



Careers in nursing

Caring, compassionate, committed

Make a difference with a career in health

Welcome

A career for you

There are more than 350 roles in health, and many of them are part of a wider team which works alongside other health professionals for the benefit of patients and the public. As well as the NHS itself, a great many large and smaller organisations provide healthcare and work to prevent ill health in the UK. These include public and private sector organisations, community interest companies, social enterprises and charities, and you could work for the NHS or any one of these other organisations in a health role.

Some roles give you direct contact with patients, while in others you are part of a vast support network vital to delivering healthcare and preventing ill health, and good team-working is essential. Some jobs are in hospitals, others are based in the community: increasingly, health and social care services are integrated or co-ordinated in order to provide a seamless service for people with a range of needs.

We actively recruit people of all ages, backgrounds and levels of experience, including people who have worked in other sectors or who bring life experience from outside the world of work. This helps us to understand the different needs of patients, families and carers, and to provide the best possible service every day.

NHS values and the 6Cs of compassionate care

To apply for any job in the NHS or in an organisation that provides NHS services, or for a course with clinical placements in the NHS, you'll need to show how you think the values of the NHS Constitution would apply in your everyday work.

The NHS Constitution values are:

- > Working together for patients
- > Respect and dignity
- > Commitment to quality of care
- > Compassion
- > Improving lives
- > Everyone counts

These values may also be promoted as the 6Cs of compassionate care, as part of Leading Change, Adding Value. The 6Cs are:

- > Care
- > Compassion
- > Competence
- > Communication
- > Courage
- > Commitment

Find out more about the NHS Constitution and the 6Cs at:

 www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/nhsconstitution

 www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/6Cs

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Your career in nursing

If you want to work in an environment that's interesting, rewarding and challenging, a career in nursing will give you plenty of scope to do exactly that.

A career in nursing offers employability, flexibility and purpose and nurses work with people of all ages and backgrounds in a variety of settings, such as patients' homes, communities and hospitals.



In the UK, only those who have successfully completed a degree level nursing programme approved by the Nursing and Midwifery Council are allowed to legally call themselves a registered nurse.

Nurses often begin their careers in support roles, such as being a healthcare or nursing assistant; this gives valuable experience and enables you to know for sure that a career in nursing is for you.

Entry routes to becoming a registered nurse are equally flexible. You could apply direct to university, apply for a nursing degree apprenticeship, or first train as a nursing associate, before going on to become a registered nurse later.

Whatever route works best for you, and whatever type of nurse you become, the opportunities for development, job satisfaction and flexible working are great, and all the time you'll have the chance to make a real difference, helping people during their times of greatest need.

When you apply for a nursing degree programme, a key decision you will need to make is which 'field' of nursing to study. Adult, mental health, learning disability and children's nursing are all different courses, and your education provider will usually need you to choose right from the start which type of nurse you'd like to register as when you've successfully completed your nursing degree programme.



For more information about working in nursing, visit www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/nursing

Or if you have any questions, you can call our helpline on 0345 60 60 655 or email advice@healthcareers.nhs.uk

FAQs

What do nurses do?

Nurses work as part of a team and provide care for adults and children with physical or mental ill health. The job can vary from helping someone learn basic daily tasks to administering life-saving drugs. Whichever area of nursing you work in, you'll be assessing, diagnosing, planning and evaluating treatment.

What are the different fields of nursing?

When you first train as a nurse, you'll need to study for one of the four fields of nursing: adult, children's (paediatrics), learning disabilities or mental health. A small number of universities run 'dual field' nursing degrees, in which you can combine two of the fields during a four-year degree. Use our course finder to search for nursing degrees at: www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/courses

How do I train to become a nurse?

The traditional route is to take an approved full-time university pre-registration degree in nursing. If you already have a relevant first degree (such as in human biology or psychology), some universities will give recognition for this enabling you to complete the nursing degree over a shorter period. You'll need to speak to each university you're considering to see if you can get some accreditation. However, additional routes are being developed in England, including nursing degree apprenticeships, and the new nursing associate role would enable you to gain experience and then complete the nursing degree apprenticeship over a shorter period.

If you're employed in a nursing support role, also speak to your employer. Use our course finder to get a list of universities approved to run degree programmes in nursing:

www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/courses

How can I train to become a midwife?

Midwifery is a separate profession from nursing. See our *Careers in midwifery* booklet and visit the Health Careers website to find out more about a career in midwifery:

www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/midwifery

How can I train to become a nursing associate?

You will need to apply to a health or social care employer for a position as a nursing associate apprentice. Trainee nursing associates complete a foundation degree, usually over a two-year period and gain clinical learning experiences in hospitals, people's homes, community and other settings before registering with the Nursing and Midwifery Council. Nursing associate roles are currently only available in England.

Is there financial help to support me while I'm training to be a nurse?

If you are taking a full-time pre-registration course in nursing in England, you will usually be eligible for student loans to pay for tuition and maintenance fees. Arrangements are different outside of England. As a nursing degree apprentice, you will receive a wage.

Visit the NHS Student Bursaries website for more information: www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk

Which role is right for you?

People from all walks of life and with all types of health problems depend on the professional skills and care of nurses. A combination of people skills and initiative is essential for the hands-on care that all nurses are required to provide.

It's a highly responsible job, and challenges will be part of your career, making each day different. Knowing how to deal with the unexpected comes with experience, training and the support of colleagues, including doctors, therapists, assistants and healthcare scientists, who form multidisciplinary teams where learning never stops.



Nurses can choose to work in a range of settings from patients' homes, GP practices, schools, nursing homes and other areas such as prisons and hospices. They can also combine a clinical career with education, management or research. As a public health nurse, your role would be to promote healthy lifestyles, reduce the likelihood of physical and mental ill health and support people who have long-term illness or learning disabilities.

