



# Careers in pharmacy

**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 or apprenticeship 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](http://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/nhsconstitution)

 [www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/6Cs](http://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/6Cs)

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# What is pharmacy?

Medicines are the most common form of treatment in the NHS and pharmacies are where medicines are stored, prepared and dispensed. Pharmacies can be found in hospitals and the community, in health centres and GP surgeries and in high street shops and supermarkets.

Pharmacy staff play a vital part in patient care and recovery as well as public health, by using their expert knowledge of medicines and their uses. They work with colleagues in the wider healthcare team such as doctors, nurses and allied health professionals.

Community pharmacies are where patients and members of the public can get their prescribed medication as well as lifestyle advice for better health. The pharmacy team offer advice direct to patients on public health issues such as giving up smoking and sexual health and play a part in selecting treatments for patients, prescribing medicines and managing long-term health conditions such as asthma and diabetes.

If you enjoy science and are keen to help others, pharmacy could be for you. Whether you work in a hospital, GP practice or community pharmacy setting, you need good communication skills to work with the public and patients in a clinical role and as part of a healthcare team.



# FAQs

## Who works in pharmacy?

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Pharmacy staff work as a team in hospitals or community pharmacies and use their knowledge of medicines to help people with every type of medical condition. Pharmacy assistants and medicines counter assistants (MCAs) take in and hand out prescriptions and sell over-the-counter medicines. Pharmacy technicians and pharmacists are the senior members of the team, directly involved in the manufacture and supply of medicines and giving clinical advice.

Find out more at:

[www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/pharmacy](http://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/pharmacy)

## Where do the pharmacy team work?

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In hospitals, staff in pharmacy roles work as part of multidisciplinary teams alongside pharmacists and pharmacy technicians in dispensaries and wards. In community and GP surgery pharmacies, they support the pharmacist with the supply of prescribed and non-prescribed medication and provide healthy living advice such as stopping smoking. Pharmacy staff also work in the pharmaceutical industry, universities and colleges.

## Can I progress from being a pharmacy assistant to a pharmacist?

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By gaining appropriate qualifications and experience as a pharmacy assistant, you can apply for positions to train as a pharmacy technician, and from there train to be a pharmacist.

To become a pharmacist you will need to do a four-year (or five-year sandwich) pharmacy MPharm degree. If you do not have the qualifications needed for an MPharm, there are a limited number of foundation degrees in pharmaceutical science. If successful, you may be able to gain entry to the second year of an MPharm. To register and practise as a pharmacist, you will need to complete a pre-registration year and pass the registration assessment.

Use the Health Careers course finder to identify universities approved to run the MPharm at:

[www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/courses](http://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/courses)

## Can I get financial help to train as a pharmacy technician or pharmacist?

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The NHS does not provide financial support for students studying for the MPharm degree. Once you've graduated, you'll need to secure a pre-registration training position where you'll be paid a salary. Funding to train as a pharmacy assistant or technician varies, depending on the employer you train with. Some pharmacy technician and pharmacy assistant apprenticeships are available.

Find out more about studying pharmacy at:

[www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/studyingpharm](http://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/studyingpharm)

You can find out more at:

[www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/pharmacy](http://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/pharmacy)

# Which role is right for you?

To work in pharmacy, you will need good communication skills and an interest in science. In community and hospital settings you need to be able to communicate with patients and work well in a healthcare team. You will need to be methodical and able to follow procedures carefully and give instructions clearly.

In recent years the role of the pharmacy has changed. This means pharmacy teams now work in a wider range of settings and provide a wider range of health services. Pharmacists and pharmacy technicians now have more direct communication with patients both in hospitals and the community, advising on the most effective treatments for a particular health condition and providing services to the community on topics such as giving up smoking.

The amount of training you need differs, depending on the pharmacy role you choose, the level of responsibility you are given and the variety of specialist areas you can work in.

Medicines counter assistants and pharmacy assistants work under the supervision of a pharmacist. Pharmacy technicians also work under the supervision of the pharmacist but they are registered professionals and have more responsibilities. Pharmacists have a high level of responsibility, such as

strategic roles in medicines safety management, clinical roles specialising in the management of patients with long-term conditions such as diabetes, prescribing medicines or running their own pharmacy business.

