

Nurse

Introduction

As a Nurse, you will look after people who are unwell or who need special care, for example, because of a learning disability. You'll plan how to meet patients' needs, and have practical tasks such as checking temperatures, giving injections and dressing wounds. Apart from hospitals, you could also work in community settings such as GPs' surgeries and local clinics.



Work Activities

Nurses specialise in one of four areas, known as 'fields':

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

Within these fields, your work as a Nurse will be very varied. Some patients have short stays in hospital, and in places like community clinics and GPs' surgeries, you might be seeing lots of patients in a short space of time. For example, you might deal with a broken arm or give an injection against a tropical disease to someone who is going on holiday.

However, nursing some patients, such as people with cancer, can take place over months or years. This type of nursing relies on a close, trusting relationship between you and patient.

Within nursing, there are many areas of work, depending on the field. Just some examples of specialist areas are:

- intensive care
- cancer care
- theatre and recovery
- care of older people

Wherever you work, your focus is on the person you are caring for, not simply their reason for needing medical care. This means that you will have to think about and plan how to meet all the individual's care needs, including their emotional needs, and take into account any social or personal problems they might have.

You must listen and talk to the patient, answering questions and dealing with any anxiety or concerns the patient might have. You will often also talk to the patient's family or carers, updating them on the patient's progress or explaining treatment, for example.

As a Nurse, you will have to keep very careful, accurate records. You might need to change the care plan, depending on your observations of the patient. You will work closely with Doctors, Therapists and other clinical staff, bringing changes and developments to their attention.

Practical nursing might involve:

- checking temperatures
- giving drugs and injections
- dressing wounds and changing bandages

Routine care duties, such as making beds and helping the patient to eat, wash and dress, are often the responsibility of Healthcare Assistants, rather than Nurses.

Increasingly, Nurses are taking on new duties, after taking further training. You might be able to do things such as perform minor surgery, prescribe medicines and treatments, make and receive referrals, and run clinics.

Many types of nursing rely on sophisticated technology, such as life-saving and monitoring equipment. You may have to control or monitor various types of equipment.

Apart from care tasks, you might also be helping patients to learn or re-learn the skills they need to live independently at home or in their community. For example, as a Learning Disability Nurse, you might help a patient learn how to use kitchen equipment to make a cup of tea.

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 Nurse, you'll need:

- a friendly, caring nature to build relationships with the patients
- tact and sensitivity
- the ability to treat each patient as an individual
- strong observation skills to read the signs that a patient's condition is changing
- to be able to keep up with new procedures and treatments
- the ability to listen to patients and their families, reassure them and explain things clearly
- practical skills and the ability to use various types of equipment
- physical fitness (in most areas of nursing, you'll be on your feet a lot)
- number skills, for example, to take body measurements such as blood pressure
- patience and tolerance to cope with demanding situations
- emotional strength to deal with distressing situations
- the ability to follow health and safety procedures
- effective teamwork skills

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.

- Band 5: £24,214 - £30,112

Salaries in the private sector are broadly similar to those of the NHS.

Hours of work

Nurses work 37.5 hours a week. Shift work is usual. Some employers offer flexitime working, and overtime is common.

Where could I work?

Employers include:

- the NHS (in hospitals and in the community)
- private healthcare providers
- charities
- the armed forces
- the prison service

There are also opportunities to work in other countries (some countries require extra qualifications).

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

Where are vacancies advertised?

Vacancies are advertised in local/national newspapers, on recruitment and employers' websites, and on Find a Job (www.gov.uk/jobsearch).

For vacancies in the NHS visit NHS Jobs at (www.jobs.nhs.uk).

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 qualify as a Nurse, you must complete a pre-registration degree course in nursing. The course must be approved by the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC).

Nursing degrees usually take three years to complete (four in Scotland). There are a small number of part-time degree courses for people employed as assistant practitioners in the NHS.

In Wales, nursing degree courses take from two-four years to complete depending on which course you are studying. In Wales, there are undergraduate part time, fulltime and postgraduate entry routes into nursing available. The part time routes are usually undertaken by healthcare support workers who are already employed within one of the Health Boards or Trusts within Wales. Return to practice funding is available (www.weds.wales.nhs.uk/return-to-practice).

