Careers in the allied health professions

Join the team and make a difference
Welcome to the NHS

The NHS offers a huge range of exciting and challenging opportunities for people who are passionate about making a difference.

With more than 350 different careers on offer, there is a job for you no matter what your interests, skills or qualifications.

What’s more, you’ll be given every opportunity to build on your skills and learn new ones as part of the Career Framework – a system that demonstrates our commitment to skills development. See the pages 10 and 11 for more information about this.

Scientists, accountants, porters, psychologists, nurses, information technologists and estate managers, to name but a few, are all needed to ensure the smooth running of the NHS. These people, and many more, work together as a team to deliver the very best care for our patients.

To find out more about becoming a member of the NHS team, call 0345 60 60 655, email advice@nhscareers.nhs.uk or visit www.nhscareers.nhs.uk

We look forward to hearing from you!
If you are looking for a career that combines a challenge, an excellent employment package and the reward of doing something really worthwhile, the allied health professions offer a wide range of opportunities. As key members of today’s healthcare team, allied health professionals provide diagnostics, treatment and rehabilitation that transforms people’s lives and helps them to remain as independent as possible for as long as possible.

This booklet briefly describes the different roles within the allied health professions. These range from treating a broken toe to assessing what’s going on in someone’s mind. Whether you are interested in science, the arts, sport or psychology, you’ll find something here that suits you.

Acquiring the knowledge and skills to become a professional involves training and study at degree or diploma level but there is also a range of vital support roles that require no set academic qualifications.

Once you have joined the NHS, you’ll enjoy flexible working conditions, excellent benefits and a wealth of opportunities to develop your career.

The NHS Careers team

For more information about working in the allied health professions, please visit www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/AHP

If you have any questions, call our helpline on 0345 60 60 655 or email advice@nhscareers.nhs.uk
The NHS – a rewarding place to work

There are very few careers that are as rewarding as one in the NHS, or that give you the opportunity to work with such a wide variety of people.

We actively recruit people of all ages, backgrounds and levels of experience. This helps us understand the different needs of the patients we serve every day and provide the best possible service.

Whichever area you join, you become part of a talented, passionate team of people, committed to providing the best care and treatment to patients. You will also enjoy one of the most competitive and flexible benefits packages offered by any employer in the UK.

Benefits of working in the NHS
Everyone who joins the NHS is guaranteed a salary that matches their ability and responsibilities, and given every opportunity to increase it through training and development.

On top of your basic salary, NHS employees will receive at least 27 days’ holiday each year, plus a range of other benefits, including health and counselling services.

Join one of the UK’s best pension schemes
The NHS Pension Scheme is one of the most generous in the UK. Every new employee automatically becomes a member and you will get an excellent package of pension benefits.

For more information about the pension, and a full list of the benefits included, please go to www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/payandbenefits

PAY AND CONDITIONS

The NHS pay system, known as Agenda for Change, offers real benefits for all directly employed staff except doctors, dentists and very senior managers, including:

- a standard working week of 37.5 hours
- holiday entitlements of 27 days per year, plus eight general and public holidays, rising to 33 days after ten years’ service
- pay enhancements to reward out of hours, shift and overtime working
- career and pay progression based on the application of knowledge and skills
- annual personal development review to support career aspirations.

Other benefits of working in the NHS include training, occupational health services, automatic membership of the NHS Pension Scheme (unless you choose to opt out) and study leave for sponsored courses.

To find out more about the different Agenda for Change pay bands, and to see the most up-to-date salary information, visit www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/payrates
• The NHS is committed to offering development and learning opportunities for all full-time and part-time staff.

• No matter where you start within the NHS, you’ll have access to extra training and be given every chance to progress within the organisation.

• You will receive an annual personal review and development plan to support your career progression.

• You will be encouraged to extend your range of skills and knowledge and take on new responsibilities through the Knowledge and Skills Framework.

See pages 10 and 11 for more on Career Framework and an example of how an employee has progressed through the NHS.
Francesca La Nave

**Job title:** art psychotherapist, St George's Healthcare NHS Trust, London

**Entry route:** degree in fine arts and print making

Francesca studied fine arts and printmaking and worked in community arts for a number of years. She started her career in the NHS as a nursing assistant, while also training to become an art psychotherapist.

