

Careers in the NHS

COVID-19 has led to an increased focus and interest in careers in health. Although doctors and nurses are the best known groups of employees in healthcare, there are many other roles. In fact, there are over 350 different careers within the NHS. This article will give you a flavour of some of them, as well as a quick snapshot of the ongoing trends in the NHS workforce, as it prepares for the changing needs of the population of the future.

Patient-facing roles

If the thought of helping patients interests your son or daughter, then how about he/she considers one of the fourteen [allied health profession](#) roles, for example:

- dietitian
- paramedic
- physiotherapist
- diagnostic radiographer or therapeutic radiographer
- speech and language therapist.

There are also many patient-facing roles in [healthcare science](#), especially under the physiological sciences. Some of these are:

- audiologist
- cardiac scientist
- hearing aid dispenser
- ophthalmic and vision scientist
- respiratory physiologist and sleep scientist.

If your son or daughter has a science degree, he/she could also undertake a postgraduate qualification to become a [physician associate](#). This is a relatively new role in the UK, modelled on a similar role that has been prominent in the US for several decades.

[Pharmacy](#) is another patient-facing role, as are the [psychological professions](#).

There are so many different opportunities other than becoming a nurse or doctor!

The variety of roles

It is a myth that all the roles in the NHS are patient-facing. There are thousands of technical, managerial and scientific careers. For example, every hospital needs great people to help with IT; all staff depend on this, just like in any large organisation. They also need an array of people who are good with electronics to be able to service and repair the different medical devices and machines that are used. From patient monitors in the operating rooms, to ventilators in the Intensive Care Units, these devices are vital.

It is also a myth that as a scientist, you'll need to specialise in biology to work in the NHS. There are various healthcare science roles such as: [clinical technologists](#), [radiotherapy physicists](#), as well as [physical sciences and biomedical engineers](#), which rely on knowledge based on physics. Other roles will use knowledge in chemistry.

There is a huge need for managers in the NHS. Some examples of these are: HR managers, service managers (who will focus on the delivery of a particular department e.g. A&E), or project managers.

In addition, the NHS employs its own caterers, gardeners, plumbers and electricians etc.

All these roles will be advertised on [NHS Jobs](#).

The roles listed above are just a selection of what's available. You can [explore more roles](#) via the Health Careers website. The site also has a handy [online tool](#), which after asking a few questions will help your son or daughter to select a few careers that might suit them.

The rise of the apprenticeship

There has been a huge amount of work going on to approve the apprenticeship standards of many of the health professions. As well as higher apprenticeships, many degree apprenticeships have been approved, so expect to see a rise in these during the next few years. For more information on how apprenticeships work, see our article entitled '[Apprenticeship reforms and the future](#)'.

If you are interested in which apprenticeships have been approved, or are being developed, have a look at the [Skills for Health website](#).

Student Funding

[Funding](#) towards some of the degrees which will enable your son or daughter to become a healthcare professional are available. In 2020/21 the amount provided towards is £5,000 per year. This is available for nursing, midwifery and many of the allied health professions.

The health and healthcare science T-Levels

T-levels last for two years and one T-level is equivalent to three A-levels. These are being brought in from September 2020. (See the [gov.uk website](#) for a full list of T-levels to be implemented).

Health and healthcare science T-levels won't be brought in until 2021. One of the advantages of T-levels is that they will involve a work placement. They'll provide a route into some of the professions, but not all. Therefore, it is recommended that you look at the main entry requirements for the individual professions before your son or daughter applies.

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