Pharmacy assistants (sometimes called dispensing assistants) and medicines counter assistants usually need GCSEs in English and maths. To train as a pharmacy technician you need at least four GCSEs, including science (not including food science). Pharmacists need an accredited Master's degree in pharmacy. Wherever you start you will have the opportunity to take qualifications and progress in your career.

In the next section you can find out more about these roles and how to get into them. If you have any questions, you can call our helpline on **0345 60 60 655** or email [\*\*advice@healthcareers.nhs.uk\*\*](mailto:advice@healthcareers.nhs.uk)



## Medicines counter assistant/ pharmacy assistant

A **medicines counter assistant** (MCA) sells over-the-counter medicine and is trained to offer advice on common health problems. They work in community pharmacies.

**Pharmacy assistants** sell medicines to customers and give basic advice, help pharmacists and pharmacy technicians prepare medicines or use computer systems to order items. They work in hospitals and community pharmacies and are involved in audits, procurement and distribution.

## Pharmacy technician

The role of **pharmacy technician** is regulated and has developed significantly in recent years. As a pharmacy technician you will carry out some of the same tasks as a pharmacist, engaging with patients and managing the supply of medicines in a community pharmacy, and liaise with other members of the healthcare team about the supply of medicines. You could also manage a department in a hospital pharmacy, be involved in taking medicine histories from patients and reviewing medicines or give advice on different treatment options for patients in a specialist area, such as mental health, general practice and care homes.

## Pharmacist

**The role of pharmacist is very varied. Here are just some examples:**

- As a hospital pharmacist, you could work with patients to ensure they get the best from their medication, provide advice to other healthcare professionals, and perhaps specialise in paediatrics (children) or cardiology (heart) conditions.
- As a community pharmacist you could run a stop smoking service, run a medication review clinic for patients with long-term conditions such as diabetes, administer the flu jab and advise on sexual health matters.
- As a pharmacist in a GP surgery you could run clinics focused on high blood pressure, asthma, reducing the use of opioids and benzodiazepine, and clinics for frail elderly people.
- As a pharmacist in a primary care setting such as a clinical commissioning group or in a public health team, you could be responsible for making the best use of resources allocated for medicines or developing access to health services involving medicines.

# Pharmacy roles at a glance

Staff in pharmacy roles often work as part of a pharmacy team and support each other in their different roles. You can find more detailed information about all the roles described in the following pages on the Health Careers website at:

**[www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/pharmacy](http://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/pharmacy)**

There are also short videos about some of these roles on our YouTube channel:

**[www.youtube.com/HealthCareers](http://www.youtube.com/HealthCareers)**

## Medicines counter assistant (MCA)

A medicines counter assistant sells over-the-counter medicine working under the supervision of a pharmacist. They are trained to offer advice to the public on common health problems, referring to the pharmacist for answers to more unusual or complex questions.

You need good customer service skills and an interest in health issues.

To train as a medicines counter assistant, you first need to be employed in a pharmacy. You would then train on the job combined with studying for an accredited three to six month medicines counter assistant distance learning course. Courses may have minimum qualification requirements.



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





## Pharmacist

Pharmacists are experts in medicines and their uses. They use their clinical knowledge of medicines and the effect they have on the human body to help people with every type of medical condition. They also run services to offer health advice on issues such as giving up smoking or sexual health. Roles can include managing patients with long-term conditions such as asthma and diabetes. Some pharmacists go on to be qualified as independent prescribers so are involved from diagnosis to prescribing.

Pharmacists may also oversee the manufacture of medicines where ready-made ones are not available, such as for some cancer treatments, or be responsible for purchasing, quality testing or medicines optimisation (maximising benefits and minimising risk associated with medicines).

Most pharmacist roles involve lots of patient contact so you need good communication skills and a desire to play a role in helping people live healthy lives. You also need a strong aptitude for science, particularly chemistry. You may supervise junior staff or have a management role.

To practise as pharmacist you need to study for an accredited Master's degree in pharmacy, (MPharm) complete a pre-registration year and pass the registration assessment. Overall, the training takes five years. Courses are offered at a number of universities across the UK.

Find out more about being a pharmacist at: [www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/pharmacist](http://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/pharmacist) and [www.rpharms.com](http://www.rpharms.com)



## Pharmacy assistant

Pharmacy assistants work under the direction of a pharmacist or pharmacy technician in a hospital or a community pharmacy.