Whether working in the community or hospital environment, nurses at all levels are relied upon to listen to people, recognise their needs and respond in a way that puts the individual first.

Healthcare is continually developing. To improve the care you provide, you'll need to keep up to date with the latest research and evidence, especially if you choose to take on additional responsibility such as being able to prescribe.

The four fields of nursing

There are four fields of nursing:

- adult nursing
- children's (paediatric) nursing
- learning disabilities nursing
- mental health nursing

Working within one of these fields will allow you to focus on the needs of a particular client group. Whatever field appeals to you, a career in nursing offers employability, flexibility and purpose, with plenty of scope to move around, work in different settings and progress your career.

More opportunities to work in the community

As healthcare increasingly moves away from hospitals and into the community, the settings in which you can work will expand and change. Nurses are central to this change, and future career options are likely to include more community-based roles such as district nursing where you'll be working with patients with long-term conditions at home.

Some jobs in nursing will be outside of the NHS, as more organisations (including social enterprises, private healthcare providers, the independent sector and charities) provide services to patients.

New opportunities are emerging for nurses to work in research and education roles, as well as at advanced practice and consultant levels. There are also more opportunities for senior nurses to lead and manage multidisciplinary teams as clinical managers.

Find out more about clinical management in our *Careers in management* booklet or visit:

www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/management

Whatever your chosen area of practice, you will be required to keep your skills and knowledge up to date through revalidation.

For more information about a career in nursing, visit: **www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/nursing**



Nursing roles at a glance

This section provides information about the work involved in the four main fields of nursing as well as specialist roles you may be interested in after qualifying.

You can find more detailed information about all the nursing roles listed below on the Health Careers website at www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/nursing

There are also short videos about some of the roles on our YouTube channel: www.youtube.com/HealthCareers



See **real-life stories** of people working in some of the nursing roles at the end of this section.



The four fields of nursing



Adult nursing

Adult nurses treat and care for adults of all ages with all types of health conditions. They manage numerous priorities and use clinical, technical, caring, counselling, managing, teaching and all aspects of interpersonal skills to improve the quality of patients' lives, sometimes in difficult situations. Roles may be based in hospital wards, clinics and, increasingly, in community settings. You may work shifts to provide 24-hour care.

Your work as an adult nurse will involve:

- being part of a busy, multidisciplinary team that includes doctors, radiographers, physiotherapists and many others
- using your critical thinking skills, clinical knowledge, initiative and high levels of observation
- working in a fast-changing, demanding environment
- assessing what is best for the patient and acting on your decision
- a willingness to take responsibility for people's wellbeing



Children's (paediatric) nursing

Children's nurses treat and care for children and young people from birth to 18 years of age. Children and young people can present with a wide range of conditions, and children's nurses deal with a range of situations including babies born prematurely, teenagers who have sustained accidents and injuries, mental health and long-term conditions and life-limiting illnesses.

Children's nurses work in partnership with the child or young person, their parents and carers to plan and deliver care. They work with other professionals, such as GPs, physiotherapists, speech and language therapists and health visitors to ensure young people enter adulthood in good health. Health problems can affect a child's development and it's vital to work with the child's family or carers so that he or she does not suffer additionally from the stress of being ill.

Children's nurses work on wards in hospitals, in specialist areas such as children's intensive care, or in day care centres, hospices, child health clinics and in the child's home. Like other fields of nursing, care is becoming more community-based. You may work shifts to provide 24-hour care.

Your work as a children's nurse will involve:

- being able to handle the challenges posed by caring for someone who is sick and may be too young to express what's wrong
- an understanding that a child or young person's health can rapidly take a turn for the worse
- sensitivity and the ability to communicate without words
- the confidence to work in partnership with the patient's family or carers
- teaching the child's parents or carers what may need to be done to carry on with treatment at home





Learning disability nursing

People identified as having a learning disability are living longer, more fulfilled lives into adolescence, adulthood and older age. Learning disability nurses play a vital role in helping them live independently.

They provide specialist healthcare and support to people with a learning disability, as well as their families.

Learning disability nurses work in education, and residential and community centres, as well as in patients' homes, workplaces, schools, acute, community, mental health and prisons. Some specialise in areas such as research and education, physical or mental health, or the management and development of services.

They work as part of a team alongside GPs, psychologists, psychiatrists, therapists, teachers, social workers, families and people with a learning disability themselves. Some work in a residential, acute or mental health setting, so work shifts to provide 24-hour care.

Your work as a learning disability nurse will involve:

- a great deal of patience, sensitivity and excellent interpersonal/communication skills
- an ability to work across health and care system with a range of professions to negotiate and lead care for people with a learning disability
- a willingness to be adaptable, flexible and prepared to act as an advocate for those you support to ensure that they do not suffer discrimination
- the ability to work in a demanding and stressful environment



Mental health nursing

As many as one in four people will have a mental health problem at some point in their life, regardless of their age or background. Conditions range from personality and psychological disorders to neuroses and psychoses.

Nurses who specialise in mental health – a complex and demanding area – work with GPs, psychiatrists, psychologists, therapists and others to help care for patients with mental illnesses. Increasingly, care is given in the community, with mental health nurses visiting patients and their families at home, in residential centres, in prisons or in specialist clinics or units. Some work shifts to provide 24-hour care.

This is a valuable role that provides much reward and satisfaction.

Your work as a mental health nurse will involve:

- autonomy in planning and delivering patient care within the healthcare team
- opportunities to specialise in areas such as alcohol and drug misuse
- excellent communication skills and an ability to empathise with people and understand their problems
- liaising with a patient's family and listening to and advising those who care for the patient
- dealing with occasional aggression in a sensitive and effective way

Other nursing roles

These are roles you may choose to take up after qualifying in one of the four nursing fields.



