

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 2025, NHS Scotland employed 188,313 staff (headcount figures, not Whole Time Equivalent (WTE)), an increase of 0.1% from the previous year. Of those, there were 6,096 medical and dental consultants employed (excluding Directors), up by 1.0% on the previous year. There were 67,714 nursing and midwifery staff, an increase of 0.8% from the previous year, and 14,158 allied health professionals, an increase of 0.9% from the previous year. Administrative service staff numbers stood at 29,654, a decrease of 1.8% from the previous year. ¹

In this period, nursing and midwifery had the highest number of vacancies (WTE) at 2,601, a drop of 23.1% from the previous year. There were 387 vacancies for medical and dental consultants, a reduction from the previous year of 13.5%. Allied health professions had 522 vacancies, a drop of 21.3% from the previous year. ¹

According to a report published by Skills Development Scotland, the overall healthcare workforce in Scotland stood at 267,000 in 2024, an increase of 10.1% over a 10-year period. Looking to long-term future demand (2027-2034), healthcare sector employment requirements in Scotland is forecast to grow by 5.2% (14,200 people). This is a larger percentage growth than is forecast overall across Scotland where employment is predicted to rise by 1.2% (32,000 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
- 78.8% of all employees in NHS Scotland are female, although this does vary between job families. ¹
- As of March 2025, there were 3,249 NHS dentists working in Scotland. ¹
- In 2024, the greatest number of people employed in healthcare were estimated to be in: Glasgow College Region (48,200); Edinburgh, East and Midlothian (40,500); and, Lanarkshire (26,100). ²
- In 2023/24 the Scottish Ambulance Service had 5,857 (WTE) members of staff, providing an emergency ambulance service to a population of over 5.4 million people across Scotland. ³
- During 2023/24, 220 new paramedics, technicians and advanced practice practitioners 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 \(phase one\) 31 March 2025](#), TURAS, NHS Education for Scotland

² [Sectoral Skills Assessment, Healthcare, October 2024](#), Skills Development Scotland

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