

Nurse - Learning Disabilities

Registered nurses (learning disabilities) help people with a range of physical and mental health conditions to achieve as much as they can in their daily lives. They assess clients' needs, both physical and emotional, and provide appropriate care and support.

The Work

You could be:

- helping clients with everyday activities like attending to personal hygiene, socialising, using public transport, shopping, handling money, keeping appointments or doing simple jobs
- helping them manage emotional problems such as aggression, anger or excessive shyness
- working out care plans for clients
- arranging and taking part in social and working activities for clients
- teaching new skills
- helping clients cope with any additional problems such as epilepsy, speech or hearing problems
- keeping records of clients' development and progress
- giving specialist advice to other health care professionals.

Pay

Nurses working for the NHS are paid on the Agenda for Change pay scale. The current pay scales are from April 2025. A newly qualified nurse is on Band 5, £33,247 to £41,424 a year. A senior or specialist nurse is on Band 6, £41,608 to £50,702 a year.

Conditions

- You could work in a hospital or residential home, or in the community, where you would visit clients in their own homes.
- Working in the community might involve working alone often.
- You might travel with clients on public transport to teach them independence.
- You may have to work shifts and unsocial hours.
- You wear a uniform or protective clothing.
- You may have to do some heavy lifting.
- You may be able to work part time.

Getting In

To become a registered nurse (learning disabilities) you need a degree in nursing (SCQF Level 9-10).

- Entry requirements for degree courses are usually 3-4 Highers and one or more subjects at National 5, preferably including English and Maths or a science subject. Courses last 3-4 years, depending on the institution.
- Edinburgh Napier and Glasgow Caledonian universities offers a 3-year degree course in nursing (learning

disabilities). For entry requirements, see course entries on Planit - [Edinburgh Napier](#) and [Glasgow Caledonian University](#).

- [Glasgow Caledonian University](#) also offer the BSc Hons.
- An Access to nursing course may also give entry. However, always check that the course is accepted by the university or college you want to go to before you apply.
- You will require a satisfactory criminal record check from Disclosure Scotland to show that you are suitable for this type of work. Contact Disclosure Scotland for details on the type you would need.
- You should have a good level of physical fitness. You will undergo health screening.
- When you complete your training you must register with the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC).
- Previous experience in a paid or voluntary role in a health care setting would be an advantage.

Jobs are mainly in the National Health Service (NHS), in the community, in social work units and in nursing homes. You could also work in private hospitals, or for agencies. You can find NHS job vacancies in Scotland by visiting [NHS Scotland Recruitment](#).

What Does It Take

You should be:

- able to get on well with people from all backgrounds
- able to communicate with people with speech and comprehension difficulties
- a good listener
- very observant and able to act on your own initiative
- willing to take responsibility for others
- confident in making decisions
- able to assess what is best for the patient
- resourceful and able to cope with emergencies
- able to remain calm in stressful situations.

You should also be:

- able to teach and encourage patients to develop their skills
- patient and understanding
- compassionate and sensitive.

Training

- Once you have gained your NMC registration, training is on the job. There are ongoing requirements for education and skills development.
- During your first year as a qualified nurse you would get extra support and guidance through the [Flying Start Programme](#).
- To continue working as a nurse you must renew your registration with the NMC every three years.

Getting On

- With further learning and experience you could progress to senior, advanced or consultant level.

- To renew your NMC registration you must keep your skills and knowledge up to date, by undertaking at least 35 hours of relevant Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and 450 of practice hours every three years. Full details can be found on [NMC website](#).
- Once you have gained experience you may wish to choose a specialism such as autism or epilepsy.
- You might specialise in working with children or older people.
- British nursing qualifications are recognised in many overseas countries, so you could work abroad.

More Information

The Scottish Government runs the One Year Job Guarantee (OYJG) Scheme for newly qualified nurses and midwives to help improve their chances of finding work as well as developing their skills. The positions are one-year fixed term contracts at 22.5 hours a week, set at grade 5 on the NHS Agenda for Change pay scale. For further details contact [NHS Scotland Careers](#).

Contacts

NHS Scotland Careers

Website: www.careers.nhs.scot

Website (2): jobs.scot.nhs.uk

Nursing and Midwifery Council

Tel: 020 7637 7181

Email: UKenquiries@nmc-uk.org

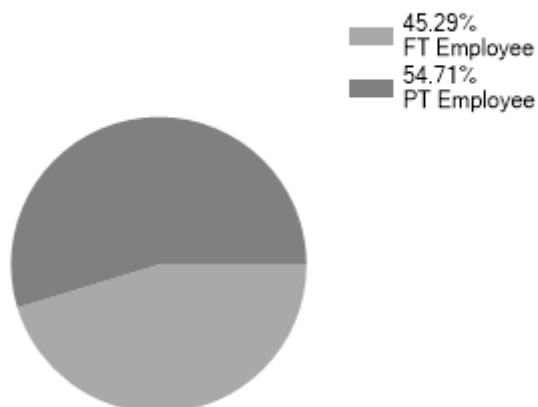
Website: www.nmc.org.uk

X: @nmcnews

Facebook: www.facebook.com/nmcuk

Statistics

Employment Status UK %

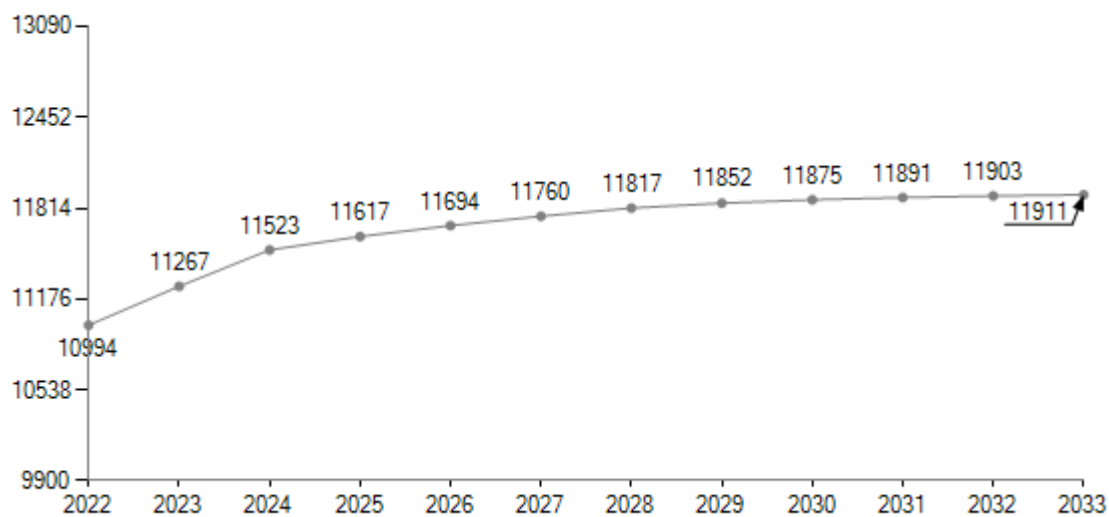


Past Unemployment - Scotland

No Claimant statistics available for Scotland.

LMI data powered by [LMI for All](#)

Predicted Employment in Scotland



LMI data powered by [Lightcast](#)