General Practice Photographer

Introduction

Most general practice photographers do 'social' photography, such as wedding photographs or family portraits. Some do commercial photography; providing a service to local companies who need photos for publicity or marketing purposes.

Also known as

- Photographer - General Practice

Work Activities

Much of a general practice photographer's work is 'social' photography. Typical duties include taking photos at a wedding, providing photos to local companies for publicity and marketing purposes, recording a building project for an architect's office or taking portrait photos.

Many have a portrait studio on their premises, or often a shop on the local high street, but it is becoming more common for photographers to travel to a client's home to take their photograph. Some general practice photographers set up temporary studios in shopping precincts or department stores to encourage people to sit for a portrait photograph.

Photographers who work alone or manage a studio, spend a large part of their working day running the business rather than taking photos.

Many general practice photographers carry out some work for their local newspaper when all the newspaper's staff photographers are busy.

Other duties include choosing locations, and setting up equipment such as cameras, lighting and props. Some general practice photographers may choose to specialise in a certain area such as weddings, portraits or advertising.

Photographers normally use digital cameras in their work, but a few still use traditional cameras. Once a photo has been taken, they use computer-imaging software to check image quality as well as retouch and edit the photos.

Travel around the local area is usually required for this profession.

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

Personal Qualities and Skills

As a general practice photographer, you need:

- Creativity and an eye for detail, shape, form and colour.
- Good social and communication skills.
- Knowledge of photography techniques.
- Good organisational skills.
- The ability to work to deadlines.
- Patience - it can take time to set equipment up and produce the required shot.
- Knowledge of computer imaging software and digital technology.

Self-employed or freelance general practice photographers will need business and marketing skills.

A driving licence is useful.
Pay and Opportunities

Pay
Pay rates for general practice photographers vary depending on whether they are employed or self-employed.

The pay rates given below are approximate.

General practice photographers earn in the range of £16,000 - £19,000 a year, rising to around £24,500 - £32,000 with experience.

Higher salaries can be awarded to more experienced photographers.

Photographers may be paid an hourly rate. This can range from £7 to £15 per hour.

Bonuses may be awarded on top of a salary.

Incidents of unpaid work are high amongst photographers.

Hours of work
Working hours for general practice photographers vary widely. The number of assignments to deal with varies greatly. Some weeks there may be little to do and in other weeks, long, irregular hours may be required. General practice photographers often work weekends - those specialising in weddings may be especially busy at weekends during the summer.

What’s happening in this work area?

Competition for photography posts is strong, as there are often more applicants than vacancies.

There is strong competition for freelance work.

Where could I work?

General practice photographers are often based in a high street shop.

Opportunities for general practice photographers occur in towns and cities throughout the UK.

Self-employment

Opportunities occur for general practice photographers to become self-employed. Some set up studios in their own homes. Some work alone and some employ assistants. There may be opportunities for photographic assistants to become partners or to set up their own photographic studio.

Where are vacancies advertised?

Vacancies are advertised in photography, advertising and design trade magazines and on websites such as the Association of Photographers (AOP).

Vacancies are also advertised on all the major job boards, on Universal Jobmatch, and at Jobcentre Plus.

It's a good idea to build up a network of relevant contacts, as not all photography jobs are advertised. Making speculative job applications to potential employers can be useful.

Entry Routes and Training

Entry routes

The best way for a potential photographer to learn about the industry is by becoming either a full-time or freelance photographic assistant, although there is a lot of competition for these posts.

Alternatively, you can enter the industry by doing a course in photography. Full-time and part-time courses are available, leading to foundation degrees, HNCs, HNDs or degrees in photography.
Some people get on to degree courses via a Foundation course.

Some people enter this career via an Advanced Level Apprenticeship.

The British Institute of Professional Photography (BIPP) - the official qualifying body for professional photography - can provide information on training courses and membership.

**Training**

Training is on-the-job.

The Association of Photographers (AOP) also offers training and networking opportunities.

City & Guilds also offers qualifications in photography.

**Progression**

Photographers may be able to move to larger organisations or work overseas.

Many photographers become self-employed.

**Qualifications**

You don’t always need qualifications to enter photography. However, some employers prefer you to have them.

To start an Advanced Level Apprenticeship, you’ll usually need 5 GCSEs at grade C or above, or to have completed an Intermediate Level Apprenticeship.

