

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.

The largest employer in the UK healthcare sector is the NHS, employing around 1.4 million people, making it one of the largest workforces in the world.¹

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?

The NHS is Scotland's biggest employer and as of March 2024, NHS Scotland employed 187,157 staff (headcount figures, not Whole Time Equivalent (WTE)), an increase of 3.4% from the previous year. Of those, there were 6,634 medical and dental consultants employed (excluding Directors), up by 2.5% on the previous year. There were 77,407 nursing and midwifery staff, an increase of 4% from the previous year, and 16,271 allied health professionals, an increase of 4% from the previous year. Administrative service staff numbers stood at 35,518, an increase of 3.4% on the previous year. ²

In this period, Allied health professionals had the highest number of vacancies (WTE) at 664.4, a drop of 35.8% from the previous year. There were 451 vacancies for medical and dental staff, a reduction from the previous year

by 3.6%. Nursing and midwifery staff had the highest number of vacancies at 3,382.5, a drop of 39.3% from the previous year. ²

According to a Sectoral Skills Assessment published by Skills Development Scotland in October 2023, the overall healthcare workforce in Scotland stood at 254,300 in 2023, an increase of 9.5% over a 10-year period. Looking to long-term future demand (2026-2033), healthcare sector employment requirements in Scotland is forecast to grow by 5.5% (14,400 people). This is a larger percentage growth than is forecast overall across Scotland where employment is predicted to rise by 0.9% (22,700 people). Here it is also predicted that the top 3 employing occupations in 2033 will be: Caring personnel service occupations; Health professionals; and Administrative occupations. ³

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

Facts and figures

- 24% of the Scottish NHS workforce is aged 55 and over. The median age for NHS Scotland workers is 44. ²
- Healthcare has a higher proportion of the workforce educated to SCQF Levels 7 and above. ³
- 78.8% of all employees in NHS Scotland are female. ²
- In 2022/23, there were 16,354 nursing and midwifery students in Scotland. ²
- In December 2023, there were 3,436 NHS dentists working in Scotland. ²
- In 2022/23 the Scottish Ambulance Service had over 5,800 (WTE) members of staff, providing an emergency ambulance service to a population of over 5.4 million people across Scotland. ⁴
- Last year, the Scottish Ambulance Service undertook over 400,000 journeys. Air Ambulance undertook around 4,527 missions and ScotSTAR (Scottish Specialist Transport and Retrieval Service) undertook 3,156 emergency missions. ⁴

Want to find out more?

[Skills for Health](#) is the Sector Skills Council for the health sector, their website provides lots of careers information for entry level careers.

Sources

¹ [Overview of the healthcare sector in the UK](#) (Darcy Nathan, February 2024), Prospects

² [NHS Scotland workforce \(phase one\) 31 March 2024](#), TURAS, NHS Education for Scotland

³ Sectoral Skills Assessment, Healthcare, October 2023, Skills Development Scotland

⁴ Annual Report and Accounts (for the year ended 31 March 2023), Scottish Ambulance Service