When I started my art psychotherapy training, I was juggling part-time work, a young family and a training placement in a school in south London! Once I finished my studies and qualified, I worked in a rehabilitation unit in Surrey where I gained a lot of experience and established a comprehensive art therapy programme for residents and outpatients. A few years later I took up a post in a day hospital where I furthered my interest in group therapy eventually training in Group Analytic Psychotherapy, followed by an MA in Group and Intercultural Therapy.

While working at Sutton Hospital and Community Services, I expanded the art psychotherapy service, particularly the group programme. I developed models for group art therapy which worked well for people with mixed diagnoses including enduring mental health problems and disorders.

After a few years I was offered the post of trust-wide training placement coordinator for all the arts therapies. In this role I work with local boroughs and services as well as collaborating with accredited higher education institutions that provide arts therapy training.

I also get to work with new trainees which I really enjoy. Helping new art therapists to develop is extremely important and helps to ensure the effectiveness of the service we provide to patients. I am proud that art psychotherapists work with some of the most difficult-to-reach patients in mental health services.

I am now extending my clinical and professional skills through writing, training and coaching in supervision and private practice. I believe in supporting creativity as a life-enhancing path not only in clinical practice but also through helping patients use their imaginations for their personal and collective development.

Helping new art therapists to develop is extremely important.
Helping you find the right work-life balance
The NHS is committed to maintaining a healthy work-life balance for all NHS staff. There is a real focus on specific areas that are designed to make your life easier at certain times during your career. These include:

• flexible working and flexible retirement
• childcare provision and support for carers in the workplace
• coping with stress
• training and development
• tackling discrimination, bullying and harassment.

Manage your commitments in and out of work
The size and diversity of the NHS means we can offer you a range of flexible working opportunities.

Part-time roles and jobshare opportunities are often available, as well as term-time only, evening and weekend positions. We will do everything we can to help you combine your work for us with commitments in your everyday life – whether you’re studying for a new qualification, raising a family or have other responsibilities.

Many people take an extended break to look after young children or other dependants who need special care, or to study full time.

We will help you combine your work for us with commitments in your everyday life

As well as advice and support for people looking after sick or elderly relatives, we provide a range of childcare services for NHS employees, including:

• nursery care
• after-school and breakfast clubs
• holiday play schemes
• emergency care.

Get more information about the benefits and opportunities offered by the NHS at www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/payandbenefits

You can find more information on health and well-being at work at www.nhsemployers.org/healthyworkplaces
Your career in the allied health professions

The allied health professions are a diverse group of professionals who deliver high-quality care to patients and clients across a wide range of care pathways and in different settings including hospitals, the community, people’s homes and schools. They might also work in the independent sector or for charities.

Therapeutic radiographers, for example, play a key part in treating people who have life-threatening cancers. Orthoptists may be asked to assess the vision and eye movements of young babies with the aim of detecting and correcting problems related to eye or brain development. Occupational therapists can help people regain independence after a serious illness or injury – firstly in hospital but also in their own home. Arts therapists help people come to terms with, and recover from, severe mental health conditions such as depression or addiction. Each of the allied health professions brings specialist knowledge and skills that are unique to their job. Although they are often working alongside doctors, nurses and other healthcare professionals, they are making independent assessments and decisions about treatment. As an allied health professional, it will be important that you can work as part of a team and be able to make your own decisions based on the training and specialist expertise you have acquired.

In the frontline of healthcare
All the allied health professions involve working directly with patients, usually one-to-one, but sometimes with groups of people who share similar health problems or issues. However, the kind of work varies according to the profession you choose.
Name: Peter Eckersley

Job title: physiotherapy team leader, inpatient orthopaedics, The Pennine Acute Hospitals NHS Trust

Entry route: Physiotherapy degree

Peter’s interest in physiotherapy began on a work experience placement at his local hospital while he was at school.

I remember being struck by the range of patients the physiotherapists treated during that first spell of work experience. They looked after everyone from patients recovering from a stroke to those who had just had knee ligament surgery. I decided to apply for the degree course and qualified as a physiotherapist in 2001.

I’ve worked at North Manchester General Hospital for 13 years now, beginning as a band 5 physiotherapist where I gained experience across a range of specialties including musculoskeletal outpatients and medical, surgical, rehabilitation and infectious diseases wards.

