



# Careers in the allied health professions

**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

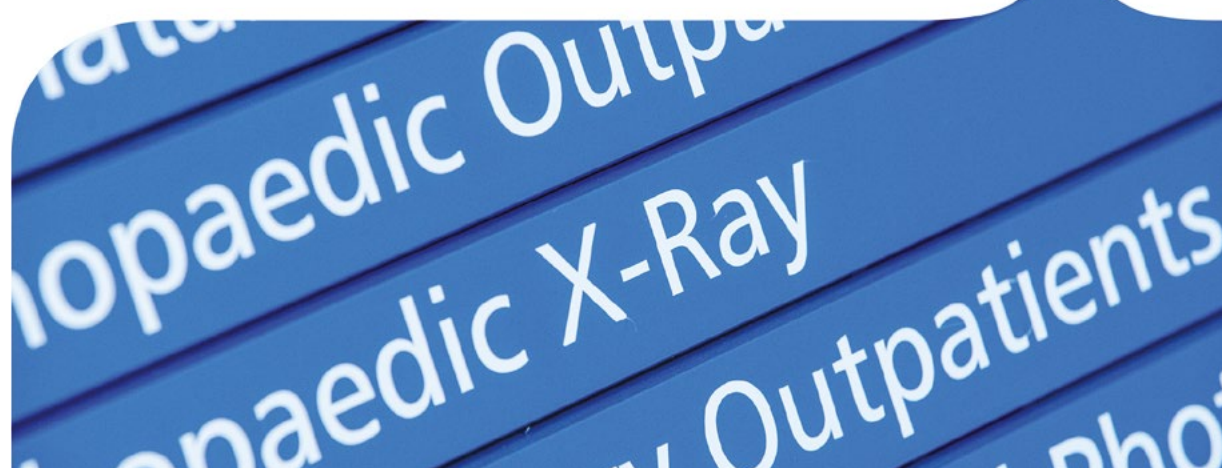
Find out more about the NHS Constitution and the 6Cs at:

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

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

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# What is an allied health profession?

If you are looking for a career that combines a challenge, an excellent employment package and the reward of doing something really worthwhile, the allied health professions offer a wide range of opportunities.



Allied health professionals (AHPs) provide treatment and help rehabilitate adults and children who are ill, have disabilities or special needs, to live life as fully as possible. They work across a wide range of different settings including the community, people's homes and schools, as well as hospitals. They often work in the independent sector and for charities.

Although they frequently work alongside doctors, nurses and other healthcare professionals, AHPs are making independent assessments and decisions about treatment. As an AHP, it will be important that you can work well as part of a team and be able to make your own decisions based on the training and specialist expertise you have acquired.

In the frontline of healthcare, all the allied health professions involve working directly with patients, usually one-to-one, but sometimes with groups of people who share similar health problems or issues.





# FAQs

## What are the allied health professions?

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The allied health professions (AHPs) are art therapist, dietitian, dramatherapist, music therapist, occupational therapist, operating department practitioner, orthoptist, osteopath, paramedic, physiotherapist, podiatrist, prosthetist/orthotist, diagnostic radiographer, therapeutic radiographer, and speech and language therapist.

## How do I train to be an allied health professional?

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The training for each of these professions involves going to university to do an approved programme. For some careers, only full-time courses are available, but for others there may be part-time routes too. Apprenticeships into some AHPs are being developed too.

## Is there financial help to support me while I'm training?

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Students applying to study approved full-time AHP courses can usually apply for student loans. They may also be able to access the Learning Support Fund which can provide support for excess travel and dual accommodation expenses incurred owing to attending practice placements; help students with child dependants and those facing severe hardship. Check directly with each university you are considering applying to in case there are any additional local financial support arrangements that you can access. Visit **[www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/financialsupport](http://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/financialsupport)**

## Can I work as an AHP assistant and train later?

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Yes, there are opportunities to work in a variety of clinical support roles, such as a dietetic assistant, physiotherapy assistant, podiatry assistant, occupational therapy assistant, technical instructor, radiography assistant, orthotic technician, prosthetic technician and speech and language therapy assistant. Depending on your role, your employer may then support you to train as a fully qualified AHP.



# Which role is right for you?

Whether you are interested in science, the arts, sport or psychology, you're sure to find something here that suits you.

What all the roles share is a commitment to the individual patient or client. These are jobs you'll enjoy if you feel comfortable interacting with people, including families and other carers, as treatment progresses.



On the frontline of healthcare, all the allied health professions involve working directly with patients, usually one-to-one, but sometimes with groups of people who share similar health problems or issues. However, the kind of work varies according to the profession you choose.

