

Routes into nursing and midwifery

Introduction

Nursing and midwifery are popular choices for adult job changers, particularly as maturity and life experience are recognised as being advantageous.

Mature applicants may find that colleges and training schools do not expect the same academic qualifications from them as they would from a school leaver. This leaflet gives some ideas as to the types of qualifications that may be considered.

However, due to the scientific basis of the work and fierce competition for training places on some courses, there are unlikely to be many concessions and mature applicants will normally need to show evidence of recent study: for example Science A-Levels, Open University Foundation course, Access course etc.

It is important that as well as showing evidence of academic study, mature students can demonstrate a thorough knowledge of what nursing involves when they are interviewed by training schools. It is highly desirable to have visited a hospital or another health care setting to observe your chosen career. Many hospitals are able to arrange work shadowing, work experience or at least a discussion with a trained professional. It can also be an advantage to have worked at assistant level in a hospital, for example, Health Care Assistant, or to have done some voluntary work in a health care setting. Useful contact addresses are included in this leaflet.

Nursing

The nursing profession is changing constantly in response to changes in the NHS, and to advances in technology and equipment used in the care of patients.

There are four main branches of nursing, and it is necessary to specialise in one of them. They are:

- Adult nursing
- Children's nursing
- Mental health nursing
- Learning disabilities nursing.

Once an area of nursing has been chosen it may be difficult to change as places are regulated by projected requirements. Once qualified as a registered nurse there are possibilities for further training and career development.

Nurses work in hospital wards and in many other places, including community health centres, GPs' surgeries, specialist clinics, prisons and private companies. Some nurses visit patients in their own homes.

The work

Practical nursing might involve:

- checking temperatures
- taking blood pressure readings
- helping doctors to give examinations
- giving drugs and injections
- dressing wounds and changing bandages.

Increasingly, and through further training and development, nurses are taking on new duties. Some nurses are now responsible for performing minor surgery, prescribing medicines and treatments, making and receiving referrals and running clinics.

Hospitals use complex equipment to help with patient care, and nurses are often responsible for monitoring this. They also record their observations and any treatment they give.

Other tasks are likely to include:

- acting as first point of contact for their patients
- working as part of a patient's 'health care team', which is likely to involve not only with the giving of care but the planning of it too.
- counselling patients and their relatives.
- observing, monitoring and recording patients and their relatives.



- playing a major role in promoting health care and lifestyle changes among their patients as well as directly caring for them.

Pay and conditions

The recent Agenda for Change offers staff a minimum of 27 days holiday per year, a standard 37.5 hour working week, additional pay for staff working in high cost areas and an annual personal development and review process that supports career progression within the NHS. Many hospitals offer flexible hours of work. Some nurses work extra hours, either as overtime or for nursing agencies that supply staff to the private sector.

National pay rates for all staff are subject to annual review and pay reflects responsibilities and skills. At the time of writing (June 2006) a newly qualified nurse starts on NHS pay band 5: £19,166 – £23,789. Progression to higher bands comes with experience, additional responsibilities and further training. A small number of nurse consultants or senior managers earn up to £60,880.

Extra allowances can be earned for additional responsibilities, length of service, and geographical location.

For up-to-date information on pay visit www.nhscareers.nhs.uk > **Working in the NHS > Careers in Detail > Nursing Midwifery and Health Visiting > Pay for Nurses and Midwives**

All staff benefit from pay during sickness absence, a range of occupational health and counselling services, and various other employment benefits.

Opportunities

The NHS is the largest employer of nurses. Employment prospects are excellent since there is a current shortage of nurses. Other employers include private hospitals and nursing homes, schools and colleges, HM Forces, the prison service and industry. To find out about recruitment patterns it is best to contact individual hospital trusts. Visit

the following websites for recruitment and job information:

www.uhjobs.nhs.uk

www.lnrhwd.nhs.uk/wdc

or contact recruitment@uhl-tr.nhs.uk

Entry requirements

To qualify as a registered nurse it is necessary to complete either a **Degree or Diploma of Higher Education in Nursing**. The Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) require you to provide evidence of your literacy and numeracy, good health and good character, and recent successful study experience. In addition, institutions that offer nursing programmes are entitled to set their own specific educational entry requirements. The minimum age to begin nursing training is 17.5 years old in England, 17 in Scotland, and 18 in Northern Ireland and Wales.