After completing special training, under supervision from the pharmacist, the pharmacy assistant can take in and hand out prescriptions, sell over-the-counter medicines and pack and label medicines. You may also help the pharmacist prepare medicines or deliver medicines to other parts of a hospital.

You would usually be required to study for an accredited qualification at level 2 in pharmaceutical science or pharmacy service skills or equivalent. You would also receive training to be able to answer patients' and customers' questions. You need confidence to explain things clearly to members of the public, the ability to work in a team and able to pay attention to detail.

There are no set entry requirements to become a pharmacy assistant but employers usually expect good literacy, numeracy and IT skills and may ask for specific GCSEs or equivalent qualifications at level 2. You may be asked to demonstrate experience of relevant work experience, such as in a customer service role.

Find out more about being a pharmacy assistant at: [\*\*www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/pharmassistant\*\*](http://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/pharmassistant)



## Pharmacy technician

The pharmacy technician's role is usually to manage the supply of medicines, preparing medicines for supply and giving advice to patients and customers. In community pharmacy, pharmacy technicians may also be involved in delivering some public health services such as advice on stopping smoking. In hospitals they may have an administrative role, providing a link between wards, patients and the pharmacy or they may manufacture (make) medicines, perhaps under sterile conditions, where ready-made preparations are not available. Some pharmacy technician roles involve taking medicine histories from patients, reviewing medicines, counselling and giving advice on different treatment options for patients. You may also work on implementing IT systems, governance and medication safety.

You need to be confident to work with all sorts of people, have good communication skills including listening and explaining clearly, and to be organised.

To apply for a pre-registration trainee pharmacy technician job you usually need at least four GCSEs (9-4/A-C) including English, maths and two science or equivalent qualifications. Training currently includes studying for two accredited qualifications at level 3 in pharmaceutical science or pharmacy service skills.

Find out more about being a pharmacy technician at: [\*\*www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/pharmtech\*\*](http://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/pharmtech)



Real-life  
stories



**Falina Ogada**

#### **Job title**

**Relief pharmacist,  
high street pharmacy**

#### **Entry route**

**Pharmacy degree**

**“Some people just need a  
service with a smile and  
that makes their day.”**



## **How I got into the role**

I went to school in Malawi and was lucky enough to get a scholarship to study for a Bachelor of Pharmacy at Cardiff University. I'd always been interested in science subjects. In Malawi at the time, there were no degree courses in health and life sciences, so this was a unique opportunity for me.

## **What I do**

My day is spent checking prescriptions and ensuring that patients are receiving the correct medication. As the responsible pharmacist in the pharmacy, I have to ensure it is set up to serve patients correctly before it opens and throughout the day. I work with a team of other trained colleagues such as medicines counter assistants, dispensing assistants and pharmacy technicians.

Part of my working day is spent consulting and advising patients about their lifestyle, wellbeing and medical needs. I also answer any other queries that a patient might have, referring them to a doctor when appropriate.

We offer many services, including a minor ailments

service, emergency hormonal contraception, seasonal flu vaccination, travel health clinics and smoking cessation. The core services we offer such as Medicine Use Reviews (MURs) and the New Medicine Service (NMS) help patients understand their medication, learn about side effects and understand why they need to take the medication.

I support and train dispensing assistants and I am also there to support pharmacy graduates during their pre-registration training year.

Training is part of my continued professional development (CPD). Some of it is mandatory, for example pharmacists have to be level 2 trained in safeguarding vulnerable adults and children, and some you can choose after reflecting on your knowledge.

## **The best bits**

Working in a community pharmacy means I meet different people. I enjoy working with different people and teams to have a positive impact on patients.

Some people just need a service with a smile and that makes their day.





**"My aim is to become  
an independent  
prescriber."**

#### **Name**

**Amy Simmons**

#### **Job title**

**Lead pharmacist,  
Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust**

#### **Entry route**

**Pharmacy degree**



## **How I got into the role**

A week of work experience at a community pharmacy and an interest in science helped me decide on a career in pharmacy.

I completed the four-year Pharmacy Master's and really liked the range of subjects we covered. We had lectures on everything from law and medicinal chemistry to patient consultation, as well as practical classes in the lab and in a mock dispensary.

I then completed the necessary pre-registration year in the trust I'm working at now. I hit the ground running and quickly developed my skills, knowledge and experience in a range of specialties. I'm now lead pharmacist for the admissions unit at the same trust. Since qualifying I've achieved a postgraduate diploma in general pharmacy practice and my aim is to also become an independent prescriber.