Some roles, such as a diagnostic radiographer and therapeutic radiographer, involve using complex high-tech equipment. A range of other jobs such as prosthetist will appeal to you if you have an interest in design and technology and how they can be used to improve people's lives. Speech and language therapists and dietitians take complex scientific information and use it to create individual treatment plans for people with eating or communication problems, respectively.

Other roles are more hands-on. As a physiotherapist or podiatrist, your specialist knowledge of muscle and bone structure are needed for treatments that often involve manipulation and guiding people through exercises.

The arts therapies involve listening and working in partnership with clients to identify ways of overcoming their problems. You'll use art, drama and music to enable others to live their life more fully.

Each of the allied health professions brings specialist knowledge and skills that are unique to their job.

For example:

- Therapeutic radiographers play a key part in treating people who have life-threatening cancers.
- Orthoptists may be asked to assess the vision and eye movements of young babies with the aim of detecting and correcting problems related to eye or brain development.
- Occupational therapists can help people regain independence after a serious illness or injury, working in hospitals but also in the clients' own home.
- Arts therapists help people come to terms with, and recover from, severe mental health conditions such as depression or addiction.

To move into any of the professional roles, you need to have completed a course of study and training at degree, diploma or postgraduate level. Only then will you be qualified to make the kind of clinical

This booklet focuses on the professional AHP roles.

For information about staff working in assistant or clinical support roles, visit [www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/clinicalsupportstaff](http://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/clinicalsupportstaff)

judgements on which the health and wellbeing of your patients may depend. This means you will need good grades at A-level or equivalent level 3 qualifications to gain a place on a university course, or relevant work experience combined with evidence of academic ability.

For more information about the training needed to work in the allied health professions, visit [www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/AHPtraining](http://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/AHPtraining)

## Working as an assistant

Across most of the allied health professions there are a range of assistant roles that play an important part in providing treatment to patients. There are no set academic requirements but these roles can act as a springboard for further career development and eventual professional qualification. How far you want to take your career will depend on you but the culture of personal development and continuing learning within the NHS will provide all the support you need.





# The allied health professions at a glance

You can find more detailed information about all the allied health roles listed below on the Health Careers website at [www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/AHP](http://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/AHP)

There are also short videos about most of the AHP roles on our YouTube channel: [www.youtube.com/Healthcareers](http://www.youtube.com/Healthcareers)



See **real-life stories** of people working in some of the allied health professions at the end of this section

## Art therapist

Art therapists use their psychotherapeutic training and their creative skills to work with people who have difficulty communicating and relating to others. Working in hospitals, mental health and disability services and in prisons, art therapists help clients to express their feelings, explore their potential, and achieve a sense of personal development and fulfilment.

**It's a career to consider if you enjoy art and can see how the creative process could have therapeutic value for a wide range of people.**

Before you start training as a therapist, you need academic qualifications, evidence of your ability as an artist, and to demonstrate a genuine interest in helping people.

Find out more about being an art therapist at [www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/arttherapist](http://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/arttherapist)



## Dietitian

Dietitians are experts in food and nutrition. They are the only health professionals who assess, diagnose, support and treat health conditions with food and nutrition. Dietitians also promote wider public health messages such as reduction of obesity and diabetes, and many work on a freelance basis with clients to achieve personal goals.

Dietitians work in a variety of settings. While many work in hospitals, others work in the community, health centres, specialist clinics, people's homes, with the food industry, sports and the media.

**Key to being a dietitian is your ability to understand the science and evidence behind whatever you are presented with and translate that information so that patients and clients are able to understand.**

Find out more about being a dietitian at [www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/dietitian](http://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/dietitian)





## Dramatherapist

Dramatherapists use role play, movement and storytelling to help people explore and solve personal and social problems. Dramatherapists work in a variety of settings, including mental health and disability services, and in prisons.

**If you enjoy drama, and are willing to undertake psychotherapeutic training, it could be the career for you.**

You will need academic qualifications, evidence of your dramatic ability, and to be able to demonstrate a genuine interest in helping people.

Find out more about being a dramatherapist at [www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/dramatherapist](http://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/dramatherapist)

## Music therapist

Music therapy can be particularly helpful when words are too much or not enough to express emotions verbally. Music therapists use their psychotherapeutic training and creative skills to work with people who have difficulty communicating verbally, and in relating to others. Using a wide range of musical styles, including free improvisation, music therapists work with people's innate musicality to offer appropriate, sensitive and meaningful support to help people find ways in which to express themselves, explore their potential and support their wellbeing.

**Music therapy is a career to consider if you are a highly skilled musician and can see how music can be used therapeutically to support people across the lifespan with a wide range of needs.**

Before you start training as a music therapist, you need academic qualifications, evidence of your ability as a musician, and to be able to demonstrate a genuine interest in helping people.

