Health Visitor

Introduction

Health visitors support, educate and advise families through pregnancy until the child’s fifth birthday. They make sure that families can access support services and, if necessary, refer them to other healthcare specialists.

Work Activities

As a Health Visitor, you will work with parents and families to ensure that babies and children have the best start in life. You visit families at home, and also hold clinics and drop-in sessions at GPs’ surgeries, local health centres and Sure Start children’s centres.

One of your main responsibilities is to check the development of babies and children through regular home visits and clinic sessions. You work closely with Midwives, sometimes making antenatal visits alongside them to introduce themselves to families and advise on pregnancy issues. After the birth, you take over responsibility from the Midwife and keep this until the child is five years old.

New birth visits include giving advice on issues such as feeding, diet and sleep patterns. You also carry out health and development checks on the baby. Throughout your period of responsibility, you make regular checks at home and in clinics. You give families advice on issues such as:

- safety
- mobility
- speech and language development
- nutrition
- immunisation
- obesity

Health Visitors also support and advise the family as a whole. For example, you support mothers with postnatal depression, making sure they can access services. Caring for the family could also involve detecting problems, including child abuse, working with families that have children on the child protection register, and supporting the victims of domestic violence.

Health Visitors make sure that families have access to the range of services that can support them and keep them healthy. These services are part of the Healthy Child Programme (HCP). You also develop services, working with healthcare professionals, agencies and voluntary organisations to make sure that services are available locally. You decide what level of support families need from the HCP. Some families will need support with specific issues or general support over a longer period.

Health Visitors advise on children’s development. For example, you might suggest books or games to help with speech and language development. If need be, you will refer the family to an appropriate healthcare professional for more support.

Health Visitors build effective working relationships with GPs, other healthcare professionals such as Speech and Language Therapists, Nurses, and voluntary agencies.

You have to write and keep accurate records and reports.

Being able to read, write and speak Welsh may be an advantage when you’re looking for work in Wales.

Personal Qualities and Skills

To become a Health Visitor, you’ll need:
• the ability to communicate with people of all ages, cultures and social backgrounds
• sensitivity and tact
• listening skills
• the ability to give clear explanations and advice
• to be able to reassure and encourage people
• strong observation skills to pick up on signs of ill health that are not revealed in conversation
• emotional strength to deal with issues such as bereavement, child abuse and drug dependency
• the ability to make decisions alone, and to take responsibility for those decisions
• stamina - the work can be physically, emotionally and intellectually demanding
• teamwork skills
• organisational skills
• written skills to produce reports

A driving licence is usually essential.

Pay and Opportunities

Pay

NHS employees are paid on a rising scale within defined pay bands, according to their skills and responsibilities. The pay rates given below are approximate.

• Starting - Band 6: £30,401 - £37,267

Hours of work

Health Visitors work 37.5 hours a week, which could include day, evening and weekend work.

Where could I work?

Health Visitors work in a variety of places, including GPs' surgeries, local health clinics and Sure Start children's centres, as well as families' own homes.

Opportunities for Health Visitors occur in towns, cities and rural areas throughout the UK.

Where are vacancies advertised?

Vacancies are advertised on the NHS Jobs website, in local/national newspapers, and on Find a Job (www.gov.uk/jobsearch).

Social media websites, such as LinkedIn, Twitter or Facebook are a great way to network, find vacancies and get in contact with possible employers. Make sure that your profile presents you in a professional manner that will appeal to potential employers.

Take a look at our General Information Article 'Finding Work Online'.

Entry Routes and Training

Entry routes and training

To become a Health Visitor, you must first be a registered Nurse or Midwife and then take further training.

This training is at degree level and takes at least one year to complete full-time, or the part-time equivalent. You don’t need to have completed a minimum period of post-registration nursing or midwifery experience before starting to train.

To qualify as a Nurse, you must usually complete a pre-registration degree course in nursing.
Nursing degrees usually take three years to complete. There are a small number of part-time degree courses for people employed as Assistant Practitioners in the NHS.

You might be able to use previous learning or practical experience to complete your degree in a shorter time. This is through accreditation of prior (experiential) learning or APEL. Some universities reduce the pre-registration time by as much as one year. Examples of previous learning might include a relevant degree subject or practical experience of nursing, care or a related area.