District nursing

District nurses visit people of all ages, often in their own homes, GP surgeries or a residential or care home. Some patients may have dementia, others may have disabilities, be recovering after a hospital stay, or have a terminal illness. Some work shifts to provide 24-hour care.

You'll need to qualify and work as a registered nurse and then complete a Masters or degree-level specialist practitioner programme in district nursing, before you can become a district nurse. Funding or sponsorship may be available from your employing trust.

This is a rewarding role as you can work one-to-one with patients and their families on an ongoing basis, which enables you to develop a trusting relationship while you improve their quality of life.

Your work as a district nurse will involve:

- working with a variety of people as part of a team with GPs, social services, voluntary organisations and NHS bodies, as well as the ability to work on your own
- being adaptable and the ability to put people at ease
- good organisational skills so you can plan care for all your patients, some of whom will have very complex care needs
- visiting patients as required to prescribe and administer medication and monitor health
- teaching patients or their families how to carry out procedures such as administering injections
- carrying out annual health checks and delivering health promotion programmes
- sign-posting patients and their families to local services and resources that can help maintain and improve their quality of life.





General practice nursing

General practice nurses work in GP surgeries as part of a primary care team that is likely to include doctors, nurses, therapists and pharmacists. In smaller practices, you may be the sole nurse, whereas in larger surgeries, you may share duties with other general practice nurses. You may also be required to work flexibly, including some evenings and weekends. As the range of healthcare services provided in the community increases, the role of the general practice nurse is likely to expand and change.

To become a general practice nurse, you will need to first qualify as a registered nurse.

This role offers much scope and variety for those who have highly developed communication skills, enjoy working flexibly and are organised. Depending on your experience, you could run clinics, which will demand attention to detail, initiative and plenty of confidence. You'll be employed by

GP practices and may be able to work part-time. As a general practice nurse, you will be able to apply for senior positions such as nurse practitioner, where you can manage your own caseload.

Your work as a general practice nurse will involve:

- treating small injuries
- assisting with minor operations carried out under local anaesthetic
- health screening
- family planning
- running vaccination programmes, for example protection against flu
- managing well-woman clinics
- supporting the healthcare team in its monitoring of conditions such as diabetes, high cholesterol and high blood pressure



Health visiting

Health visitors are registered nurses or midwives who have done additional training in community public health nursing to work with families of children under five in a specific geographical area. They work with parents who have newborn babies, offering support and informed advice from pregnancy until the child starts school at age 5. All new parents are entitled to a health visiting service, regardless of their situation and number of children, but a more intensive service is provided to families who would benefit from more health visiting support and time. The service provided to each family will vary according to an assessment of their needs.

Health visitors are usually based in settings such as GP surgeries, children's centres, community or health centres. They visit parents at home and run groups with colleagues such as nursery nurses, children centre staff and voluntary organisations.

This is a role that will appeal to those who like to work in teams or have sole responsibility for a caseload of families from the local area and want to work with autonomy, while remaining part of a healthcare team. You'll have opportunities to progress and manage a team of health visitors or to other management roles.

You'll need to qualify and be a registered nurse or midwife to start the Specialist Practitioner Health Visitor/Specialist Community Public Health Nurse (SCPHN/HV) postgraduate training programme.

The programme usually lasts a minimum of one year full-time and there are also some part-time courses available. If you have a degree, you could seek accreditation for your prior learning to enter a two-year graduate-entry pre-registration nursing programme followed by the one-year SCPHN/HV programme.

You may receive financial support from your employer, although this can depend on which course you take and where you live.

Pre-school children and their families will be your key focus, and your work as a health visitor will involve:

- supporting new parents and families in the care and development of their babies and pre-school children
- providing practical public health help and advice to people of all ages and backgrounds, aiming to prevent illness and promote good health
- working independently and being highly organised
- being confident and using your skills to deal with people in a variety of situations, some of which may be challenging



Neonatal nursing

Neonatal nurses focus on the care of newborn babies who are born prematurely or need specific care in the first few months of their life. They provide focused care for premature or ill newborns, or work exclusively with seriously ill newborns in a neonatal intensive care unit. You may work shifts to provide 24-hour care.

Often, premature babies have respiratory problems (which can be life-threatening if they are not treated promptly and monitored), birth defects, infection, health malformations and problems requiring surgery. For both the neonate and their family, admission to the neonatal unit is a stressful time which needs to be recognised when planning and providing holistic care. Family-centred care is essential, where the parents and carers are regarded as equal partners in their baby's care.

Your work as a neonatal nurse will involve:

- being a source of support to the baby's family at a stressful and emotional time
- taking an active role in the multidisciplinary team looking after the child
- a strong level of empathy
- competence to operate in a busy, technical environment

Neonatal nursing training programmes are part of continuing professional development (CPD) and are normally studied as modules by registered nurses and midwives. As with other types of nursing, there are opportunities to progress to management, research and education, as well as into nurse consultant roles.

Prison nursing

Prison nurses are employed by the prison service, private providers or by the NHS to care for and treat patients who are in prison. Many prisoners have substance abuse or mental health problems, making nursing in this environment challenging. By improving mental and physical health, the care provided by prison nurses may help to lower re-offending rates, and therefore have a positive impact on prisoners, their families and the wider public.

A background in mental health or learning disability nursing may help. As with other types of nursing, you can undertake further training and apply for management roles. As a prison nurse, you may work shifts to provide 24-hour care. There are also job opportunities for nurses elsewhere in the criminal justice system such as police custody suites and immigration centres.

