Finding work experience in the healthcare sector

Looking for work experience in a healthcare role?

Work experience demonstrates your commitment to and your awareness of the realities of your career choice. The National Council for Work Experience can provide general information on the benefits of work experience. Healthcare occupations require you to have gained skills in working with people and you should think broadly about the settings in which you could gain such experience. The NHS is not the only source of relevant opportunities. In the West Midlands a quarter of the jobs in healthcare are in the private sector. Opportunities to work with the general public outside of healthcare can still enable you to acquire ‘people handling’ skills.

You can search Careers Network’s vacancy database for work experience opportunities, and visit the Jobzone at the Guild for details of part time jobs whilst you study. Volunteering via the Guild of Students may offer the chance to gain relevant experience. Online student placement organisations and even specialist recruitment agencies may be able to help, but many work experience, voluntary and temporary positions go unadvertised. For these you will need to make speculative approaches to organisations you have researched carefully.

Before starting your enquiries visit the careers pages of the NHS website and the Sector Skills Council websites: Skills for Health and Skills for Care. These provide careers information on the sorts of jobs available in healthcare as well as up to date labour market information. Think about the future skills requirements of the sector so that you can try to tailor your work experience to gain the kind of skills that will make you stand out from the crowd.

Future Skills Needs

According to the National Guidance Research Forum’s Labour Market Information, the healthcare sector’s high priority skills requirements for the future include:

- patient handling skills,
- management and leadership skills,
- team working skills,
- communication/language skills,
- IT and administrative skills,
- A high level of professional and specific skills.
What could you do to develop or demonstrate that you have these skills?

Finding opportunities:

Most NHS Trusts now use the [NHS Jobs website](https://jobs.nhs.uk) to advertise temporary vacancies for nursing, medical, administrative, and clerical posts. Some Trusts have their own temporary staff banks. **LOCATE** is the temporary bank at [University Hospital Birmingham](https://uob.walsall.nhs.uk). Individual Trust websites often carry information regarding work experience and volunteering opportunities, though personal contacts or speculative approaches are often the only means of securing work shadowing, visits or placements. Generally speaking the human resources or workplace development departments would be the first point of contact.

In the West Midlands there are 16 Primary Care Trusts, 1 Care Trust (which provides community healthcare such as Dentistry and GP services), 19 Acute Trusts, 7 Mental Health Trusts and 1 ambulance service.

The website addresses and locations of all West Midlands Health organisations can be found at: [NHS West Midlands](https://www.nhs.westmidlands.nhs.uk)

**The NHS Choices** website allows you to search for care services including GP surgeries, hospitals, dentists, pharmacies and opticians by postcode.

**The Care Quality Commission** has a search facility which enables you to locate healthcare organisations in your area.

**NHS EQUIP** is an information portal which includes a community and voluntary page detailing health related organisations across the region which recruit volunteers.

Your local council website also provides details of services in your area to which speculative applications for work experience could be made. In Birmingham, details of services can be viewed at: [www.birmingham.gov.uk/](https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/)

The websites [www.vinspired.com](https://www.vinspired.com), [www.csv.org.uk](https://www.csv.org.uk), [www.bvsc.org](https://www.bvsc.org) and [www.do-it.org.uk](https://www.do-it.org.uk) all advertise volunteering opportunities including working with agencies supporting people with disabilities, physical or mental health issues, health education projects and projects aimed at specific minority groups.

For graduates seeking paid work experience see also [West Midlands Graduate Internships](https://www.westmidlandsgraduates.com/)

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