Find out more about being a music therapist at [www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/musictherapist](http://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/musictherapist)

## Occupational therapist

This is a wide-ranging role that links health with social care and the surroundings in which people live. Occupational therapists help people with physical and psychological problems to be more independent in home, work and social settings by assessing what they are able to do for themselves and providing support and encouragement.

**It will appeal to you if you have a strong practical streak, and can quickly grasp the day-to-day problems created by someone's state of health and the circumstances in which they live.**

Working in hospitals, community health centres and in people's own homes, your job is to help clients achieve as much as possible for themselves. Occupational therapists also provide support and guidance for families and carers.

Find out more about being an occupational therapist [www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/OT](http://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/OT)



## Operating department practitioner

Operating department practitioners (ODPs) are an important part of the operating theatre team. They work with surgeons, theatre nurses and anaesthetists to ensure that every operation is as safe and effective as possible.

ODPs provide high standards of skilled care and support during each of the three phases of a patient's perioperative care – anaesthetic, surgery and recovery. The role includes assisting the anaesthetist in preparing specialist equipment and drugs; providing the correct surgical instruments and materials to the surgeon; and delivering appropriate treatment until the patient has recovered from the effects of the anaesthesia.

**If you like the idea of working in a pressurised atmosphere on intricate and complex procedures, have excellent concentration skills and can stay calm under pressure, being an ODP could be the role for you.**

Find out more about being an ODP at [www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/ODP](http://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/ODP)



## Orthoptist

Orthoptists specialise in the assessment and treatment of patients who have problems with eye movement and coordination, such as a lazy eye (amblyopia) or squint (strabismus).

**A career in orthoptics requires an in-depth understanding of how the eye and brain work, combined with the ability to work with people of all ages, including young children.**

Orthoptists work in hospital clinics and community health centres, and may also go into schools to conduct vision assessments.

Orthoptists have particular expertise in assessing the visual development of young babies and correcting double vision.

Find out more about being an orthoptist at [www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/orthoptist](http://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/orthoptist)

## Osteopath

Osteopathy is a safe and effective form of prevention, diagnosis and treatment of a wide range of health problems.

Osteopaths use manual therapy, exercise and advice, to promote the optimum environment for health, based on the individual needs of the patient. They work with patients of all ages.

**Most osteopaths work for themselves, which allows for flexibility in how the role is undertaken, but does come with the challenges associated with self-employment.**

Find out more about being an osteopath at [www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/osteopath](http://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/osteopath)

## Paramedic

Paramedics respond to 999 and 111 calls and are trained in all aspects of urgent and emergency care, ranging from problems such as cardiac arrest, heart attacks, strokes, spinal injuries and major trauma, to minor illnesses and injuries.

They assess the patient's condition and make potentially life-saving decisions about whether the patient can be treated at the scene or transferred to hospital.

In non-life-threatening situations, they use their clinical judgement to make key decisions. Most patients treated by paramedics do not have life-threatening injuries.

**Career opportunities for paramedics have expanded and they now work in clinical practice, leadership and management, research and development, and education.**

Find out more about being a paramedic at [www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/paramedic](http://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/paramedic)



## Physiotherapist

Physiotherapists assess everything from back pain and getting strength back after a stroke or long illness to sports injuries, and provide treatment using techniques ranging from exercise programmes to the use of heat and other therapies.

**If you're especially interested in anatomy and exercise, physiotherapy will give you a deeper understanding of what's involved in movement and how injuries, pain and problems associated with disease can be managed and treated.**

Many physiotherapists work with patients in hospitals and in outpatient clinics, but there is a wide range of other community settings too.

Find out more about being a physiotherapist at [www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/physiotherapist](http://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/physiotherapist)



## Podiatrist

Podiatrists are trained to diagnose, treat, prevent and rehabilitate complications of the feet, ankles and lower limbs. They prevent, manage and correct foot problems, relieve pain, treat infection and keep people of all ages mobile and active.

Podiatrists undergo specialist training to manage people with foot and lower limb complications resulting from long term conditions including diabetes, peripheral arterial disease, rheumatoid arthritis and musculoskeletal pain. They are the experts in all aspects of foot and lower limb structure, function and health.

**If you have a keen interest in how the body functions, and the capacity to problem-solve and help patients to make good decisions, being a podiatrist could be the role for you.**

Find out more about being a podiatrist at [www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/podiatrist](http://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/podiatrist)

## Prosthetist/orthotist

Prosthetists use their skills to design and fit artificial limbs for people who have lost limbs through trauma, diabetes, peripheral vascular disease or due to congenital deformities. Their work facilitates function that has been lost through amputation.