I moved into a band 6 post in 2004 where I added neurology to my experience, and I became team leader for inpatient orthopaedic physiotherapy in 2007.

A typical day is mainly spent on the wards helping people to mobilise and recover from their orthopaedic surgery. It is very satisfying to help patients progress from admission to discharge home after their surgery.

As a team leader, I am also responsible for the training and development of my team and the service, to ensure we are providing the best quality care for our patients.

I have become very interested in leadership and took part in the NHS Leadership Academy Clinical Fellowship Programme in 2011/12, which resulted in a postgraduate certificate in NHS leadership and service improvement. It has given me a far greater range of skills to use as team leader, and led to my workplace project from the programme being presented at an international healthcare conference in 2013.

It is very satisfying to help patients progress from admission to discharge home.
Some roles such as a radiographer involve using complex high-tech equipment. A range of other jobs such as prosthetists will appeal to you if you have an interest in design and technology and how they can be used to improve people’s lives. Speech and language therapists and dietitians take complex scientific information and use it to create individual treatment plans for people with eating or communication problems.

Other roles are more hands-on. As a physiotherapist or podiatrist your specialist knowledge of muscle and bone structure will be needed for treatments that often involve manipulation and guiding people through exercises.

Arts therapies involve listening and working in partnership with your patients to identify ways of overcoming their problems. They use art, drama and music to enable others to live more fully.

What all the roles share is a commitment to the individual patient. These are jobs you’ll enjoy if you’re interested in people and feel comfortable interacting with patients, their families and other carers as their treatment progresses.

Professionals and assistants
To move into any of these professional roles you will need to have completed a course of study and training at degree or diploma level or above. Only then will you be qualified to make the kind of clinical judgements on which the health and well-being of your patients may depend. This means you will need good grades at A-level or equivalent level 3 qualification to gain a place on a university course, or relevant work experience combined with evidence of academic ability.

Across most of the allied health professions there are a range of assistant roles that play an important part in providing treatment to patients. There are no set academic requirements but these roles can act as a springboard for further career development and eventual professional qualification. How far you want to take your career will depend on you but the culture of personal development and continuing learning within the NHS will provide all the support you need.

For information about the qualifications needed to work in the allied health professions, visit www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/AHPtraining

There is also a range of assistant roles. There are no set academic requirements but these roles can be a starting point for further career development. For information about clinical support roles, visit www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/clinicalsupportstaff
CASE STUDY

Name: Anne Gordon
Job title: consultant paediatric occupational therapist, Guy’s & St Thomas’ Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
Entry route: degree in Applied Science – Occupational Therapy

Anne always knew she wanted to work with people so occupational therapy was the perfect career choice.

What appealed to me about occupational therapy was the opportunity to work closely with people in a problem-solving role and to help people to be as independent as possible in their daily life. After completing my degree in Australia, I worked in a specialist rehabilitation facility for children with cerebral palsy. It was this experience that made me want to specialise in working with children. When I moved to London some years later, I worked as an occupational therapist in community child health and at Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children in the neurology and neurosurgery departments.

I undertook an MSc to gain further experience and training in research and enjoyed working in research so much, I decided to apply for a PhD, looking at children who had suffered a stroke during infancy or childhood.

I currently work as the lead clinician for the occupational therapy team at the Evelina Children’s Hospital. We work with children who have been admitted to hospital with a variety of health conditions, as well as children who come for specialist out-patient appointments. In the out-patient clinics, I clinically support children who have had a brain injury or who have complex epilepsy.

My role is to identify how the child’s health condition impacts what they need and want to do in daily life, and advise on how they can best be supported to live independently. I also undertake research to improve care, therapy interventions and service standards for children with special healthcare needs, both across London and nationally.

Helping to find solutions and deliver therapy that improves children’s health, independence and quality of life is really satisfying.
### Career Framework

The Career Framework has been designed to improve career development and job satisfaction for NHS employees. It encourages individuals to learn new skills and take on extra responsibilities that enable them to progress within the organisation. Many people take on additional responsibility within their own area, while others retrain and move in to different roles.

The case study on page 9 describes how Anne Gordon has progressed within the allied health professions. You can follow her career path in the white boxes on the diagram below, alongside other potential paths in the different areas of the NHS.