## **What I do**

When I tell people I'm a pharmacist, they assume I stick labels on boxes, but there's much more to it than that!

My day starts on the busy acute admissions ward where I clinically screen charts and obtain medication histories for newly-admitted patients. The junior pharmacists have more than one ward per day to work on.

I work very closely with clinicians such as consultants, junior doctors, speech and language therapists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, dietitians, nurses and healthcare assistants. We work as a team to make sure that the patients receive the most effective treatment.

## **The best bits**

I really enjoy meeting new patients every day and using my knowledge and experience to help others.

A pharmacist needs to be inquisitive, dynamic and patient-focused. It's always best to try and get some experience to make sure the role is right for you.





### Name

Steve Williams

### Job title

Senior clinical pharmacist, Westbourne Medical Centre and The Adam Practice

### Entry route

Pharmacy degree

**"My biggest success has been getting two other general practices to employ a pharmacist within the national pilot scheme."**



## How I got into the role

I worked in hospital pharmacy for 25 years but was keen for a lifestyle change and to use my medicines expertise in primary care.

I was particularly keen to try and reduce some of the medicines-related harm that causes avoidable hospital admissions. The NHS was introducing a major national pilot scheme for clinical pharmacists to work in general practice so I applied for the senior post on the beautiful Dorset coast.

## What I do

There are five main aspects to this role:

1. Dealing with day-to-day clinical enquiries from clinicians such as GPs, nurse practitioners, district nurses about medicine choices for patients.
2. Updating all the medicines on the GP computer system for patients over age 60 when they are discharged from hospital. This usually involves speaking to the patient themselves to check understanding of what has happened to their medicines, and sometimes the community pharmacy.

3. Working to improve the safety and efficiency of repeat prescription systems.
4. Using my medicines expertise and prescribing qualification to perform annual medication reviews for patients on multiple medicines, in particular patients in care homes.
5. Getting involved in reviewing and improving the quality of prescribing to achieve initiatives set by local or national bodies such as NICE.

## The best bits

My biggest success has been getting two other general practices in the area to employ a pharmacist within the national pilot scheme. They had been considering it for a while but having me in the role demonstrated to them just how important these roles are going to be in general practice.



**"I saw how each  
person works together  
to help patients."**



### Name

**Aditya Aggarwal**

### Job title

**Pre-registration pharmacist,  
high street pharmacy**

### Entry route

**Pharmacy assistant**

## How I got into the role

I knew I wanted to work in healthcare, but didn't know in what capacity, so I worked in a pharmacy as a dispensary assistant for a year to understand the role. It was a busy team and I saw how each person works together to help patients.

My pharmacy degree has shown me the expanding role of pharmacists and how integrating pharmacists in the community, hospitals and industry can help patients. New roles have been developed for pharmacists in GP surgeries and I've come into contact with pharmacists working in consulting and banking - areas I'd never thought of before!

## What I do

I'm currently on placement in a pharmacy which is always busy, particularly on Monday mornings! I try to learn as much as possible from my tutor and work as if I'm already a qualified pharmacist.

I arrive at work at 8.30am to get the pharmacy ready and check to see if we've received any urgent faxes from clinics or if there are doctors' notes that

need attention. The day is spent completing the weekly orders for patients, preparing prescriptions and providing advice to patients and healthcare professionals. I counsel patients on their medicines and provide support for them on how to use their medicine devices. I've also shadowed my pharmacist while he carries out medicine reviews and provides advice on minor ailments.

I've worked in 'cross-sector' placements such as in a hospital and a GP practice. The variety has enhanced my learning and helped me see where I would like to fit in.

Most of the time is taken up with helping patients maximise the use of their medicines, ensuring the prescription is clinically correct for them and learning if there have been any updates to the national guidance.

## The best bits

The best bit about the role is knowing you have positively impacted someone's health. Over time, you get to see the positive impact your advice and care has had on your patients and their loved ones.



### Name

Shannon Harris

### Job title

Assistant technical officer – dispenser,  
Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust

### Entry route

Training while working

**“I was attracted to a role  
in pharmacy because of the  
attention to detail and  
accuracy it requires.”**



## How I got into the role

I was attracted to a role in pharmacy because of the attention to detail and accuracy it requires. With a young baby to care for, I was looking for a stable job and a family friend who's a midwife suggested looking on the Health Careers and NHS Jobs websites.