Your work as a prison nurse will involve:

- delivering care and treatment within a custodial setting
- developing positive relationships with prisoners and treating them with compassion
- developing excellent interpersonal skills
- treating and caring for individuals with substance abuse or mental health problems
- understanding the particular problems faced by your patients and those working in prisons

School nursing

School nurses work with schools and local communities to support the health and wellbeing of school-age children, young people and their families. School nurses work closely with pupils, parents, carers and teachers, offering support and advice on a range of issues from obesity to sexual health. They play a vital role in children's development, carrying out immunisations and screening programmes, and managing medical conditions such as asthma and diabetes. They work closely with other agencies, such as social services, acting as a point of contact for child protection issues.

Nurses in this key role are usually employed by a primary care provider, local health authority, community trust or by individual schools.

It is possible to go straight into this role after qualifying as a registered nurse. However, experience of working with children, in child protection or health promotion, will be beneficial.

Many school nurses will also work towards the Specialist Practitioner – School Nursing/ Specialist Community Public Health Nurse qualification at degree and Master's level.

Your work as a school nurse will involve:

- carrying out screening programmes
- raising awareness of and providing information on issues that could have a negative effect on health, such as smoking and drug and alcohol abuse
- administering immunisations and vaccines
- promoting healthy living and safe sex
- running health promotion or drop-in surgeries
- using excellent communication skills
- supporting children and young people with medical needs, such as asthma, diabetes, epilepsy or mental health problems and disability
- working as part of a safeguarding team
- working in partnership with teachers and families, contributing to social education and citizenship classes and providing training to teachers on healthcare issues
- adopting a non-judgemental approach and building trust with children and young people

Find out more about the different nursing roles at:

www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/nursing





Real-life stories



Adult nursing

Name

Aisha Thabet

Job title

A&E nurse, Sheffield Teaching
Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

Entry route

Adult nursing degree

"As a healthcare assistant, I

found my passion for helping people and saw

how rewarding a nursing career could be."



How I got into the role

A few years ago I worked as an apprentice in care on an elderly ward and when I saw a job as a healthcare assistant advertised, I grabbed it with both hands. I worked with vulnerable people, helping them with severe conditions such as dementia. It was during this time that I found my passion for helping people and saw how rewarding a nursing career could be. Working closely with nurses on a daily basis I saw how much amazing work they did, and I felt I wanted to have more responsibility, like they do.

When deciding on which nursing specialism to choose, I knew I wanted to keep my options open. Adult nursing covers all types of healthcare and working in A&E means you see patients from all ages and backgrounds.

What I do

Nurses are on the front line of an A&E ward! When patients come in we make an initial assessment and have to decide whether or not they need immediate attention. We observe anything that needs flagging like sepsis or any cardiac issues and make a plan for the patient before they see a doctor to ensure they get the best care possible.

As a nurse working on an A&E ward there are lots of instances where you have to take control of the

situation and be the decision-maker. This was a bit daunting at first but it is really empowering and there's always loads of support around you. Sheffield is a major trauma centre so we often have to work with the trauma lead and get stuck in with everything that needs doing.

I work alongside some great people on a regular basis, both the doctors and senior nurses I work with every day, and the front door response team. Between us, we ensure an elderly patient gets the care they need to enable them to return home safely. We even work with the police.

The best bits

I love seeing the speedy turnaround of patients. Most patients in A&E are suffering some serious pain and it's great to be able to stabilise them and put a plan in place that means they get the best care possible.

I also love the variety of the work; you never know what you're going to see next. I am treating different people with different needs every day and that makes the job really exciting.



Children's nursing

Name

Ewout Van Sabben

Job title

Children's nurse, Gloucestershire
Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

Entry route

Children's nursing degree



**"My degree gave me the
experience and knowledge I need
to be a success."**

How I got into the role

I had worked previously as a support worker, working with young adults with learning difficulties where I developed a passion for helping people. I knew I wanted to work in a healthcare setting and I was looking for a course and a career where I could make a difference. Nursing stood out as a perfect choice.

I used to volunteer at summer camps and in primary schools working with children doing outdoor activities and teaching them different skills. It made me realise that I wanted my work to involve childcare, so children's nursing was the right one for me when it came to choosing a nursing specialty.

I've just started my first role as a paediatric nurse and my degree gave me the experience and knowledge I need to be a success. The lectures were very interactive and engaging, covering subjects ranging from how the NHS works to learning about the vulnerability of our patients.

My varied placements in different hospitals gave me the opportunity to learn on the job and equipped me with the practical skills necessary to be a great nurse. I learned so much from all the amazing healthcare professionals that I have worked with during my placements. I'm ready!

What I do

Every day has been different so far, depending on whether I was at university or on placement. At university, there was a combination of interactive lectures and time spent honing practical skills in the simulation centre.

And I've done eight placements in NHS and private hospitals where every day was exciting. I spent time working with and learning from a wide range of healthcare professionals from doctors and nurse to directors and healthcare assistants. Everyone looks after you; it's all about team work!.

The best bits

It's got to be the impact you have on your patients and their families and the relationships you build with them. Seeing a child leave in a better situation than when they came in and with a smile on their face is just the most amazing thing.

During one of my placements there was a child who was particularly distressed and their parent was also struggling. To be able to go into that situation and be able to help calm the child down and assure the parent that everything was ok was incredible. You get to witness the positive impact that the work we nurses do has on patients and their loved ones.



Learning disabilities nursing



Name

Sarah Trute

Job title

Community behaviour specialist – learning disabilities, Surrey and Borders Partnership NHS Foundation Trust

Entry route

Diploma in learning disability nursing*

“The focus is on enabling each person to reach their full potential.”

How I got into the role

On leaving school with GCSEs, I got a job as a PA, then as a project manager, working in the health and social care sectors. My job was strategic and interesting, but I never saw how my work directly affected people.

Going from senior project manager to newly-qualified nurse involved a drop in pay, but it has definitely been worth it. Given my interest in autism and special needs, I chose to study for a learning disability nursing diploma at Kingston University, supported by a bursary and holiday temping jobs.