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.

The Department of Health and Social Care has announced two new entry routes into nursing:

- Nursing apprenticeship - You are now able to become an apprentice Nurse. Exactly where you start the degree apprenticeship will depend upon your current qualifications and experience, although the course will not require GCSE English or Maths. You will learn all the skills you require to become a Nurse on-the-job, whilst taking time to complete your degree at university.
- Nursing Associate - You can now begin working as a Nursing Associate. This role will consist of on-the-job training, and will provide a route from health and care support roles into fully qualified nursing. You will work under the direction of a qualified Nurse and work towards a Level 5 qualification. You can then top this up to a degree in order to become a qualified Nurse.

Important Note: The Nursing Degree Apprenticeship and Nursing Associate are not available in Wales. In Wales the entry route into nursing is through a degree course in nursing, a bursary is available. To find out how to apply for the bursary visit www.nwssp.wales.nhs.uk/student-awards

The Degree Course

On your degree course, you will 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 fields 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 field you will follow in the title, such as 'nursing (adult)'. Some universities and colleges of higher education don't offer all four fields after the CFP, so please check college/university websites carefully. There are also a small number of courses that combine nursing with a social work qualification.

In Wales you will study fundamental nursing practice within your field of nursing, as well as develop clinical, management and leadership skills. You will also have the opportunity to undertake placements across a wide range of healthcare settings. Full details of the course contents can be found on the websites of the universities that offer these programmes within Wales.

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

What kind of Nurse will you be?

Having qualified through one of the four fields and gained some experience, you can gain 'post-registration' qualifications and work in a broad range of specialist roles such as District Nurse, Occupational Health Nurse, Theatre Nurse, Health Visitor or School Nurse.

Direct training to become a Midwife is through a degree in midwifery. Qualified Nurses can also take training courses to become Midwives.

If you are thinking of becoming a Nurse and then training to be a Midwife, District Nurse or Occupational Health Nurse later on, you should think carefully about which field of nursing you train to do. It can be difficult to get on a training course if you haven't gone through the adult nursing field.

You might be able to enter a degree after completing a foundation degree in a relevant subject.

It can be possible to enter a nursing degree course after a relevant Advanced Level Apprenticeship.

Progression

There are lots of possibilities for progression. You could move into a management or research position. Some Nurses progress to trainer posts, teaching student Nurses. You can also take further advanced or specialist training, for example, to become a Midwife, District Nurse or Occupational Health Nurse.

Work Experience

Some employers enable experienced staff in relevant positions (such as Senior Healthcare Assistants or Assistant Practitioners) to take a pre-registration degree course part-time on full salary, as long as they meet the usual entry requirements.

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

In Wales the entry criteria for a pre-registration nursing degree courses can vary across universities. Typical entry requirements are:

- A levels

- Welsh BACC
- Access to higher education
- BTEC
- 5 GCSEs including maths and English language
- degree in relevant subject for post graduate entry course

It is worth contacting the university if you do not hold any of the typical qualifications above to discuss further

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

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

Entry can also be possible with alternative level 3 qualifications such as:

- NVQs
- BTECs
- City & Guilds
- Cambridge Technicals
- the International Baccalaureate Diploma

However, course requirements vary, so please check college/university websites very carefully.

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 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 degree course, you might be able to start one after completing a college or university Access course, for example, Access to Nursing. 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 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 a nursing degree 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 MSc or postgraduate diploma courses, usually for graduates in health or science-related degrees (some universities consider graduates with a degree in any subject).

If you've had a break from nursing 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 in Wales

RTP course are funded in Wales, tuition fees are paid and a bursary of £1,000 will be available to each nursing student, with £1,500 available for midwives, undertaking an accredited return to practice course.

Funding the NHS Wales Bursary Scheme

The Welsh Government through the Welsh NHS fund the education and training for a range of **health professional education** courses. The full NHS Wales bursary scheme is available to UK residents and EU nationals that have been ordinarily resident in the UK for three years prior to the start of the course, and who commit to working in Wales following completion of their programme. EU nationals not resident in the UK who commit to work in Wales following completion of their programme can access funding for the **tuition fees only** and will not be eligible to access the full NHS Wales Bursary Scheme.