On your degree course, you'd spend the first year completing the Common Foundation Programme (CFP). This covers a general introduction to nursing and develops your observational, communication and caring skills.

From the second year of the course onwards, you would specialise in one of the four branches of nursing:

- adult nursing
- children's nursing
- mental health nursing
- learning disability nursing

Some courses have a general title, such as 'nursing', while others tell you which branch you will follow in the title, such as 'nursing (adult)'. Some universities and colleges of higher education don't offer all four branches after the CFP, so please check prospectuses carefully. There are also a small number of courses that combine Nursing with a social work qualification.

Completing the degree will lead to registration with the Nursing and Midwifery Council (a requirement to practise in the UK).

There are also a small number of pre-registration MSc or postgraduate diploma courses, usually for graduates in health or science-related degrees (some universities consider graduates with any subject).

Some people become Health Visitors after registering and gaining experience as Midwives. Direct training as a Midwife is through a degree in midwifery. There are also some pre-registration postgraduate courses, usually for graduates in science- or health-related subjects (some universities accept other subjects). It is also possible to train first as an Adult Nurse and follow this with a shortened course in midwifery.

You might be able to enter a nursing or midwifery degree course after completing a foundation degree in a relevant subject.

It can be possible to enter a nursing or midwifery degree course after completing an Advanced Level Apprenticeship. Take a look at our information article 'Apprenticeships – How do I apply', for more details about applying for apprenticeship positions.

A great way to get into this career is through an internship. Take a look at our information article 'Internships', for more details.

Progression

You could move into a Team Leader post or into general management. It's also possible to progress into a specialist, advanced research or teaching post.

Work Experience

Previous experience within a caring or hospital environment will be really useful for this career.

Rehabilitation of Offenders Act

This career is an exception to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. This means that you must supply information to an employer about any spent or unspent convictions, cautions, reprimands or warnings, if they ask you to.

This is different from other careers, where you only have to reveal information on unspent convictions if you are asked to.

Qualifications
For a degree in nursing, the usual entry requirement is:

- 3 A levels - some universities ask for at least one science subject but psychology and sociology can be other preferred subjects
- GCSEs at grade C/4 and above in your A level subjects
- 2/3 GCSEs at grade C/4 and above where English and maths might be specified

Some universities specify biology or science, especially if you don't have biology at A level.

However, course requirements vary, so please check prospectuses carefully.

To get onto an Advanced Level Apprenticeship, you'll usually need 5 GCSEs at grade C/4 or above, including English and maths, or to have completed an Intermediate Level Apprenticeship.

Some universities accept the Welsh Baccalaureate as equivalent to 1 A level.

**Adult Opportunities**

**Age limits**

It is illegal for organisations to set age limits for entry to employment, education or training, unless they can show there is a real need to have these limits.

**Skills/experience**

Some employers enable experienced staff in relevant positions (such as senior healthcare assistants or assistant practitioners) to take a pre-registration nursing or midwifery degree course part-time on full salary, as long as they meet the usual entry requirements.

**Courses**

If you don't have the qualifications that are usually needed to enter a nursing or midwifery degree course, you might be able to start one after completing a college or university Access course, for example, Access to Nursing or Midwifery. You don't usually need any qualifications to start an Access course, but you should check individual course details.

It can be possible to enter a nursing or midwifery degree course after completing an Advanced Level Apprenticeship, for example, in Health and Social Care; Health - Clinical Healthcare Support; or Health - Allied Health Profession Support.

Other possible routes into nursing or midwifery degree courses can be an NVQ/Diploma level 3 in a relevant subject or modular course credits from the Open University.

You might be able to use previous learning or practical experience to complete your degree in a shorter time. This is through accreditation of prior (experiential) learning or APEL. Some universities reduce the pre-registration time by as much as one year. Examples of previous learning might include a relevant degree subject or practical experience of nursing, care or a related area.

There are a small number of pre-registration nursing or midwifery MSc or postgraduate diploma courses, usually for graduates in health or science-related degrees (some universities consider graduates with any subject).

If you've had a break from nursing or midwifery and want to return to the NHS, you'll need to complete a Return to Practice (RTP) programme that is approved by the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC). The programmes refresh clinical skills and there are classroom sessions to discuss theory. Many RTP courses are part-time.

**Funding**

To receive financial support from the NHS, you need to meet certain criteria. For more information, see The NHS Business Services Authority website.