The diagram below gives an illustration of a variety of NHS careers and where they may fit on the Career Framework. It is not exhaustive; details on other careers can be found in the relevant booklets and on the NHS Careers website.

Visit the NHS Careers website at www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/AHP

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<td>Health records assistant</td>
<td></td>
<td>Nurse cadet</td>
<td>Porter</td>
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*all paramedics are allied health professionals.
## What opportunities are available?

On the following pages you will find brief descriptions of the different roles in the allied health professions. They may help you decide which career may be right for you.

You can find more detailed information about all the allied health professions roles listed below on the NHS Careers website at [www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/AHP](http://www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/AHP).

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Main responsibilities</th>
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| Arts therapists     | • Art therapists, drama therapists and music therapists use their psychotherapeutic training and their artistic skills to work with people who have difficulty communicating and relating to others. Working in hospitals, mental health and disability services and in prisons, arts therapists help clients to express their feelings, explore their potential, and achieve a sense of personal development and fulfilment.  
  • It’s a career to consider if you enjoy the visual and performing arts and can see how the creative process could have therapeutic value for a wide range of people. You will need academic qualifications, evidence of your ability as an artist, actor or musician, and demonstrate a genuine interest in helping people, before you start training as a therapist. |
| Dietitians         | • Dietitians are experts in food and nutrition. They are the only health professionals who assess, diagnose, support and treat health conditions with food and nutrition. Dietitians also promote wider public health messages and many work on a freelance basis with clients to achieve personal goals.  
  • Should you want a career in dietetics, you could work in a variety of settings. While many dietitians work in hospitals, others work in the community, health centres, specialist clinics, people’s homes, with food industry, sports and the media. Key to any work setting will be your ability to understand the science and evidence behind whatever you are presented with and translate that information so that patients and clients will be able to understand. |
| Occupational therapists | • This is a wide-ranging role that links health with social care and the surroundings in which people live. Occupational therapists help people with physical and psychological problems, be more independent, by assessing what they are able to do for themselves and providing appropriate support and encouragement.  
  • It will appeal to you if you have a strong practical streak, and can quickly grasp the day-to-day problems created by someone’s state of health and the circumstances in which they live. Working in hospitals, community health centres and in people’s own homes, your job will be to help clients achieve as much as possible for themselves. |
| Orthoptists         | • Orthoptists assess and treat patients of all ages who have problems with eye movement and coordination, such as a lazy eye (amblyopia) or squint (strabismus).  
  • A career in orthoptics requires an in-depth understanding to how the eye and brain work, combined with the ability to work with people of all ages, including young children. You will be working in hospital clinics and community health centres, and may also go into schools to conduct vision assessments. |
### Paramedics
- Paramedics are the senior ambulance service healthcare professionals at a range of emergency and non-emergency situations. As a paramedic, you will use high-tech equipment, such as defibrillators (which restore the heart’s rhythm), spinal and traction splints and intravenous drips, as well as administering oxygen and drugs.
- A career as a paramedic will be varied and give you the opportunity to be on the frontline of clinical care. You will need to be able to think quickly and remain calm. In non-life-threatening situations, you’ll also have to use your professional judgement to make key clinical decisions.

### Physiotherapists
- Whether it’s a sports injury, back pain or getting strength back after a stroke or long illness, physiotherapists assess the problem and provide treatment using techniques that range from exercise programmes to use of heat and other therapies.
- If you enjoy sport and exercise, physiotherapy will give you a deeper understanding of what’s involved in movement and how injuries, pain and problems associated with disease can be managed and treated. Many physiotherapists work with patients in hospitals and in outpatient clinics, but there is a wide range of other possible settings.

### Podiatrists (chiropodists)
- Our feet and ankles are complex structures of bones, skin and soft tissue that are crucial to mobility and overall health. Podiatrists assess, diagnose and treat foot disorders to help keep people on the move.
- A career in podiatry will give you a specialist area of professional expertise where you will be making your own clinical decisions and treatment plans. You will need a keen interest in how this part of the body works, and confidence in your judgement. You might be working in hospitals, outpatient clinics, community health centres and people’s own homes.