What I do

Learning disability nursing is quite different to other fields of nursing. The focus is not on ‘making people better’ but enabling each person to reach their full potential, increase their independence and enjoy an improved quality of life.

I decided that community work was definitely for me, so I took further training to become a community behaviour specialist.

Community behaviour specialists spend time assessing the whole person and their challenging behaviours. Interventions can be quite creative, like designing picture sequences to support skill learning, or making personalised reward charts. I’ve helped one client who self-harms to learn a safer way to express her feelings, which has been very effective.

The best bits

My role is very people-oriented. Working with staff teams and managing risk can be challenging at times, but it’s very rewarding to see a client benefit from their positive behaviour support plan.

What I love most is helping a client achieve something that’s really important to them, whether that’s teaching a new skill, preventing self-harm, or enabling them to access their local community.

**Nursing diplomas are no longer available. You now need to take an approved degree in nursing.*



Mental health nursing

Name

Chris Dzikiti

Job title

Modern matron, East London NHS
Foundation Trust

Entry route

Nursing diploma*

**"I wanted a challenging
specialty where I'd really
get to know my patients."**



How I got into the role

I decided to leave my career in banking after being inspired by my cousin's enthusiasm for nursing.

My first placement in elderly care was fascinating – the patients were as interested in me as I was in them. Before I finished my diploma training, I was already planning my career.

I wanted a challenging specialty where I'd really get to know my patients. Mental health seemed perfect: the patients love to talk, and the nurses don't wear uniforms.

To gain the right skills, I studied part-time for my nursing degree and then took a Master's in Transcultural Psychiatry, which gave me an insight into how mental disorders and their treatment can be influenced by cultural and ethnic factors.

I also spent a year as unit manager in a private hospital, which really opened my eyes to financial management.

What I do

Two years later, these skills helped bring me to my current position as modern matron for a mental health unit. Our team includes ward managers,

nurses, psychologists and psychiatrists, and my budget is just over £2 million.

I also do lots of training on mental health issues. I presented at a conference hosted by the National Association of Psychiatric Intensive Care Units, and was recently appointed honorary lecturer at City University. It's amazing how much confidence this career can give you. Ten years ago I never thought I'd give a lecture to 200 people. Now, I feel I can do anything and talk to anyone.

The best bits

Throughout my career, I've been careful to maintain my patient focus and still get involved with new admissions. People lose so much when they suffer from mental illness: jobs, relationships, physical health, even the ability to look after themselves. It's incredibly satisfying to help someone get their life back, watch them regain their skills and give them hope and aspirations.

Friends of mine say they've never changed someone's life for the better. I have. On Sundays, they dread going to work the next day. I can't wait.

**Nursing diplomas are no longer available. You now need to take an approved degree level programme in nursing.*



District nursing

Name

Suzanna Whitwell

Job title

Tissue viability nurse, Milton
Keynes Community Health Services

Entry route

Degree in nursing, now completing
a district nursing qualification



**"You need very good
interpersonal skills and a
wide knowledge base."**

How I got into the role

My ambition to be a nurse began in childhood. During the various placements on my degree course, I realised that working in the community came closest to my idea of what nursing is about. In my last community placement as a student, I was given my own caseload to work with under supervision. I really loved it.

After qualifying, I worked in A&E for a short period. Then I got a job as a community nurse with a primary care provider. After two years, I moved to my current role and am now being sponsored by my employer to study for a community specialist practitioner degree.

What I do

I am now part of a new tissue viability team in district nursing, providing care to patients in their own homes. This involves teaching and advising community staff around policies relating to wound care. My experience in district nursing has been really useful to my current role, as a large part of my work involved wound care. I work closely with other community colleagues, especially district nurses, to continue to develop and improve practice and standards.

I'm learning more about management and team leadership, and about the implications of the policy shift towards more community-based care. Once finished, I will be a qualified district nurse and a team leader, which is quite special for someone of my age.

The best bits

I like the greater autonomy you have in the way you treat and manage patients as a nurse in the community. Patients feel less stressed and anxious than in hospital wards and there is close teamwork with a wide range of other professionals in health and social care. The regular hours are also a plus point – I might work one weekend in four or five but otherwise it's a normal working day.

You need very good interpersonal skills and a wide knowledge base. In the community, you have the opportunity to look at people holistically; you have to be aware of their whole home situation, not just their condition. In future, it's going to be more and more important that people are well looked after in their own homes.



General practice nursing

Name

Nadia Halley

Job title

Senior practice nurse,
NHS Thurrock Clinical
Commissioning Group

Entry route

Degree in nursing



"I love working with the
wide range of people who
walk through my door every day."

How I got into the role

My mother trained to be a nurse and told me a lot about it as a career. She taught me lots of practical nursing skills too. I volunteered in India in the early 1990s, working for a charity that provided medical and nursing care for people living in slums. It was then that I decided to train to be a nurse myself and returned to England to start my training.

After qualifying in 2005, my first job was a community nurse before progressing to a district nurse role when the team I was in changed to an integrated care team. Working in the community, I developed a wide range of skills, including palliative care, wound care and liaising with hospitals and other care providers. In my team, we also provided a rapid response service during the evenings. After I qualified, I also spent some time in Malawi, using my nursing skills to help people.

What I do

After 18 months, I started an apprenticeship as a practice nurse part-time, working as a community nurse the rest of the week. I began specialising in managing diabetes and have been a full-time practice nurse in various clinics in Essex since 2009. I am now the senior practice nurse at Acorns PMS in Grays.

A typical day could see me doing routine work like childhood immunisations, cytology and ear syringing, electrocardiograms and wound care. And I also look after people with conditions like diabetes and patients who may self harm or are homeless.

The best bits

I love what I do and working with the wide range of people who walk through my door every day! I have patients from Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Nepal, eastern Europe, Iraq, Iran, Turkey and from several African countries.