The academic entry requirements for a **Nursing Diploma** are likely to include at least five GCSEs (A-C)/S grades (1-3), preferably including English, maths and/or a science-based subject. In England applications for the diploma are made through **NMAS**. (See Contacts)

The academic entry requirements for a **Nursing Degree** will usually include the same GCSE/S grades and subjects as the diploma plus two or three A levels/H grades, possibly including a biological science. Applications for the degree are made through UCAS (See Contacts)

An **Access to Higher Education** qualification may also be accepted for entry to certain courses. Access courses are regulated by the **Open College Network**. If experienced in a related field, you may be able to gain recognition of your skills through Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL). Please check with colleges or universities for exact entry requirements.

From 2007 Leicester College will be offering a **Springboard to Nursing** course at their Bede Island campus. This will allow mature candidates who lack the necessary qualifications to meet the entry requirements for a pre-registration diploma.



If you already work in a relevant role, perhaps as a **healthcare assistant** or support worker, you may be able to study for a relevant NVQ at level 3. This will usually satisfy the entry requirements for a nursing diploma or degree course.

An accelerated two year **postgraduate course** may be an option for registered nurses who have qualified in an alternative branch of nursing, and for graduates with a first degree in a health-related subject: check with individual institutions for entry details. For this programme, applications are made through NMAS.

A criminal record check will be carried out; however, a criminal conviction does not automatically exclude you from working within the NHS.

Since September 2005 all overseas nurses who have trained outside the UK and EEA, and wish to commence professional practice in the UK, will be required to undertake the NMC approved Overseas Nurses Programme (ONP). For more details contact the NMC. (See Contacts)

Training

During nurse training you divide your time between university or college, and supervised placements in local hospitals and the community. Courses usually consist of three years' full-time study.

The first year of the course follows the **Common Foundation Programme**, which provides an introduction to the principles and practise of nursing care together with the study of anatomy and physiology, psychology, sociology, ethics, social policy and core practical skills. In the remaining two years you specialise in your chosen branch of nursing and work in relevant clinical placements.

In Leicestershire registered nurse training is available through **De Montfort University**. Diploma and degree courses last 3 years. Other Regional providers are the Universities of Birmingham, Coventry, Derby, Northampton, Nottingham, UCE Birmingham and Wolverhampton.

Funding

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Nursing diploma and degree courses attract a non-repayable bursary to cover living expenses. Bursaries for a diploma are **non-means tested** and bursaries for the degree are **means-tested**. Course fees are also usually paid. Additional allowances may also be available. For more details about student financial support, contact the NHS Student Grants Unit (See Contacts).

Midwifery

You do not need to be a nurse to be a midwife. Midwives deal with healthy people and as such have a different relationship with the patient. Contrary to popular belief, there are male as well as female midwives.

The work

Midwives care for and support pregnant women, their partners and babies, before, during and after the birth.

Their work includes: monitoring the health of the mother and baby with physical examinations and ultrasound scanners; counselling the mother on issues such as healthy eating or giving up smoking; and explaining the mother's childbirth and pain relief options.

Midwives run antenatal and parenting classes. These involve teaching expectant and new parents the essential skills needed to care for their baby. They look after the mother and baby during labour and birth, and for one month after the birth. They also advise on breast-feeding.

Pay and conditions

Midwives in the NHS work 37.5 hours a week on a shift basis. This includes evenings, nights, weekends and bank holidays. Flexible and part-time working is likely to be available. Midwives work in hospital maternity units, GP surgeries, health centres, clinics, and in the homes of patients.



Midwives working in some NHS trusts will split their time between working in the community and working in hospitals. In other trusts, midwives are rotated every six months between antenatal, delivery, post-natal and community settings. Community midwives usually need a driving licence.

A newly qualified midwife starts on NHS pay band 5: £19,166 – £23,789. Experienced midwives earn up to £36,416, and a small number of consultant midwives earn up to £60,880 (June 2006)

Extra allowances can be earned for additional responsibilities, length of service, and geographical location.

For up-to-date information on pay visit:

www.nhscareers.nhs.uk > **Working in the NHS > Careers in Detail > Nursing Midwifery and Health Visiting > Pay for Nurses and Midwives**

Opportunities

The NHS is the largest employer of midwives, but there are some opportunities in private hospitals and clinics and in the armed forces. There are some opportunities to become self-employed and to practise independently in accordance with NMC guidelines.

There are opportunities to work overseas especially in developing countries.

Prospects for promotion are good; there are new midwife consultant posts at the top of the profession. There are also opportunities to move into education and training.

Entry requirements

To qualify as a registered midwife it is necessary to achieve **one** of the following:

- a Diploma of Higher Education in Midwifery
- a Degree in Midwifery
- a Diploma of Higher Education/Degree in Nursing (adult branch) followed by a 12-18 month midwifery conversion course.

The Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC), require you to provide evidence of your literacy and numeracy skills, good health and

good character, and recent successful study experience. In addition, institutions running midwifery and nursing programmes are entitled to set their own specific educational entry requirements. The minimum age to begin training is 17.5 years old in England, 17 in Scotland, and 18 in Northern Ireland and Wales.

The academic entry requirements for a Midwifery Diploma or Degree course are likely to include at least five GCSEs (A-C)/S grades (1-3) with English, and either maths or science, **plus** two or three A levels/H grades preferably including biology or human biology, or equivalent, for the degree course.

An **Access to Higher Education** qualification may also be accepted for entry onto certain courses. If experienced in a related field, you may be able to gain recognition of skills through Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL). Please check with colleges or universities for exact entry requirements.

If you already work in a relevant role, perhaps as a healthcare assistant or support worker, you may be able to study for a relevant NVQ/SVQ at level 3; this will usually satisfy the entry requirements for a midwifery or nursing diploma.

Since September 2005 all overseas midwives who have trained outside the UK and EEA, and wish to commence professional practice in the UK, will be required to undertake the NMC approved Overseas Nurses Programme (ONP). For more details, contact the NMC. (See Contacts)

A criminal record check will be carried out; however, a criminal conviction does not automatically exclude you from working within the NHS.

Training

During a midwifery training course you divide your time between university or college, and supervised placements in hospitals and the community. On placement you will gain experience in every area of midwifery including antenatal wards and clinics, delivery



units, postnatal wards, and the community. You will study midwifery practice, care of the newborn, management of labour, communication skills, health education and health promotion.

Continual professional development is an essential part of the job and there are many opportunities for further training in areas such as family planning, teaching and research. Former registered midwives wishing to return to the profession can take a return-to-practice course; courses are available throughout the UK and consist of a mixture of theory and practice. Contact NHS Careers for details. (See Contacts).

In Leicestershire midwife training is available via **De Montfort University**. All the routes described above are available, together with a number of specialist post-registration courses. Other Regional providers are the Universities of Coventry, Northampton, Nottingham and UCE Birmingham.

Funding

Midwifery diploma and degree course programmes attract a non-repayable bursary to cover living expenses. Bursaries for a diploma are **non-means tested** and bursaries for the degree are **means-tested**. Course fees are also usually paid. For more details about student financial support, contact the NHS Student Grants Unit (See Contacts).

Further information

NHS Careers (England)

PO Box 376,
Bristol
BS99 3EY.

Tel. 0845 6060655

www.nhscareers.nhs.uk

NHS Learning and Development Service

Tel: 08000 150 850

NHS Student Grants Unit

Hesketh House
200-220 Broadway

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Fleetwood
Lancashire
FY7 8SS

0845 358 6655

www.nhsstudentgrants.co.uk

Nursing and Midwifery Admissions Service

(NMAS),
Rosehill,
New Barn Lane,
Cheltenham,
GL52 3LZ.

01242 544949.

www.nmas.ac.uk

University and Colleges Admissions Service

(UCAS)
Rosehill,
New Barn Lane
Cheltenham
GL52 3LZ.

01242 227788

www.ucas.com

Nursing and Midwifery Council

(NMC)
23 Portland Place
London
W1B 1PZ

020 7637 7181

www.nmc-uk.org

De Montfort University

School of Nursing and Midwifery
The Promotions and Recruitment Centre
Faculty of Health and Life Sciences
Hawthorn Building
The Gateway
Leicester
LE1 9BH

0116 257 7700

www.dmu.ac.uk

Open College Network (East Midlands Region)



OCNEMR
Unit G
Long Eaton Trade Centre
52 – 56 Nottingham Road
Long Eaton
Nottingham
NG10 2AU

0115 946 1118
www.ocnemr.org.uk

Leicester College
Bede Island Campus
Narborough Road
Leicester
LE3 0BT

0116 224 2001
www.leicestercollege.ac.uk

Remember...

nextstep can offer you free information and advice on all aspects of jobs, training and courses.

- Call into the *nextstep* Shop at 82 Charles Street, Leicester. You can talk to an adviser, browse in the library and information zone and use the computers.
- Call free on **0800 0850 330**. You can talk to an adviser or find out where your nearest *nextstep* centre is.
- Visit the *nextstep* website at www.nextstep-leics.org.uk You can search for a course or a job, view career profiles, use the CV builder, and there are dozens of useful links to other sites. There's also a full list of *nextstep* centres.

You can also call learndirect on **0800 100 900**. Lines are open seven days a week, 8.00am – 10.00pm, and you can talk to an adviser in nine languages other than English.

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