### Prosthetists / orthotists
- Prosthetists use their skills to design and fit artificial limbs for people who have lost limbs through trauma, diabetes, peripheral vascular disease or due to congenital deformities. Your work will facilitate function that has been lost through amputation. Orthotists assess, design and provide orthoses to modify the structural or functional characteristics of the neuromuscular and skeletal systems. They will work with patients with conditions such as diabetes, arthritis, cerebral palsy, spina bifida and scoliosis. They help mobilise patients, reduce pain and facilitate healing of ulcers.
- Both prosthetists and orthotists have extensive knowledge of biomechanics, anatomy, physiology, pathologies and material science. A career in this area would suit people with good practical, design, handling and communications skills. You would be working in hospitals, clinics and community health centres, both as an autonomous practitioner and as part of a multi-disciplinary team.

### Radiographers
- Using x-rays, imaging and ultrasound technology, diagnostic radiographers capture detailed images from inside the body that can be crucial to the correct diagnosis and treatment of illness and injuries. Therapeutic radiographers use high-energy radiation in the front line battle against cancers and other diseases.
- Radiography is a large and growing area within modern healthcare offering you a range of career possibilities if you have an interest in science and a caring attitude. You will be working mainly in hospitals and health centres operating highly sophisticated equipment.

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| Speech and language therapists | • This role is about helping people who, for physical or psychological reasons, have problems speaking and communicating. Patients range from children whose speech is slow to develop, to older people whose ability to speak has been impaired by illness or injury. It also includes treatment for those who have difficulty with eating or swallowing.  
  • It offers a rewarding career if you are interested in language and communication, and how we produce speech. You will be working in hospitals, outpatient clinics and community health centres. |
CASE STUDY

Name: Wayne Hoban
Job title: deputy general manager, radiology, Royal Free Hampstead NHS Trust, London
Entry route: radiography training programme

Wayne’s career to date is a great illustration of the opportunities to progress and work in different areas of the NHS.

A year after qualifying as a radiographer, I moved to a teaching hospital in London to get experience with the specialised procedures that were being developed, particularly in trauma services and CT scanning.

As my experience grew I progressed from radiographer to senior 2 then senior 1. I also became active in the Society of Radiographers as a union representative and council member.

It’s the part of my career that has always mattered to me – getting involved in the processes that decide how work is organised and how services are delivered.

By then I was a superintendent radiographer in a busy A&E department which advanced my special interest in trauma. I have since assisted in running and developing a series of postgraduate courses to develop trauma knowledge and skills.

I also took an interest in forensic radiography using equipment as an investigative tool. Since then my career has taken me in some unexpected directions. I helped set up a trauma imaging group and a forensics radiography group that has been assisting war crimes investigations in the Balkans and provides x-ray services in the wake of incidents like the 2005 London bombings.

Now I’m a deputy department manager so I don’t have the same level of day-to-day clinical involvement with patients which I miss. But you have to know when it’s time to move on and contribute in other ways.

It’s the part of my career that has always mattered to me – getting involved in the processes that decide how work is organised and how services are delivered.
Getting started

There is a tremendous variety of opportunity within the allied health professions in the NHS. Whatever role you choose, and whatever level you start at, you will get all the support you need to develop your career.

Work placements and volunteering

Doing volunteer work or arranging a work placement is the best way to find out if a healthcare profession is right for you. It will give you experience of the working environment, show you the kind of work you would be doing and the people you would be helping, and let you talk with people who are already doing the job.

The number and type of work placements or volunteering opportunities available vary depending on where you are in the country. For more information about opportunities in your area, please talk to your local trust or voluntary organisations.

Opportunities for assistants

In many of the allied health professions, there are opportunities for people to work as healthcare assistants or clinical support workers. Healthcare assistants help qualified staff to provide a better service to more people – preparing patients for treatment, setting up equipment, and assisting in the therapy itself. There are no set academic requirements for these jobs. Employers will be looking for enthusiasm, a willingness to learn and a commitment to working with people.

Clinical support workers have their own vocational qualifications and career paths. Additionally, in some professions – dietetics, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, podiatry, radiography and speech and language therapy – working as an assistant can create a route into study and training for a professional qualification. This will normally involve a part-time course, such as a foundation degree, while you continue working as an assistant.

Professional training

In any of the allied health professions, you will be working as an independent professional, responsible for the assessment and treatment of your own caseload of patients. Therefore, you must first complete an approved training programme at degree, diploma or postgraduate level (depending on the profession).