The usual entry requirements for a relevant Foundation course are:

- 1/2 A levels. You’ll need an A level in Art or in an art-based subject.
- GCSEs at grade C or above in 4/5 subjects. Some courses ask that you have a pass in English

For all relevant courses, having a portfolio of your photographic work will be very useful.

For entry to a relevant degree course, the usual requirement is:

- 2/3 A levels. Some courses may ask for passes in Art and in Photography.
- 4/5 GCSEs at grade C or above. You’ll usually need English and maths

Alternatives to A levels include:

- A BTEC level 3 National Diploma in Art and Design.
- An Advanced Level Apprenticeship.
- The International Baccalaureate Diploma

For the International Baccalaureate Diploma, many courses will ask that you have Art at Higher level.

Many other qualifications are also accepted so check prospectuses for more details.

To enter a relevant HNC, HND or foundation degree, you will usually need:

- 1/2 A levels. A pass in Art could be useful.
- 4/5 GCSEs at grade C or above. Passes in English, Maths and Art may be required.
Alternatives to A levels include:

- A BTEC level 3 National Diploma in Art and Design.
- An Advanced Level Apprenticeship.
- The International Baccalaureate Diploma

For the International Baccalaureate Diploma, many courses will ask that you have Art at Higher level. Many other qualifications are also accepted so check prospectuses for more details. Some universities accept the Welsh Baccalaureate as equivalent to 1 A-level.

**Adult Opportunities**

**Age limits**

It is illegal for any organisation 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**

This is an extremely competitive field. Relevant skills and/or qualifications are usually preferred. A portfolio of photographic work is useful. Some photographers start their working careers as a photographic assistant.

**Courses**

Photography can be studied on a full- or part-time basis, or it can develop from a hobby. It is useful to update your skills by taking short courses in photographic techniques and methods such as those offered by City & Guilds.

If you don't have the qualifications needed to enter your chosen degree or HND course, a college or university Access course (eg, Access to Art and Design) could be the way in. No formal qualifications are usually required, but you should check individual course details.

They can lead to relevant degree/HND courses.

A full list of relevant qualifications is available on the Skillset website.

Universities and colleges of higher education (HE) will usually consider applications from candidates who don't meet their usual entry requirements, especially those with relevant experience. You should check the admissions policy of individual universities and HE colleges.

**Distance learning**

Relevant courses at various levels in photography are offered by a large number of centres, including the Open University, by distance learning.

**Statistics**

- 55% of those in occupations such as photographer are self-employed.
- 22% work part-time.
- 5% have flexible hours.
- 20% of employees work on a temporary basis.

**Further Information**

**Professional institutions** Professional institutions have the following roles:

- To support their members.
- To protect the public by keeping standards high in their professions.
For more information on the institution(s) relevant to this career, check out the contacts below.

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)

- **Skills Development Scotland - Modern Apprenticeships**
  Tel: 0800 9178000
  Email: info@skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk
  Website: [www.myworldofwork.co.uk/modernapprenticeships](http://www.myworldofwork.co.uk/modernapprenticeships)

- **City & Guilds**
  Address: 1 Giltspur Street, London EC1A 9DD
  Tel: 020 7294 2468
  Email: learnersupport@cityandguilds.com
  Website: [www.cityandguilds.com](http://www.cityandguilds.com)

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

- **Association of Photographers (AOP)**
  Address: 21 Downham Road, London N1 5AA
  Tel: 020 7739 6669
  Email: info@aophoto.co.uk
  Website: [www.the-aop.org](http://www.the-aop.org)

- **Royal Photographic Society**
  Address: Fenton House, 122 Wells Road, Bath BA2 3AH
  Tel: 01225 325733
  Email: reception@rps.org
  Website: [www.rps.org](http://www.rps.org)

- **British Institute of Professional Photography (BIPP)**
  Address: The Coach House, The Firs, High Street, Whitchurch, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire HP22 4SJ
  Tel: 01296 642020
  Email: info@bipp.com
  Website: [www.bipp.com](http://www.bipp.com)

- **British Journal of Photography**
  Publisher: Incisive Media
  Email: support@apptitudemedia.co.uk
  Website: [www.bjp-online.com](http://www.bjp-online.com)

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

Related Careers

- Photographic Processing Assistant
- Digital Imaging Technician
- Fashion Photographer
- Medical Photographer
- Press Photographer
- Scientific Photographer
- Industrial/Commercial Photographer
• Photographer