Orthotists assess, design and provide orthoses (custom-designed external devices) to modify the structural or functional characteristics of the neuromuscular and skeletal systems. They work with patients with conditions such as diabetes, arthritis, cerebral palsy, spina bifida and scoliosis. They help mobilise patients, reduce pain and facilitate healing of ulcers.

**A career in this area suits people with good practical, design, handling and communications skills.**

Both prosthetists and orthotists have extensive knowledge of biomechanics, anatomy, physiology, pathologies and material science. You could be working in hospitals, clinics and community health centres, both as an autonomous practitioner and as part of a multi-disciplinary team.

Find out more about being a prosthetist or an orthotist at [www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/prosthetistandorthotist](http://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/prosthetistandorthotist)





## Radiographer

Radiography is a large and growing area within modern healthcare based mainly in hospitals and health centres operating highly sophisticated equipment, including x-rays, magnetic resonance, radionuclides and ultrasound technology.

**A career in radiography will suit you if you have an interest in science and a caring attitude.**

There are two distinct areas in which radiographers work: diagnosis and therapy.

### Diagnostic radiographer

Using x-rays, imaging and ultrasound technology, **diagnostic radiographers** capture detailed images from inside the body that can be crucial to the correct diagnosis and treatment of illness and injuries.

Find out more about being a diagnostic radiographer at [www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/diagnosticradiographer](http://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/diagnosticradiographer)

## Therapeutic radiographer

**Therapeutic radiographers** use high-energy radiation in the frontline battle against cancers and other diseases.

Find out more about being a therapeutic radiographer at [www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/therapeuticradiographer](http://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/therapeuticradiographer)

## Speech and language therapist

This career is about helping people who, for physical or psychological reasons, have problems speaking and communicating.

Patients range from children whose speech is slow to develop, to older people whose ability to speak has been impaired by illness or injury, such as stroke or Parkinson's disease. It also includes treatment for those who have difficulty with eating or swallowing.

You will be working in hospitals, in research, outpatient clinics, community health centres, with people in care or in prisons, and schools.

**This career will suit you if you have an interest in combining the use of science, language, linguistics, social science and medication to help people.**

Find out more about being a speech and language therapist at [www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/SALT](http://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/SALT)



# { Real-life stories



# Dietitian

## Name

Pete Turner

## Job title

Specialist dietitian, Royal  
Liverpool and Broadgreen  
University Hospitals NHS Trust

## Entry route

Postgraduate diploma  
in dietetics

**"I had an interest  
in nutrition and wanted  
to work with people."**



## How I got into the role

My degree in pharmacology was interesting but would have led to a career in a lab. I had an interest in nutrition and wanted to work with people so a postgraduate diploma in dietetics was an obvious choice for me.

I worked as a ward dietitian and then as a research dietitian and it soon became apparent that nutritional support was the area I was most interested in. Nutritional support involves feeding very sick and malnourished patients, often through tubes and intravenous lines. I jumped at the chance when a specialist nutritional support post came up at Royal Liverpool University Hospital in 1995 and have been in the role ever since.

## What I do

I'm part of a multidisciplinary nutrition team with a pharmacist, nutrition nurse and doctor. Every morning we do a ward round of around 20 patients on intravenous feeding known as total parenteral nutrition. I monitor patients' progress and work out their requirements in terms of energy, fats, proteins, carbohydrates, vitamins and minerals which helps the pharmacist to devise a suitable feeding regime for the patient.

In the afternoons, I work on surgical wards or the intensive care unit. Surgical patients often need building up before their operation with food, oral nutritional supplements or tube feeds and usually need nutritional support to help them recover after surgery. Intensive care patients usually need to be fed through tubes and drips and I decide on the best feeding options for them.

## The best bits

I lead a team of band 5 and band 6 dietitians, undertake clinical audit and educate hospital staff including nurses and doctors on the importance of good nutritional care. I am also chair of the committee that organises the British Association for Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition annual conference, the UK's largest clinical nutrition conference.

I really enjoy working as part of a multidisciplinary team and helping patients to recover with good nutritional care. Giving presentations to educate staff about the importance of good nutritional care is very rewarding too.



# Operating department practitioner

Name

Jordan Faithwaite

Job title

Professional development practitioner, The Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust

Entry route

Diploma in operating department practice/top-up degree

**"You have the opportunity to specialise in different clinical specialties."**



## How I got into the role

My mum worked on a surgical ward and suggested the role of operating department practitioner (ODP) to me. I had not heard about it before and when I started looking into it, I knew straight away that it was something I would be interested in. I've always wanted to work in a role that would help people and this role seemed so interesting.