Entry to degree/diploma courses will usually require three good A levels. However, universities may recognise other qualifications and work experience. If you already have a degree in a relevant discipline, there are also postgraduate training courses for some professions at diploma, masters or doctorate level.

Each university will have its own admission criteria and course structure, and the length of each course may vary but it is likely to be three years. Make sure your course is recognised by the Health and Care Professions Council, which is the relevant regulatory body for the allied health professions.

Registration

To begin and continue practising as an allied health professional, you must be registered with the appropriate regulatory body. This is the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC). You apply for registration once you have successfully completed your training course. Evidence of continuing learning and development will be required in the future to maintain your registration.
Funding
NHS Student Bursaries provides financial support to eligible students taking approved courses in the following allied health professions:
- dietetics
- occupational therapy
- orthoptics
- physiotherapy
- podiatry/chiropody
- prosthetics and orthotics
- radiography
- speech and language therapy.

To be eligible for financial support, you must meet certain conditions. There are different financial arrangements for the other allied health professions.

For more information about student funding, visit the NHS Student Bursaries website at: www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/students

Pay
Most jobs are covered by the Agenda for Change (AfC) pay scales. This pay system covers all staff except doctors, dentists and very senior managers. The NHS job evaluation system determines a points score, which is used to match jobs to pay bands and determine levels of basic salary. Each pay band has a number of pay points. Staff will normally progress to the next pay point annually until they reach the top of the pay band. For individual salaries of each pay band, please visit www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/payrates

Your career as a qualified allied health professional would typically start at AfC band 5, for instance as a physiotherapist or occupational therapist. Some entry level qualified roles would attract higher bandings than band 5, for instance arts therapy. Clinical support worker roles in this area would typically attract band 2, rising to band 3 for higher level roles and band 4 for technician roles, for instance in podiatry or occupational therapy. Specialist and managerial AHP roles would attract higher bandings such as advanced practitioners (band 7), an orthoptist specialist (band 6), a physiotherapy principal (band 8a) or a radiographer consultant (diagnostic) band 8b-c). Clinical directors are usually band 9.

For more information on pay bands in your chosen career, visit www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/payforAHPs

Doing volunteer work or arranging a work placement is the best way to find out if a healthcare profession is right for you. It will give you experience of the working environment.
CASE STUDY

Name: Liz Muir

Job title: speech and language therapist, NHS North East Essex

Entry route: university degree in speech and language therapy

Liz’s work as a volunteer encouraged her to do a degree in speech and language therapy. She now chairs the same type of stroke rehabilitation group for which she once volunteered.

My first experience of speech and language therapy was as a volunteer with a local stroke rehabilitation group. I think my mum came up with the idea that I might like it as a career, so I volunteered so I could find out more. I enjoyed it and the experience helped with my university application because there’s strong competition for places.

The degree course took three and a half years, combining study with work placements. Once I’d qualified, I got a job where I spent my last placement. Two years on, I’m really happy with the career choice I made.

It’s a busy life. You’re working closely with the other members of a multidisciplinary team, like physiotherapists and dietitians. Every case is different so you’re really kept on your toes. To gain wider experience, I started in a split role, working with people with learning disabilities and patients with acquired disorders through injury or disease.

Now I’m working in hospital, outpatient clinics and in the community with patients who have had a stroke. I work with them and their relatives, assessing their communication and swallowing difficulties, and setting goals for coping with, or overcoming, their problems. In fact, I now chair the same kind of stroke group that I used to be a volunteer with. It feels like I’ve come a long way in a short time.

It’s a busy life. You’re working closely with the other members of a multidisciplinary team, like physiotherapists and dietitians.
What’s your next step?

We hope this booklet has given you some idea of the many opportunities on offer in the allied health professions.

If you’ve decided you do want to work in the NHS, it’s important to start planning straight away. Find out as much information as you can about the qualifications you need and the opportunities that are available.

If you need a degree, you can get a list of the institutions running approved courses leading to registration, by using the NHS Careers coursefinder www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/courses. You will usually need to apply through UCAS for a place.

Each university will be able to tell you what they look for in applicants. For example, getting some work experience is an excellent way of showing your commitment and enthusiasm.

If you are already working but are thinking about a change of career, consider volunteering in your spare time. This is a great way to find out if you like the work, and can sometimes lead to a more permanent position.