I enjoy knowing I've been able to help someone from another nation and the fulfilment that comes with making a difference to someone's life and knowing it's appreciated.

Getting started in nursing

To work as a nurse or nursing associate in the UK, you must hold an approved pre-registration programme qualification in nursing, which allows you to register with the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC). You can start your career at various levels, and be assured of practical support as you progress.

For more information about careers in nursing, including entry requirements and training, visit www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/nursing



Work placements and volunteering

Doing volunteer work or arranging a work placement is the best way to find out if a health profession is right for you. It will give you experience of the working environment, show you the kind of work you would be doing and the people you would be helping, and give you the opportunity to talk with people who are already doing the job.

The number and type of work placements or volunteering opportunities available vary, depending on where you are in the country. Experience doesn't always need to be gained in the NHS either, so think about the independent health sector, charities and other organisations where you could provide care for people as a way of gaining experience.

For more information about opportunities in your area, talk to your local healthcare and voluntary organisations. You can also find more information on gaining experience at www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/experience

Cadet schemes and apprenticeships

Some healthcare organisations offer apprenticeships (at different levels) in health and social care or cadet schemes in nursing. These consist of a variety of placements while providing the opportunity to work towards a relevant vocational qualification, such as the Care Certificate or foundation degree, depending on the level of apprenticeship.

Experience and qualifications gained through an apprenticeship or a cadetship will be invaluable for a career in nursing. An apprenticeship at intermediate, advanced or higher level, will not directly qualify you as a registered nurse. However, experience may count if you decide to apply for a full-time degree in nursing or a nursing degree apprenticeship.

If you are considering an apprenticeship or cadetship, it's important to check about career progression routes with your employer or training provider.

Visit www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/studyingnursing for further information, speak to your careers adviser, call us on **0345 60 60 655** or email advice@healthcareers.nhs.uk to find out more.

Remember that if you're applying for a role either directly in the NHS or in an organisation that provides NHS services, you may be asked to show how you think the values of the NHS Constitution apply in your everyday work. Find out more at www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/nhsconstitution and www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/6Cs

Clinical support workers

As a clinical support worker or healthcare assistant, you'll provide vital assistance to healthcare professionals for diagnosing, treating and caring for patients. These offer an ideal entry route to many health careers, including nursing, for people with commitment and enthusiasm rather than academic qualifications.

If you secure a position as a healthcare assistant and then progress into a senior support worker or nursing associate role, you will study for a foundation degree – a part-time qualification run in conjunction with further education colleges and universities.

If you have the ability and support from your employer, you may then be able to progress onto the pre-registration nursing degree on a part-time basis, or apply for a place on a nursing degree apprenticeship.

For more information about clinical support worker and nursing associate roles, visit www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/clinicalsupport

For up-to-date information about training to be a nurse, visit: www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/studyingnursing

Nursing associates

Nursing associates are registered professionals who work in a support role alongside existing health and care support workers and qualified registered nurses to deliver hands-on care. Nursing associates care for adults and children of all ages across a range of settings with all types of health conditions and care needs. Nursing associate roles can be based in hospitals, community settings, nursing homes and GP practices. They have skills and knowledge across the four fields of nursing and work as part of a multidisciplinary team. Nursing associates work towards a foundation degree that can count towards the training needed to become a registered nurse

Professional training

Nursing programmes are available at both undergraduate and postgraduate level. After completing your degree or degree apprenticeship, you must register with the Nursing and Midwifery Council before you can practise.

Undergraduate degree

When you are selecting your pre-registration degree, you will usually need to choose one of the four fields of nursing: adult, children's (paediatric), learning disability or mental health. A limited number of universities offer the chance to train for two fields on the same course.

All nursing degrees consist of academic study (taught across all four fields of nursing) and practice learning placements relevant to the chosen field. If, for example, you choose to go into mental health nursing, the practice learning placements will be mainly concentrated in that environment, and will focus on patients with mental health problems. However, certain aspects of training will be common to all fields of nursing, and there will often be opportunities to study alongside students on other healthcare courses.

All applicants must be numerate, be of good character and health and, above all, be passionate about providing compassionate care to patients. Undergraduate degrees are available on a full-time and part-time basis.

Full-time degree

If you have appropriate qualifications, you can apply directly to universities to undertake a full-time pre-registration degree in nursing. These courses are at least three years long and are a combination of 50 per cent academic study and 50 per cent supervised work placements in hospitals and the community.

There is no national minimum academic entry requirement for nursing degrees. It is up to each university to decide what they will accept, but on the whole, degree programmes usually require applicants to have at least five 9-4 grade GCSEs (including English language or literature and a science subject) and two A-levels (or equivalent). In reality, you are likely to need three A-levels or equivalent qualifications at level 3. If you have a relevant

first degree, you can consider a graduate entry programme (see the next page for details).

If you have no formal educational qualifications and/or did your secondary education some time ago, you can take an Access to Higher Education course which teaches skills around study and confidence in how to deal with the academic demands of a university course.

Access courses tend to be run by further education colleges around the country and are often linked to a specific university course.

In such cases, you may be interviewed by someone from the college as well as the university. You may be guaranteed a place on the university course on successful completion of an Access course.

You should always check what each university requires before embarking on an Access or other course.

Universities will usually look for applicants to provide evidence of relevant care or customer service experience. This need not necessarily be in the NHS. You can find out what sort of experience may be preferred or required by contacting the universities directly.

For more information about ways to gain experience visit: www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/experience



Part-time degrees

Part-time pre-registration nursing degree courses are provided by some universities and normally last for five or six years. They are typically available to those working as an experienced healthcare assistant or assistant practitioner with qualifications at level 3. Those studying part-time courses could receive assistance from their employers in terms of study leave or financial support. This varies between employers.