Once I became an ODP, I started to look for career opportunities within the NHS. I have always enjoyed education and knew that this was something I wanted to pursue. I was very lucky when a clinical educator's role became available within my trust. I applied for it and was successful.

Following this, an opportunity arose where I moved into a management position within the education team for theatres. Now I manage a team of very experienced clinical educators within theatres.

## What I do

There are two very different sides to my role: the clinical role and the educational role.

In my clinical role, every day is different and rewarding in many ways. ODPs work in three different clinical roles within the theatre

department: anaesthetics, surgery and post-anaesthetic care. There is a lot of variety.

Depending on where you work, you have the opportunity to specialise in and work across different clinical specialities. You are directly involved in hands-on patient care, caring for patients when they are most vulnerable.

In my educational role, I am part of a team responsible for delivering training to staff, students and learners across theatres. This ranges from clinical skills to resilience and well-being. This role is very varied as it includes policy writing, training, learning from incidents and also supporting staff and students.

## The best bits

Every day is different. The needs and requirements of each patient change each day which keeps work interesting and challenging.

In both my clinical and educational roles, I know I am making a difference to patients whilst improving the safety of the work place and providing high-quality care.





# Orthoptist

## Name

Teniola Ibrahim

## Job title

Orthoptist, Barking, Havering  
and Redbridge University  
Hospitals NHS Trust

## Entry route

Degree in orthoptics

**"It's great to know  
you're making an impact  
on a child's future."**



## How I got into the role

I always knew I wanted to work within a healthcare setting, one which involved treating children. I did some research about possible healthcare careers and came across the role of orthoptist. I discovered that it was a hospital-based role, treating both adults and children with eye movement disorders.

During my work experience, I shadowed an orthoptist in the eye department at my local hospital. I saw what a difference the orthoptist made to the patients' quality of life by treating their double vision, improving the vision in a lazy eye and managing squints.

The few days of work experience made me realise how dynamic the role was, as each case was unique – making every day exciting. That's when I decided to enrol into the orthoptics BSc undergraduate programme. A day after my final exam, I was offered my first job as a qualified orthoptist!

## What I do

In a typical day I see patients with simple or complex needs, their ages ranging from a few months to 90 years old and beyond! These patients are referred to the eye clinic in the hospital outpatient by the optician, health visitor or other specialities within the hospital.

We commonly see children with a lazy eye that we help treat with patching to improve the vision in the lazy eye. We see adults and children with squints that are treated by surgery or botulinum toxin injections by the eye surgeon.

Patients with double vision are frequently referred to orthoptists and it is my job to determine the cause of the double vision and manage the condition with treatment such as prisms to join the double vision together.

## The best bits and challenges

The staff and patients make work a joy, especially the children. It's great to know you're making an impact on a child's future.

My role is a daily challenge and I love that because it makes every day interesting.



# Physiotherapist

## Name

Peter Eckersley

## Job title

Physiotherapy team leader,  
inpatient orthopaedics, The  
Pennine Acute Hospitals NHS Trust

## Entry route

Physiotherapy degree

**"It is very satisfying to  
help patients progress  
from admission to  
discharge home."**



## How I got into the role

I remember being struck by the range of patients the physiotherapists treated during my first spell of work experience at my local hospital, when I was at school. They looked after everyone from patients recovering from a stroke to those who had just had knee ligament surgery. I decided to apply for the degree course and qualified as a physiotherapist in 2001.

I've worked at North Manchester General Hospital for 13 years now, beginning as a band 5 physiotherapist where I gained experience across a range of specialties including musculoskeletal outpatients and medical, surgical, rehabilitation and infectious diseases wards.

I moved into a band 6 post in 2004 where I added neurology to my experience, and I became team leader for inpatient orthopaedic physiotherapy in 2007.

## What I do

A typical day is mainly spent on the wards helping people to mobilise and recover from their orthopaedic surgery. As a team leader, I am also responsible for the training and development of my team and the service, to ensure we are providing the best quality care for our patients.

I have become very interested in leadership and took part in the NHS Leadership Academy Clinical Fellowship Programme in 2011/12, which resulted in a postgraduate certificate in NHS leadership and service improvement. It has given me a far greater range of skills to use as team leader, and led to my workplace project from the programme being presented at an international healthcare conference in 2013.

## The best bits

It is very satisfying to help patients progress from admission to discharge home.



# Podiatrist

## Name

Kerry Brown

## Job title

Podiatrist/research podiatrist,  
Solent NHS Trust

## Entry route

Podiatry degree

**"It was a revelation  
to me how  
broad podiatry is."**



## How I got into the role

I've had one or two different careers - most recently as head of policy for a national regulatory body - but I had the appetite for one more!