Here is a checklist of things you should be doing, whether you’re still at school, studying for your degree or looking for a change of career:

- Have you explored routes into your chosen career? Will you need a degree or other qualification before you join, or will the NHS train you on the job? (There may also be the opportunity to start as an assistant).
- Are there any particular skills or experience that will improve your chances of getting into your chosen career?
- Have you enquired about opportunities to volunteer or do relevant work experience?
- Have you investigated further qualifications you might need for your chosen role?
- Have you searched the NHS Jobs website or spoken to your local trust to get an idea of the type of vacancies available?

Whatever position you’re in now, the NHS Careers service can help. Call us on 0345 60 60 655, email advice@nhscareers.nhs.uk or visit our website at www.nhscareers.nhs.uk.

To search for jobs visit www.jobs.nhs.uk. To find information about professional bodies, please see www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/AHPcontacts.
CASE STUDY

Name: Elisha Miller

Job title: paramedic trainee, West Midlands Ambulance Service NHS Trust

Entry route: BA Hons sports studies, paramedic science foundation degree

Elisha enjoys the challenge of handling different emergencies every day and helping others when they need it most.

My first job after school was urgent call taker in the control centre at Yorkshire Ambulance Service NHS Trust. I handled calls from district nurses, hospital staff, residential and nursing homes, and GPs, and decided on the best type of response for their patients.

That experience started me thinking about a career as a paramedic and, when I finished my sports studies degree, I got a place on the two-year foundation paramedic science degree. During the course, I worked as a first aider at the students union during evening events which gave me fantastic experience of assessing people’s injuries.

I graduated as a paramedic in summer 2013 and started work at West Midlands Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust. As an autonomous practitioner at the scene of an emergency, I undertake a detailed assessment of the patient, and provide high-quality care at the scene. I then refer them for the most appropriate ongoing care. That may be to a hospital, their GP or social services, or showing the patient how to manage their own care after the incident.

There’s lots of room for career progression in this role, for example to advanced paramedic or emergency care practitioner. Most of all, I love the feeling that I’ve helped others in their moment of need, whether it’s a patient having a heart attack or an elderly patient who’s fallen over and just needs a helping hand to stand up.

There’s lots of room for career progression in this role, for example to advanced paramedic or emergency care practitioner.
Here are some other things you can be doing, depending on where you are right now.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Where are you now?</th>
<th>What should you do now?</th>
<th>Who can help?</th>
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</table>
| Studying for your GCSEs                                | • Visit www.stepintothenhs.nhs.uk and register for more information on chosen careers.  
• Check what your likely exam grades/results will be.  
• Explore routes into your chosen career – will you need a degree or other qualification before you join, or will the NHS train you on the job? Can you start as an assistant?  
• Are there any particular skills or experience that will improve your chances of getting into your chosen career?  
• Enquire about volunteering or work experience.  
• Find out if you need any specific A levels, or equivalent qualifications.  
• Consider the option of a 14–19 diploma. | Subject teachers  
Your careers adviser/Connexions service  
Professional bodies  
NHS Careers                                                                                       |
| Studying for A-levels or another course at your school or a local college | **As GCSEs, plus:**  
• If you need to study a particular degree, investigate which universities offer it.  
• Investigate any further qualifications you might need for your chosen role.  
• Find out if you are eligible for a bursary.  
• Search the NHS Jobs website at www.jobs.nhs.uk and speak to your local trust to get an idea of current vacancies.  
• Consider the option of an apprenticeship. | Subject teachers  
Your careers adviser/Connexions service  
National Careers Service  
UCAS  
NHS Student Bursaries  
NHS Careers  
Professional bodies  
NHS Jobs  
Universities                                                                                   |
| At university                                           | **As A levels, plus:**  
• If you’re doing a degree in a subject not relevant to AHP training, investigate your options for switching courses, or going on to do a postgraduate course approved by the relevant professional or regulatory body. | University careers service  
NHS Careers  
Professional bodies  
NHS Jobs  
Regulatory bodies                                                                                       |
| Looking for a new career                               | **As A levels, plus:**  
• Find out if you will need to retrain before you apply for new roles or if the NHS will train you while you are working. | Careers adviser  
National Careers Service  
NHS Careers  
Jobcentre Plus  
Professional bodies  
NHS Jobs  
UCAS                                                                                                 |