Previously I studied a degree in costume design and making, but no longer wanted to pursue this as the work was freelance and not stable enough to live on. But I felt my background in designing and making costumes, where it's essential to be accurate with measuring and construction, could be applied to preparing prescriptions. It's vital for me to measure and decant liquids correctly and check drugs are in the right strengths.

## What I do

My role as dispenser is to label and dispense prescriptions for the patient. In any given day, the team prepares more than 180 prescriptions and each one can include up to 20 items per patient. It's a lot of work to get done correctly in a short space of time.

I came to the job with years of customer service and retail experience. That experience definitely helps my work now when I'm communicating with different staff, answering phones, and dealing with face-to-face enquiries.

## The best bits

The best bit about the job is knowing I'm helping someone get the medication they need to help them on their personal road to recovery. In hospital, pharmacy is one of the last hurdles to help a patient to be in less or no pain and hopefully get them to a place where they feel well again.

It's a good feeling knowing I've done a little bit to help the patient feel even the slightest bit better.



**"Pharmacy is an  
exciting and varied  
profession to work in."**

**Jurinda Cowe**

#### **Job title**

**Senior pharmacy technician,  
City Hospitals Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust**

#### **Entry route**

**Pharmacy technician course**



## **How I got into the role**

As young as age 11, I was keen to learn about medicinal herbs and was very interested in biology. My aunt used to laugh and say, "One day you'll work in pharmacy yourself!"

I didn't get into university unfortunately but worked as a cashier in a local pharmacy where I observed the pharmacy technicians serving customers and advising on different medications. It was at that point I decided to study pharmacy myself and took a two-year pharmacy technician course (equivalent to the two-year NVQ3/BTEC course).

When I moved to England in 1999, I found a job in a local pharmacy here and served customers, dispensed prescriptions and rotated stock.

After a few more years' experience, I was confident enough to apply to work for a pharmaceuticals manufacturer and worked in their lab.

## **What I do**

My manufacturing job was a long way from home so eventually I applied for a pharmacy position at my local hospital.

I was initially based in the pharmacy dispensary where I completed my checking course and started training on the wards as a medicine management technician. In that role it was important that I was very organised, able to work on my own as well as part of a group, and a good communicator.

My days at work are very busy and full of unexpected tasks. One moment I may be counselling a patient about their medication, and the next, as a manager, I may have to deal with upset or angry patients or a medication error or query.

Pharmacy is an exciting and varied profession to work in.

## **The best bits**

My goal is always to make the patients happy and, if I'm lucky, receive a smile and "thank you" from them.

My role at the hospital has taught me how to look after my team. I'm very proud to be working here and the opportunities I have to get involved in many aspects of pharmacy work.

# Getting started in pharmacy

If you have an interest in a career in pharmacy there are a number of different ways you can get started.



## Work experience and volunteering

Volunteering or arranging a work placement is one of the best ways to find out if a career in health is right for you.

For a career in pharmacy, getting experience in a pharmacy or work shadowing a pharmacist will be most useful. Work shadowing involves watching an experienced practitioner at work and perhaps being able to ask them questions to see what their role is really like. This might be in a healthcare setting (such as a health centre or hospital pharmacy) or in a high street pharmacy or supermarket with a pharmacy section. Failing this, experience in any healthcare setting will be valuable. Gaining customer service skills in retail or volunteering for an organisation or charity where you could help or talk to people will also be useful.

You can find more information on gaining experience at: [www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/experience](http://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/experience)

## Apprenticeships and entry level roles

Apprenticeships are a great way to learn and gain experience at the same time. Apart from learning in the workplace you may go on day or block release to a training centre or college, or undertake distance learning.

Level 2 and 3 apprenticeships are available with some employers for pharmacy assistants and pharmacy technicians respectively.

For more information about apprenticeships in health see: [www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/apprenticeships](http://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/apprenticeships)

Apprenticeship vacancies in pharmacy can be found on the NHS Jobs website: [www.jobs.nhs.uk](http://www.jobs.nhs.uk) and the Government's Apprenticeships website at: <https://www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship>

Remember that wherever you start in pharmacy you will have the opportunity to take qualifications and progress in your career. Assistants can apply to train as pharmacy technicians and, with the right qualifications, pharmacy technicians can go on to study to become a pharmacist.