Nursing degree apprenticeships

Nursing degree apprenticeships offer flexible routes to becoming a nurse that won't require full-time study at university – although nursing degree apprentices will still need to undertake academic study at degree level and meet the standards laid down by the NMC.

You will need to secure a position as a nursing degree apprentice and your employer will then release you to study at university on a part-time basis. You will train in a range of practice placement settings. Most nursing degree apprenticeships will take four years. If you already have prior learning and experience, you may get some recognition of this through Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) and so the nursing degree apprenticeship may take you less than four years to complete.

Graduate entry (accelerated) programmes

Some universities will accredit an applicant's previous theoretical and practice learning (such as a relevant degree or relevant practical experience through APEL) against the requirements of the pre-registration programme. This may mean that the student can complete the course in a shorter time. Up to one third of a three-year programme can be accredited in this way.

These programmes are typically offered at postgraduate diploma and Master's level.

You can get a list of universities approved to run undergraduate and graduate-entry (accelerated) pre-registration programmes on a full and part-time basis and in each field of nursing by using our course finder at: www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/courses

Funding

If you are taking a full-time pre-registration course in nursing in England, you will usually be eligible for student loans to pay for tuition and maintenance fees. You may be able to access elements of the Learning Support Fund, which relates to costs associated with travel, childcare and hardship. Arrangements are different outside of England..

Registration

For more information about student funding, visit:

www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/financialsupport

For the latest information about the Learning Support Fund, visit: www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/learning-support-fund

You must ensure that your pre-registration nursing programme leads to registration with the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC), or you won't be eligible to practise as a nurse in the UK. Check with your university or college.

For a list of approved institutions running nursing courses leading to registration, visit: www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/courses

Next steps and progressing your career

If you want to work in health, it's important to find out as much information as you can about the qualifications you need and the opportunities that are available.



If you need a degree, you usually need to apply through UCAS who provides details of the universities offering courses. Each university will be able to tell you what they look for in applicants.

If you are already working but are thinking about a change of career, consider volunteering in your spare time. This is a great way to find out if you like the work, and can sometimes lead to a more permanent position.

Here is a checklist of things you should be doing, whether you're still at school, studying for your degree or looking for a change of career:

- Have you explored routes into nursing from your current situation? For example, are apprenticeships or healthcare assistant and nursing associate roles available as a way of gaining relevant experience before applying for a pre-registration programme?
- Have you found out which universities offer the field(s) of nursing you are considering?
- Will you want to specialise in a particular area of nursing and if so, what sort of training is needed for this?

- Are there any particular skills or experience that will improve your chances of getting into nursing?
- Have you enquired about opportunities to volunteer or do relevant work experience?

Whatever position you're in now, the Health Careers service can help. Call us on **0345 60 60 655**, email advice@healthcareers.nhs.uk or visit our website at www.healthcareers.nhs.uk

To search for jobs and apprenticeships with organisations providing NHS services, visit www.jobs.nhs.uk

For job vacancies with other health organisations, visit www.gov.uk/jobsearch

For job vacancies in local government, visit www.lgjobs.com

For apprenticeship vacancies, you can also visit www.findapprenticeship.service.gov.uk/apprenticeshipsearch

Here are some other things you can be doing, depending on where you are right now:

Where are you now?	What should you do now?	Who can help?
Studying for your GCSEs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Visit www.stepintothenhhs.nhs.uk > Check what your likely exam grades/results will be. > Explore routes into your chosen career – will you need a degree or other qualification before you join, or will the NHS train you on the job? Can you start as an assistant? > Are there any particular skills or experience that will improve your chances of getting into your chosen career? > Find out if you need any specific A-levels, or equivalent qualifications. > Explore the availability of apprenticeships in nursing. 	Subject teachers Your careers adviser Professional bodies Health Careers National Careers Service
Studying for A-levels or another course at your school or a local college	As GCSEs, plus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Investigate which universities offer the degree course you want. > Investigate any further qualifications you might need for your chosen role. > Search the NHS Jobs website at www.jobs.nhs.uk and speak to your local trust to get an idea of current vacancies. > Enquire about volunteering or work experience. > Explore the availability of apprenticeships in nursing, nursing associate or support roles. 	Subject teachers Your careers adviser UCAS Health Careers Professional bodies NHS Jobs National Careers Service
At university	As A-levels, plus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Take advice on whether it's a good idea to switch your degree course. > Complete your current degree and look for postgraduate courses. 	University careers service Health Careers Professional bodies NHS Jobs
Looking for a new career	As A-levels, plus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Find out if you will need to retrain before you apply for new roles or if the NHS will train you while you are working. 	Health Careers Jobcentre Plus Professional bodies NHS Jobs UCAS National Careers Service



Fulfil your potential

The NHS is committed to offering development and learning opportunities for all full-time and part-time staff. If you work for the NHS, no matter where you start, you'll have access to extra training and be given every chance to progress within the organisation. You'll receive an annual personal review and development plan to support your career progression.

You will also be encouraged to extend your range of skills and knowledge and take on new responsibilities through the Knowledge and Skills Framework (KSF). The KSF is available on the NHS Employers website: www.nhsemployers.org/SimplifiedKSF

The example career routes on p.34-35 makes it easy to see at a glance how you can progress within your chosen career.

Other organisations that provide healthcare and work to prevent ill health will offer similar development opportunities and the chance to review your work. It's a good idea to discuss career development with any employer you are considering.





Benefits of working in the NHS

As a nurse in the NHS, you will enjoy one of the most competitive and flexible benefits packages offered by any employer in the UK and a wealth of opportunities to develop your career. You will join one of the country's most respected organisations and one which has the values of compassionate care and staff wellbeing at its very heart.

If you work as a nurse in the private or voluntary sectors or another public sector organisation, your pay and benefits will vary depending on your employer.



