

Finding Work Experience in the NHS

What is work experience?

Work experience can vary from ‘tasters’ lasting just half a day through to programmes over one or two weeks, a few months or a year. Some work experience placements offer a hands-on experience, while some provide insights, observation and work shadowing. All can provide a valuable experience for people looking to move into a career in the health sector.

Variety in the health service

More people in England work for the NHS than any other organisation. There are over 350 different careers ranging from healthcare assistants, doctors through to administrative staff and gardeners.

We realise that many people do not know of the range of opportunities that are available. For more information on the careers in the NHS in England see www.nhscareers.nhs.uk

Work experience is crucial to bridge the gap between education or training and the world of work. At its broadest and best, work experience can open people’s eyes to jobs they had never thought of, help inform career decisions, provide valuable experience for job applications and entry to further and higher education, offer a chance to prove themselves to an employer and help instill the attitudes and behaviours expected at work.

There are many different organisations within the health service, which can offer students work experience.

The main organisations are:

Acute hospital trusts

These provide medical and surgical care through hospital and outpatient treatment, and other services commissioned to meet local population needs.

Mental health trusts

They provide specialist care for people with complex and severe mental health problems.

Ambulance trusts

They respond to 999 calls, transport patients, and provide outof-hours care in some areas.

Community trusts

Community Trusts provide a wide range of medical, nursing and therapeutic care to prevent avoidable admission to hospital and to minimise hospital stay.

Primary care services

There are a range of local primary care services provided through GP practices, NHS walk-in centres, dental practices, pharmacists and opticians.

Independent or voluntary healthcare providers

These are private sector healthcare organisations that can be contracted by the NHS to provide healthcare or work privately outside of the NHS (for example nursing homes).

Most work experience placements are available in acute trusts as they employ by far the largest number of people in the NHS. However, there are increasing opportunities in the other types of organisation, which can provide very different experiences.

Accessing work experience in the NHS

Our top tips for accessing work experience:

Get in contact early

Make contact during the academic year before you want the placements to start. This gives you an opportunity to plan the placements together and for all paperwork to be completed.

Be flexible on timings

If you can offer your placements at different times of the year then do so.

Allow for different models of work experience

You may need 200 hours of work experience but do these all need to be from the same placement or the same organisation? A shorter experience in the NHS, alongside other placements could be valuable and beneficial.

Further Information

NHS Careers

www.nhscareers.nhs.uk

The information service for careers in the NHS in England.

Step into the NHS

www.stepintothens.nhs.uk

A website and communications programme for 14–19 year olds which aims to stimulate awareness of the huge range of opportunities available within the NHS.

NHS Choices

www.nhs.uk

Provides information on how the NHS works, and details of local trusts and health services.

Skills for Health

www.skillsforhealth.org.uk

The Sector Skills Council for the health sector which aims to help the whole sector to develop solutions that deliver a skilled and flexible UK workforce in order to improve healthcare

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