## Studying to be a pharmacist

To register to practise as a pharmacist, you need to study for an accredited Master's degree in pharmacy (MPharm). This is a four year (or five year sandwich) course and is offered throughout the UK.

To get on a course you will usually need A-level chemistry and in addition A-level biology, maths or physics or equivalent qualifications. Grades A-B are usually required, but check individual universities for details of grades and subject requirements.

If you do not have qualifications at the right level, or need extra study in science for an MPharm course, there are a limited number of foundation degrees accredited by the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) where entry requirements are lower. If you attain the required standards, direct entry on to Year 2 of an MPharm is possible.

Use the Health Careers course finder to locate MPharm courses at: [www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/courses](http://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/courses)

To become fully qualified, you will need to work for a year under supervision (pre-registration training) in a community or hospital pharmacy and pass a registration exam.

Find out more about studying pharmacy at: [www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/studyingpharm](http://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/studyingpharm)

## Registration

To practise as a pharmacist or a pharmacy technician you need to be registered with the GPhC. As you progress through your career you'll need to keep your skills and knowledge up to date to remain on the register. Joining an appropriate professional association can be a good way to access professional development courses and conferences, for example the Royal Pharmaceutical Society (RPS) in the case of pharmacists or the Association of Pharmacy Technicians (APTUK) for registered technicians.



## Next steps and developing your career

If you've decided you want to work in pharmacy it is important to find out as much information as you can about the qualifications you need and the opportunities that are available.

You can use the Health Careers course finder: [www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/courses](http://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/courses) to locate and find out more about MPharm courses accredited by the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) to qualify as a pharmacist. Applications for the MPharm must be made through UCAS at: [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com)

To find out more about the pre-registration year required before you can practise as a pharmacist and to apply for pre-registration pharmacist positions, see individual employer websites or: [www.oriel.nhs.uk](http://www.oriel.nhs.uk)

### Jobs and trainee posts

To search for pharmacy assistant (dispensing assistant) and trainee pharmacy technician posts, go to: [www.jobs.nhs.uk](http://www.jobs.nhs.uk)

Apprenticeships can be found on the Government Apprenticeships website: [www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship](http://www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship)  
Jobs can also be found on individual NHS organisation websites. See the NHS Choices website for a list of NHS organisations: [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

Large retail pharmacies advertise on their own websites. Independent pharmacies may also advertise locally, in a shop window or in a local paper.

For job vacancies with other health organisations, visit: [www.gov.uk/jobsearch](http://www.gov.uk/jobsearch)  
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](http://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/nhsconstitution) and [www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/6Cs](http://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/6Cs)



If you have any questions, you can call  
our helpline on **0345 60 60 655** or email  
[advice@healthcareers.nhs.uk](mailto:advice@healthcareers.nhs.uk)



## Opportunities for progression

Wherever you start, you will have the opportunity to take qualifications and progress in your career. Pharmacy assistants may be offered the opportunity to study a General Pharmaceutical Council-approved qualification at level 2 in pharmacy service skills or pharmaceutical science. Trainee pharmacy technicians study accredited qualifications at level 3 to enable them to practise as a pharmacy technician. These qualifications can help you if you want to study to be a pharmacist but in most cases you will still need A-level chemistry. Pharmacists may do additional training to allow them to diagnose and prescribe medicines.

For all pharmacy roles there is the opportunity to progress to team leader or supervisory roles. For example, a chief pharmacy technician could be responsible for the day-to-day management of a pharmacy department. Pharmacists can choose to progress towards management or strategic roles or they may wish to move into teaching or research. Some pharmacists combine a clinical role with teaching and work as a consultant pharmacist or decide to work in the pharmaceutical industry.

There are also opportunities to specialise. Pharmacists can specialise in areas such as haematology (blood), cardiology (heart), paediatrics (children), emergency departments, infection management and antibiotic resistance, the NHS111 service, and radiopharmacy (radioactive drugs used in cancer treatments).

Pharmacy technicians can specialise in an area of practice such as mental health, oncology (cancer treatment) or paediatrics (children's healthcare). Other areas of specialism include medicines management, manufacturing, clinical trials, medicine information services, IT, risk management or strategic management.