The full NHS Wales Bursary scheme includes the following:

- the cost of tuition fees
- a bursary for living costs, including a £1,000 non means tested grant and a means tested bursary. In addition students are supported for costs such as travel, accommodation (whilst on placement), Childcare, Disabled Student Allowance, Dependents Allowance and Parental Learning Allowance.
- If eligible, you will have access to a reduced student loan (subject to Student Loans Company Regulations)
- **Please note that individuals who already have a first degree and are undertaking a pre-registration programme e.g. Physicians Associate, MSc/PG Dip Nursing, PG Dip Dietetics and PG Dip Occupational Therapy programmes are not eligible to apply for a reduced student loan, however they will have access to all other elements of the NHS Wales Bursary Scheme.**

Individuals who **do not feel** they can commit to work in Wales following completion of their programme **will not** be eligible to receive the benefits of the NHS Wales Bursary Scheme; however, they will still be able to study in Wales and will be able to access the following support:

- Welsh domiciled students will have access to the standard student support package available from Student Finance Wales.
- Non-Welsh domiciled students, will continue to be eligible to study in Wales but will need to secure funding from an alternative sources, this may include funding from the relevant funding body in their home country or self finance etc.

Once students have received an offer of a training place from an NHS Wales agreed provider they will need to decide whether they wish to commit to work in Wales prior to applying for either the NHS Wales Bursary or the standard student finance package.

More information about the NHS Wales Bursary Scheme can be accessed on the Student awards Services website: <http://www.nwssp.wales.nhs.uk/course-starts-on-or-after-1-september-20>

Funding in England

The Government has recently announced changes to the way that health courses are to be funded from 2017 onwards. **Important:** This does not apply in Wales.

From 2017, students applying to study a health course will need to apply for a student loan - in the same way that students on non-health courses currently do.

Under the student loan system, students will be able to apply for non-repayable grants to help with the following:

- Additional childcare
- Adult dependants

- Parent learning costs
- Travel to placements

Students with a disability can also apply for additional grants to help pay the extra essential costs they may have whilst studying on a higher education course as a direct result of their disability, through the Disabled Students' Allowance.

Currently, student loans are generally paid back over a 30 year period and repayment is contingent on earnings. Graduates do not begin to pay back their loans until the April after they graduate, and then only if they are earning over £21,000 per year. If their income drops below £21,000 for any reason (part-time working, career break) their repayments cease.

The loan repayments are paid at a rate of 9% of any earnings over £21,000.

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
- **Health Careers**
Website: <http://www.weds.wales.nhs.uk/contact-nhs-wales-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
- **NHS Jobs**
Website: www.jobs.nhs.uk
- **Step into the NHS**
NHS careers
Tel: 0345 6060655
Website: www.stepintothens.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
- **Queen's University Belfast**
Irish enquiries
Website: www.qub.ac.uk
- **Open University (OU)**
Tel: 0845 3006090
Website: www.open.ac.uk
- **University of Ulster**
Irish enquiries
Tel: 028 7012 3456

Website: www.ulster.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
- **NHS Business Services Authority**
Website: 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
- **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
- **Nursing Careers**
Tel: 0345 6060655
Website: nursing.nhs.uk
- **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
- **Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland**
Irish enquiries
Address: 18-20 Carysfort Avenue, Blackrock, County Dublin
Tel: 01 6398500
Email: ncc@nursingboard.ie
Website: www.nursingboard.ie
- **Careers Wales - Welsh Apprenticeships**
Tel: 0800 028 4844
Website: ams.careerswales.com/
- **People Exchange Cymru (PEC)**
Public sector recruitment portal for Wales
Email: peopleexchange@cymru.gov.wales
Website: www.peopleexchange@cymru.gov.wales

Related Careers

- Emergency Care Assistant
- Healthcare Assistant
- Health Visitor
- 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
- Nursing Associate
- Phlebotomist
- Surgical Care Practitioner