I had an interest in human biology and was attracted to podiatry because it's flexible in terms of where you can work. Also, with all of us living longer, there's sure to be growing demand for the profession.

It was a revelation to me how broad podiatry is. My training covered diseases such as diabetes and rheumatological conditions that can put feet at high risk, and I studied pharmacology to understand the implications of medications. The course also covered fascinating subjects like health psychology, health education and promotion, clinical reasoning and critical reflection.

## What I do

I qualified as a podiatrist a year ago and I'm currently getting experience of several different clinics and community settings. A lot of my current work is with people whose feet are vulnerable to ulceration so I use my skills and knowledge to help the wound to heal and prevent further tissue breakdown. Keeping patients mobile and able to get on with their daily life is also a key part of my job, as well as promoting healthy lifestyle behaviours.

People tend to think we just cut toenails and deal with verrucae, but podiatrists look after a wide range of problems that can manifest in the feet. We can spot problems early like neuropathy and peripheral circulation problems, and we also look at the biomechanics of the foot and gait, including musculoskeletal issues in lower limbs.

## The best bits

Helping individual patients is rewarding, but I'm also fortunate to have a position as a research podiatrist where I play a part in improving the health of whole populations. It's brilliant that within the podiatry profession there's a strong culture of supporting research and evidence-based practice.



# Therapeutic radiographer

## Name

Hazel Rodger

## Job title

Head of radiotherapy,  
Leeds Cancer Centre

## Entry route

Degree in therapeutic  
radiography

**"I try to base my decisions  
on what I would want if our  
patients were my mum or dad."**



## How I got into the role

I always knew I wanted to work with people and looked at all sorts of options including nursing, physiotherapy, occupational therapy and radiography. The combination of using very advanced technology to treat patients and building a relationship with them over the course of their treatment was very attractive.

One of the first patients I treated as a student was an 18 year old with an aggressive cancer. We had a laugh and I know he felt 'normal' when he came for treatment when every other bit of his life was so different from his friends'. I realised then what a difference we made to his last few months and it made me even more determined.

## What I do

As a manager I no longer actually treat patients, but every decision I make is focused on ensuring we are doing all we can to offer the best possible treatments to them.

I love that my job isn't repetitive. I can be negotiating a multi-million pound equipment contract one minute and cleaning the bottom of a patient's slippers the next (a long story!). I work with a multi-professional team to set the strategy and vision for our service,

communicate to staff about the great work everyone is doing and acknowledging their successes, and ensure all staff have access to education and training opportunities to support them in their roles. Most importantly I have to ensure the service is staffed appropriately, which involves crunching lots of data and understanding how it relates to the number of staff we need and how many patients we're likely to treat in any one year.

I try to base my decisions on what I would want if our patients were my mum or dad. That was difficult recently when we lost my mum-in-law to lung cancer, but it helped me realise on a personal level what a difference we make to patients.

## The best bits

The best thing about the job is the people I work with, both staff and patients.

I wouldn't change a thing about my role. I have both the autonomy and support I need with a fantastic team around me. By that I mean everyone from senior managers to the cleaning and portering staff; we are all cogs in a huge wheel and none of us is more important than the other in making sure patients get the best possible service.



# Getting started as an allied health professional

There is a tremendous range of opportunities within the allied health professions. Whatever role you choose, and whatever level you start at, you will get all the support you need to develop your career.



## 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 let you 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, please talk to your local trust and voluntary organisations. You can also find more information on gaining experience at [www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/experience](http://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/experience)

## Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships are increasingly becoming available in the allied health professions. There are apprenticeships in care work at levels 2 and 3 which provide invaluable experience of working directly with patients and these could lead to AHP support roles. For example, you might find an apprenticeship as a therapy assistant, support worker, healthcare worker or healthcare assistant.

With experience gained through an apprenticeship and appropriate academic/vocational qualifications, you could apply for training as an allied health professional.

For some of the allied health professions, you can train on a part-time basis. So, if you are completing an apprenticeship in a support role, your employer may support you to do this as your next step.

A podiatry degree apprenticeship has recently been approved and apprenticeships for other AHPs are in development.

Apprenticeship vacancies in health can be found on the NHS Jobs website [www.jobs.nhs.uk](http://www.jobs.nhs.uk) and the government Apprenticeships website [www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship](http://www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship). More information on apprenticeship opportunities in health is available at [www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/apprenticeships](http://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/apprenticeships)

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)

## Opportunities for assistants

In many of the allied health professions, there are opportunities for people to work as healthcare assistants or clinical support workers. As mentioned earlier, many employers recruit staff into support roles via an apprenticeship.