If you meet the criteria, you'll usually have your tuition fees paid in full and you might get a bursary. You will receive a
£1,000 grant each year. You can apply for a means-tested bursary of up to £4,395 each year (or more in London).

Statistics

- 31% of nurses, including health visitors, work part-time.
- 8% have flexible hours.
- 3% of employees work on a temporary basis.

Further Information

Contacts

- **Apprenticeships: Get In. Go Far**
  National Apprenticeship Service (NAS)
  Tel: 0800 015 0400
  Email: nationalhelpdesk@findapprenticeship.service.gov.uk
  Website: [www.apprenticeships.org.uk](http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk)

- **Health Careers**

- **NHS Wales Careers**
  Publisher: National Leadership and Innovation Agency for Healthcare
  Email: abm.wedsteam@wales.nhs.uk
  Website: [www.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/829/page/36090](http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/829/page/36090)

- **NHS Jobs**
  Website: [www.jobs.nhs.uk](http://www.jobs.nhs.uk)

- **Step into the NHS**
  NHS careers
  Tel: 0345 6060655
  Website: [www.stepintothenhs.nhs.uk](http://www.stepintothenhs.nhs.uk)

- **Skills for Health**
  Skills for the health sector
  Address: Goldsmiths House, Broad Plain, Bristol BS2 0JP
  Tel: 0117 9221155
  Email: office@skillsforhealth.org.uk
  Website: [www.skillsforhealth.org.uk](http://www.skillsforhealth.org.uk)

- **Open University (OU)**
  Tel: 0845 3006090
  Website: [www.open.ac.uk](http://www.open.ac.uk)

- **NHS Education for Scotland (NES)**
  Scottish enquiries
  Address: Westport 102, West Port, Edinburgh EH3 9DN
  Tel: 0131 6563200
  Email: enquiries@nes.scot.nhs.uk
  Website: [www.nes.scot.nhs.uk](http://www.nes.scot.nhs.uk)

- **NHS Business Services Authority**
  Website: [www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk)

- **Royal College of Nursing (RCN)**
  Address: 20 Cavendish Square, London W1G 0RN
  Tel: 0345 7726100
  Email: rcn.library@rcn.org.uk
  Website: [www.rcn.org.uk](http://www.rcn.org.uk)
• **Nursing and Midwifery Council**  
  Address: 23 Portland Place, Marylebone, City of Westminster, London W1B  
  Tel: 020 7637 7181  
  Email: UKenquiries@nmc-uk.org  
  Website: [www.nmc-uk.org](http://www.nmc-uk.org)

• **Nursing Careers**  
  Tel: 0345 6060655  
  Website: [nursing.nhscareers.nhs.uk](http://nursing.nhscareers.nhs.uk)

• **Community Practitioners’ and Health Visitors’ Association (CPHVA)**  
  Address: Unite House, 128 Theobald’s Road, Holborn, London WC1X 8TN  
  Email: executive.council@unitetheunion.org  
  Website: [www.unitetheunion.org/cphva](http://www.unitetheunion.org/cphva)

• **Royal College of Nursing (RCN) Scotland**  
  Scottish enquiries  
  Address: 42 South Oswald Road, Edinburgh EH9 2HH  
  Tel: 0345 7726100  
  Email: scottish.board@rcn.org.uk  
  Website: [www.rcn.org.uk](http://www.rcn.org.uk)

• **Careers Wales - Welsh Apprenticeships**  
  Tel: 0800 028 4844  
  Website: [ams.careerswales.com/](http://ams.careerswales.com/)

• **People Exchange Cymru (PEC)**  
  Public sector recruitment portal for Wales  
  Email: peopleexchange@cymru.gov.wales  
  Website: [www.peopleexchange@cymru.gov.wales/home](http://www.peopleexchange@cymru.gov.wales/home)

**Related Careers**

- Emergency Care Assistant
- Healthcare Assistant
- Hospital Porter
- Nurse - Adult/General
- Nurse - Learning Disabilities
- Nurse - Mental Health
- Nurse - Children
- Midwife
- Ambulance Care Assistant
- District Nurse
- Paramedic
- School Nurse
- Occupational Health Nurse
- Nurse
- Nursing Associate
- Phlebotomist
- Surgical Care Practitioner