk/ncvo-volunteering
[10] https://timebanking.org/
[22] https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/E0418-24-0003
[23] https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/E0418-24-0004
[26] https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/C9376-24-0006
[27] https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/C8192-24-0030
[29] https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/C9359-24-0011
[31] https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/C9321-24-0008
[33] https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/C9328-24-0029
[34] https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/C9383-24-0026
[37] https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/C9376-24-0005
[38] https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/C9174-24-0008
[40] https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/C9349-24-0109
[41] https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/E0431-23-0009
[42] https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/F0124-24-0000
[43] https://beta.jobs.nhs.uk/candidate/jobadvert/A5587-24-0000