**Healthcare assistants** help qualified staff to provide a better service to more people – preparing patients for treatment, setting up equipment, and assisting in the therapy itself. There are no set academic requirements for these jobs. Employers look for enthusiasm, a willingness to learn and a commitment to working with people.

**Clinical support workers/therapy assistants** have their own vocational qualifications and career paths. Additionally, in some professions – dietetics, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, podiatry, radiography and speech and language therapy – working as an assistant can create a route into study and training for a professional qualification. This normally involves a part-time course, such as a foundation degree, while you continue working as an assistant.

Find out more about working as an assistant in our **Careers in the wider healthcare team** booklet.

For more information about clinical support worker careers, visit [www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/clinicalsupportstaff](http://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/clinicalsupportstaff)

To search for jobs in your area, visit [www.jobs.nhs.uk](http://www.jobs.nhs.uk)

## Professional training

Each university has its own admission criteria and course structure, and the length of each course may vary, but it is likely to be three years. **Make sure your course is recognised by the Health and Care Professions Council or the General Osteopathic Council (for osteopathy), which are the relevant regulatory bodies for the allied health professions.**

In any of the allied health professions, you will work as an independent professional, responsible for assessing and treating your own caseload of patients. Therefore, you must first complete an approved training programme at degree, diploma or postgraduate level (depending on the profession).

Entry to degree/diploma courses usually requires three good A-levels. However, universities may recognise other qualifications at level 3 and work experience.

If you already have a degree in a relevant discipline, there are also postgraduate training courses for some professions at diploma, masters or doctorate level.

For more information on studying to be an AHP, visit [www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/AHPstudy](http://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/AHPstudy)

For courses leading to a career in the allied health professions, visit [www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/courses](http://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/courses)

## Funding

Students applying to study approved full-time AHP courses can usually apply for student loans.

They may also be able to access the Learning Support Fund. The fund can provide support for excess travel and dual accommodation expenses incurred owing to attending practice placements, and help students with child dependants and those facing severe hardship.

There are different support arrangements outside of England and for some AHP postgraduate training.

Check directly with each university you are considering in case there are any additional local financial support arrangements that you can access.

For more information about student funding visit

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

## Registration

To begin and continue practising as an allied health professional, you must be registered with and regulated by the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) or the General Osteopathic Council if you are an osteopath. You need to apply for registration once you have successfully completed your training course and then provide evidence of continuing learning and development to maintain your registration in future.

For more information, visit

[www.hcpc-uk.org](http://www.hcpc-uk.org) or  
[www.osteopathy.org.uk](http://www.osteopathy.org.uk)



# 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 can get a list of the institutions running approved courses leading to eligibility to apply for registration by using the Health Careers course finder at [www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/courses](http://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/courses). For a place on a degree course, you usually need to apply through UCAS.

There are opportunities to work in a range of settings as an AHP and you can progress from one grade or band to another. In some AHP roles, you can become advanced practitioners or consultants and be able to prescribe medicines.

You'll need some experience in a more generalist role first, but in most areas of work you can specialise in an area that interests you. For example, physiotherapists can specialise in sports injuries, and speech and language therapists can progress to focusing on people with specific learning difficulties. Moving into clinical specialisms may involve taking further qualifications.

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

To search for jobs with organisations providing NHS services, visit [www.jobs.nhs.uk](http://www.jobs.nhs.uk)

For job vacancies with other health organisations visit [www.gov.uk/jobsearch](http://www.gov.uk/jobsearch)

For job vacancies in local government, visit [www.lgjobs.com](http://www.lgjobs.com)

For information about the professional bodies representing the various AHPs, look under each individual role page on our main website: [www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles](http://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles)



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?
<b>Studying for your GCSEs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Visit <a href="http://www.stepintothenhhs.nhs.uk">www.stepintothenhhs.nhs.uk</a></li> <li>&gt; Check what your likely exam grades/results will be.</li> <li>&gt; Explore routes into your chosen career – will you need a degree or other qualification before you join, or will the employer train you on the job? Can you start as an assistant? Are apprenticeships available in your area?</li> <li>&gt; Are there any particular skills or experience that will improve your chances of getting into your chosen career?</li> <li>&gt; Enquire about volunteering or work experience.</li> <li>&gt; Find out if you need any specific A-levels, or equivalent qualifications at level 3.</li> </ul>	Health Careers Subject teachers Your careers adviser Professional bodies
<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>&gt; If you need to study a particular degree, investigate which universities offer it.</li> <li>&gt; Investigate any further qualifications you might need for your chosen role.</li> <li>&gt; Find out if you are eligible for NHS financial support.</li> <li>&gt; Search the NHS Jobs website at <a href="http://www.jobs.nhs.uk">www.jobs.nhs.uk</a> and speak to your local trust to get an idea of current vacancies.</li> <li>&gt; Consider the option of an apprenticeship.</li> </ul>	Health Careers Subject teachers Your careers adviser National Careers Service UCAS NHS Student Bursaries Professional bodies NHS Jobs Universities
<b>At university</b>	<b>As A-levels, plus:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; If you're doing a degree in a subject not relevant to AHP training, investigate your options for switching courses, or going on to do a postgraduate course approved by the relevant regulatory body.</li> </ul>	Health Careers University careers service Professional bodies NHS Jobs Regulatory bodies
<b>Looking for a new career</b>	<b>As A-levels, plus:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Find out if you will need to retrain before you apply for new roles or if the employer will train you while you are working.</li> </ul>	Health Careers Careers adviser National Careers Service Jobcentre Plus Professional bodies NHS Jobs UCAS



