Health and Medicine

If you are going to work in this career area you must have a strong interest in people - in caring for them and keeping them healthy. This area includes a wide range of jobs, with around 350 roles.

NHS Scotland is Scotland's largest employer and accounts for around 70% of the healthcare workforce.

What areas can I work in?

Health and medicine covers a huge range of occupations: alternative medicine, ambulance services, dentistry, dietetics, medical technology, medicine and surgery, nursing and auxiliary work, occupational therapy, ophthalmics and orthoptics, pharmacy, physiotherapy, podiatry, radiography and speech and arts therapy.

To see the routes to getting into each of these sectors, take a look at our Career Pathway.

What kind of companies can I work for?

Most jobs in this sector are with either the public sector, mainly the National Health Service (NHS) or private healthcare companies and clinics. You can work within:

- general or specialist hospitals
- GP surgeries or health centres
- dental practices
- nursing homes
- private physiotherapy services
- alternative health practices
- colleges and universities
- optician shops or practices
- the Civil Service or government organisations.

You can also work for voluntary or not-for-profit organisations, such as the British Red Cross or Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) UK.

What's the job market like?

As of March 2026, NHS Scotland employed 191,313 staff (headcount figures, not Whole Time Equivalent (WTE)), an increase of 1.6% from the previous year. Of those, there were 6,288 medical and dental consultants employed (excluding Directors), up by 3.2% on the previous year. There were 68,921 nursing and midwifery staff, an increase of 1.8% from the previous year, and 14,424 allied health professionals, an increase of 1.9% from the previous year. Administrative service staff numbers stood at 29,826, an increase of 0.6% from the previous year. [1]

In this period, nursing and midwifery had the highest number of vacancies (WTE) at 2,962. There were 388 vacancies for medical and dental consultants, and 669 vacancies for allied health professions. [1]

According to a report published by Skills Development Scotland, the overall healthcare workforce in Scotland

stood at 296,400 in 2025, accounting for 10.9% of all Scottish employment. Looking to long-term future demand (2028-2035), healthcare sector employment requirements in Scotland is forecast to grow by 6.8% (20,600 people). This is a larger percentage growth than is forecast overall across Scotland where employment is predicted to grow by 4% (112,500 people). [2]

The same report also predicted that the top 3 employing occupations in 2033 will be: Caring personal service occupations; Health professionals; and, Health and social welfare associate professionals. [2]

There are many NHS Modern Apprenticeships across the healthcare sector, therefore a good entry route to working in this area.

Facts and figures

- The median age for NHS Scotland workers is 44. [1]
- 77% of all employees in NHS Scotland are female, although this does vary between job families.[1]
- As of March 2026, there were 3,704 NHS dentists working in Scotland. [1]
- In 2025, the greatest number of people employed in healthcare was estimated to be in: Glasgow College Region (50,700); Edinburgh, East and Midlothian (46,500); and, Lanarkshire (30,800). [2]
- In 2024/25 the Scottish Ambulance Service had 5,700 (WTE) members of staff, providing an emergency ambulance service to a population of over 5.4 million people across Scotland. [3]
- During 2024/25, 181 new paramedics were employed by the Scottish Ambulance Service. [3]

Want to find out more?

The NHS Scotland Careers website has lots of information on the variety of job roles available and how to get into them.

Sources

[1] NHS Scotland Workforce for quarter ending 31 March 2026, TURAS, NHS Education for Scotland (2 June 2026)

[2] Sectoral Skills Assessment: Healthcare, Skills Development Scotland (October 2025)

[3] Annual Report and Accounts (for the year ended 31 March 2024), Scottish Ambulance Service