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

	What should you do now?	Who can help?
<b>Studying for your GCSEs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Explore routes into your chosen career. Will you need a degree?</li> <li>➤ Find out if you need specific A-levels or equivalent qualifications at level 3, chemistry A-level for example</li> <li>➤ Use <a href="https://www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship">www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship</a> and <a href="https://www.jobs.nhs.uk">www.jobs.nhs.uk</a> to look for apprenticeships in pharmacy</li> <li>➤ Enquire about relevant volunteering or work experience, such as in a pharmacy or other healthcare setting</li> </ul>	Subject teachers Careers adviser Professional bodies Health Careers National Careers Service
<b>Studying for A-levels or another course at your school or a local college</b>	<b>As GCSEs, plus:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Use the Health Careers course finder to search for Master's degrees in pharmacy</li> <li>➤ Use UCAS to search for and apply to Master's degrees in pharmacy</li> <li>➤ Search <a href="https://www.jobs.nhs.uk">www.jobs.nhs.uk</a> to get an idea of current job and apprenticeship vacancies and the qualifications needed for different pharmacy roles</li> </ul>	Subject teachers Careers adviser UCAS Professional bodies Health Careers National Careers Service
<b>At university</b>	<b>As A-levels, plus:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ You'll need an accredited MPharm to be able to apply for a pre-registration trainee pharmacist post. Take a look at <a href="https://www.oriel.nhs.uk">www.oriel.nhs.uk</a></li> </ul>	University careers service Health Careers Professional bodies
<b>Looking for a new career</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Consider work experience or voluntary work in a pharmacy to find out about pharmacy roles. Experience in other healthcare settings or retail may also be useful</li> <li>➤ Use <a href="https://www.jobs.nhs.uk">www.jobs.nhs.uk</a> to look for pharmacy assistant, dispensing assistant or pharmacy technician trainee roles</li> </ul>	Careers adviser Health Careers Professional bodies NHS Jobs 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](http://www.nhsemployers.org/SimplifiedKSF)**

The example career routes table on page 30 makes it easy to see at a glance how you can progress within your chosen career.

Other organisations that provide healthcare will offer similar development opportunities. Community pharmacy employers and employers in the pharmaceutical industry will also offer career progression opportunities. It is a good idea to discuss potential career development with any employer you are considering.





# Benefits of working in the NHS

As a pharmacy professional 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 in pharmacy in the community or pharmaceutical sectors, your pay and benefits will vary, depending on your employer.



## Your pay as a pharmacy professional

Most jobs in the NHS are covered by NHS terms and conditions of service (Agenda for Change) pay bands, 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 normally progress to the next pay point annually until they reach the top of the pay band.

Assistant level posts in this area of work, such as pharmacy assistants, usually start on band

2 or 3. Newly qualified pharmacy technicians usually start in the NHS on band 4. Newly qualified pharmacists usually start in the NHS on band 6 and with further study and training they can apply for posts at band 7. Senior pharmacy roles, such as a senior manager of pharmaceutical services, can be at band 9.

For more information on pay bands and the most up-to-date salary information in your chosen career, visit:

[www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/pay](http://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, overtime and seven day 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](http://www.healthservicediscounts.com)

## 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 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](http://www.nhsemployers.org/healthyworkplaces)

Get more information about the benefits and opportunities offered by the NHS at: [www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/payandbenefits](http://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/payandbenefits)









## Example career routes

The diagram on pages 30 and 31 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 12 describes how Falina Ogada has progressed within pharmacy. 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	Nurse cadet	Healthcare assistant (nursing)	Senior healthcare assistant	Community care assistant	Neonatal nurse	Community psychiatric nurse	District nurse (team manager)	Nurse consultant in stroke	Director of nursing
Pharmacy	Pharmacy porter	Medicines counter assistant	Senior pharmacy assistant	<b>Pre-registration pharmacist</b>	<b>Pharmacist</b>	Pharmacy manager	Pharmacist with area of specialty	Consultant pharmacist	Director of clinical support services
Psychological therapies		Healthcare assistant (mental health)	Mental health support worker	Trainee psychological wellbeing practitioner	Trainee clinical psychologist	High intensity therapist		Consultant clinical psychologist	Assistant director - clinical professional practice
Public health	Volunteer health champion	Health champion	Health trainer	Stop smoking adviser	Health improvement practitioner	Senior health improvement practitioner	Specialty registrar in public health	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:**

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[www.healthcareers.nhs.uk](http://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk)

NHSCB12 May 2019

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