# 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 health career framework on p.30-31 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 an allied health 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 as an allied health professional in the private or voluntary sectors or another public sector organisation, your pay and benefits will vary depending on your employer.



## Your pay as an allied health professional in the NHS

NHS roles are covered by the pay system Agenda for Change (AfC) for all NHS staff 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.

Your career as a qualified AHP typically starts at AfC band 5, for instance as a physiotherapist or occupational therapist. However, some

entry level qualified roles attract higher bandings than band 5, for instance arts therapists. Specialist and managerial AHP roles attract higher bandings. Clinical directors are usually band 9.

Clinical support worker roles in this area typically attract band 2. This rises to band 3 for higher level roles and band 4 for technician roles and those working as assistant practitioners, for instance in podiatry or occupational therapy.

For more information on pay bands and the most up-to-date salary information in your chosen career, visit [www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/pay](https://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](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 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](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 18 describes how Peter Eckersley has progressed within the allied health professions. You can follow his 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	Physiotherapists
Allied health professions		Therapy clinical support worker	Occupational therapy rehabilitation assistant	Assistant practitioner in occupational therapy	Physiotherapist
Ambulance service team		Patient transport service driver	Emergency medical dispatcher	Control room duty officer	Paramedic
Dental care team		Dental nurse	Student dental technician	Assistant dental technician	Dental technician
Health informatics	Health records assistant	Support desk assistant	Medical records clerk	Helpdesk adviser	Web developer
Healthcare science		Phlebotomist	Newborn hearing screener	Critical care technologist	Cardiac technician
Management				General office manager	Payroll officer
Midwifery		Healthcare assistant (maternity)	Maternity support worker		Midwife
Nursing	Nurse cadet	Healthcare assistant (nursing)	Senior healthcare assistant	Community care assistant	Staff nurse
Pharmacy	Pharmacy porter	Medicines counter assistant	Senior pharmacy assistant	Pharmacy technician	Pre-registration pharmacist
Psychological therapies		Healthcare assistant (mental health)	Care support worker (mental health) Mental health support worker	Assistant clinical psychologist Trainee psychological wellbeing practitioner	Psychological practitioner Trainee psychological practitioner
Public health	Young Health champion	Health champion	Health trainer	Stop smoking adviser Health trainer team leader	Health promotion practitioner
Wider healthcare team	Porter	Maintenance assistant	Security officer	Medical secretary	Catering

Practitioners	Senior practitioners/ specialist practitioners	Advanced practitioners	Consultant practitioners	More senior staff
Physiotherapist	Specialist physiotherapist	Team leader (inpatient orthopaedics)	Consultant occupational therapist	
Paramedic	Specialist paramedic	Advanced paramedic	Consultant paramedic	Clinical director of service
Dental technician	Senior dental technologist			
IT developer	Special projects manager	Head of communications	Access, booking and choice manager	Director of information management and technology
Clinical physiologist	Senior biomedical scientist	Specialist respiratory physiologist	Consultant clinical scientist (medical physics)	Director of regional genetics services
Projects manager	Projects manager	Head of accounts	Maxillofacial laboratory manager	Director of human resources
Midwife	Community midwife	Head of midwifery	Consultant midwife	Director of maternity services
Nurse	Senior staff nurse	Clinical charge nurse	Nurse consultant in stroke	Director of nursing
Registration pharmacist	Pharmacist		Lead pharmacist for admissions	Director of clinical support services
Psychological wellbeing practitioner or clinical psychologist	High intensity therapist Psychotherapist		Consultant clinical psychologist	Assistant director - clinical professional practice
Health improvement practitioner	Senior health improvement practitioner	Specialty registrar in public health Advanced health improvement practitioner	Public health consultant	Director of public health
Chaplain manager	Chaplain	Head of estates		

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

Health Careers

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

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