Your pay as a nurse in the NHS

Most jobs are covered by Agenda for Change (AfC) pay scales, except doctors, dentists and very senior managers. The NHS job evaluation system determines a points score, which is used to match jobs to pay bands and determine levels of basic salary. Each pay band has a number of pay points. Staff will normally progress to the next pay point annually until they reach the top of the pay band.

You could start your career at AfC band 2 as a healthcare assistant or clinical support worker (nursing), rising to band 5 as a registered nurse and then to nurse consultant at bands 8a–c.

For more information on AfC pay bands, visit:

www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/pay



One of the UK's best pension schemes

The NHS Pension Scheme is one of the most generous in the UK. Every new employee automatically becomes a member, unless you choose to opt out.

Other employment benefits for NHS staff

Everyone employed under the NHS Agenda for Change pay system is entitled to:

- a standard working week of 37.5 hours
- holiday entitlements of 27 days per year, plus eight general and public holidays, rising to 33 days after ten years' service
- pay enhancements to reward out-of-hours, shift and overtime working
- career and pay progression based on the application of knowledge and skills
- annual personal development review to support career aspirations
- occupational health services
- study leave for sponsored courses

Many of these benefits apply across the whole of the NHS, although local organisations may offer additional benefits such as cycle to work schemes and nurseries. Many local shops, restaurants and services offer discounts to health staff too, including most gyms and leisure centres. Health Service Discounts is an employee benefit provider for many NHS organisations and offers discounts and deals for NHS staff on shopping, holidays and financial services from well-known brands:

www.healthservicediscounts.com

Get more information about the benefits and opportunities offered by the NHS at www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/payandbenefits

Health and wellbeing at work and your work-life balance

The NHS is committed to helping staff to stay well, including serving healthier food, promoting physical activity, reducing stress, and providing health checks covering mental health and musculoskeletal problems.

The NHS will help you combine your work with commitments in your everyday life and at different stages of your career - whether you're studying for a new qualification, raising a family or have other responsibilities.

The size and diversity of the NHS means we can offer you a range of flexible working and retirement opportunities. Part-time roles and job-share opportunities are often available, as well as term-time only, evening and weekend positions. Many people take an extended break to look after young children or other dependants who need special care, or to study full-time.

As well as advice and support for people looking after sick or elderly relatives, the NHS provides a range of childcare services for employees, including:

- nursery care
- after-school and breakfast clubs
- holiday play schemes
- emergency care

You can find more information on health and well-being at work at www.nhsemployers.org/healthyworkplaces

Example career routes

This diagram has been designed to provide examples of how staff can progress throughout their career in health.

It gives an illustration of a range of health careers and how someone could progress through different levels. It is not exhaustive; details on other careers

can be found in the relevant Health Careers booklets and on the Health Careers website.

The real-life story on page 19 describes how Aisha Thabet has progressed within nursing. You can

follow her career path in the white boxes on the diagram, alongside other potential paths in the different areas of health.

	Initial entry level jobs	Support workers	Senior healthcare assistants/technicians	Assistant practitioners/ Associate practitioners	Practitioners	Senior practitioners/ specialist practitioners	Advanced practitioners	Consultant practitioners	More senior staff
Allied health professions		Therapy clinical support worker	Occupational therapy rehabilitation assistant	Assistant practitioner in occupational therapy	Occupational therapist	Senior occupational therapist	Advanced occupational therapist (team leader)	Consultant occupational therapist	
Ambulance service team		Patient transport service driver	Emergency medical dispatcher	Control room duty officer	Paramedic	Specialist paramedic	Advanced paramedic	Consultant paramedic	Clinical director of service
Dental care team		Dental nurse	Student dental technician	Assistant dental technician	Dental technician	Senior dental technologist			
Health informatics	Health records assistant	Support desk assistant	Medical records clerk	Helpdesk adviser	Web developer	Special projects manager	Head of communications	Access, booking and choice manager	Director of information management and technology
Healthcare science		Phlebotomist	Newborn hearing screener	Critical care technologist	Cardiac physiologist	Senior biomedical scientist	Specialist respiratory physiologist	Consultant clinical scientist (medical physics)	Director of regional genetics services
Management				General office manager	Payroll manager	Projects manager	Head of accounts	Maxillofacial laboratory manager	Director of human resources
Midwifery		Healthcare assistant (maternity)	Maternity support worker		Midwife	Community midwife	Head of midwifery	Consultant midwife	Director of maternity services
Nursing	Apprentice in elderly care	Healthcare assistant (nursing)	Senior healthcare assistant	Nursing associate	A&E staff nurse	Senior staff nurse	Clinical charge nurse	Nurse consultant	Director of nursing
Pharmacy	Pharmacy porter	Pharmacy assistant Medicines counter assistant	Senior pharmacy assistant	Pharmacy technician	Pre-registration pharmacist	Pharmacist		Lead pharmacist for admissions	Director of clinical support services
Psychological therapies		Healthcare assistant (mental health)	Care support worker (mental health) Mental health support worker	Assistant clinical psychologist Trainee psychological wellbeing practitioner	Psychological wellbeing practitioner Trainee clinical psychologist	High intensity therapist Psychotherapist		Consultant clinical psychologist	Assistant director - clinical professional practice
Public health	Volunteer health champion	Health champion	Health trainer	Stop smoking adviser Health trainer team leader	Health improvement practitioner	Senior health improvement practitioner	Specialty registrar in public health Advanced health improvement practitioner	Public health consultant	Director of public health
Wider healthcare team	Porter	Maintenance assistant	Security officer	Medical secretary	Catering manager	Chaplain	Head of estates		

**For further copies of this booklet
please contact:**

Health Careers

Tel: 0345 60 60 655

Email: advice@healthcareers.nhs.uk

www.healthcareers.nhs.uk

NHSCB70 September 2018

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