

Healthcare Support Worker Roles (HCSW) - Frequently Asked Questions

We thought it might help to put together some of the questions we often get asked by people who are interested in becoming a Healthcare Support Worker (HCSW) at AWP –we hope this gives you some more useful information about the role and the practical expectations.

Q. What qualifications do I need to join AWP as a HCSW?

You do not need any prior qualifications to join us as a HCSW, because we will provide you with a full programme of development called the Senior Healthcare Support Worker Apprenticeship. This will give you everything you need to be fantastic in your new role, and it will provide you with a solid baseline for any future career progression you choose to pursue.

Q. What if I already have the essential qualifications for the HCSW job?

If you already have a Level 3 or above qualification in health and social care, or a different type of qualification with extensive mental health or learning disability experience, you may be eligible for an exception. **If you are appointed as an apprentice it will be a condition of your employment that you complete the training. If you opt out or do not complete for any reason you will not be able to continue in the role of Healthcare Support Worker.** This is to ensure that the care we offer is of a consistently high standard.

Q. How long will the training take?

This will depend on a range of factors, including prior qualifications, personal development goals and at which part of the career ladder you start on. Apprenticeship programmes for support workers tend to take between 18 months and two years. Professional registration apprenticeships can take over three years. The great thing about an apprenticeship, though, is that you will be earning while you learn, and you won't have to pay any course fees.

Q. Will I be given dedicated time for my apprenticeship during working hours?

Yes. Your manager will ensure you have the appropriate support and protected time / resources to successfully complete whichever programme or component of your induction you are working on. For Senior Healthcare Support Worker Apprentices, we recommend protected time of a day a month, although every day of your role will expose you to new learning and opportunities to develop and refresh your skills.

Q. Who will deliver the apprenticeship programme?

In our organisation, we work with a number of great education providers (colleges and universities), who support our staff to complete role-specific qualifications. As part of the

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recruitment process, you will be asked to complete the provider's initial assessment which will determine the level of vocational programme you will start.

Q. Will I need to attend college?

Most Healthcare Support Worker apprenticeships are supported through a combination of online learning and workplace visits from assessors employed by the education provider.

Q. What Band do you have to be to access nurse training?

Providing you meet the entry criteria and you have full managerial support to apply, you can access nurse training at any Band.

Q. Will I start on a lower band if I don't have any care experience?

During your interview process you will receive a thoughtful assessment about what role best suits your current level of knowledge, experience and confidence, and this can then be contrasted across what vacancies we have available. It is likely that those with limited care experience will start as a Band 2 Healthcare Support Worker, being supported to develop within the job to attain a higher-banded role as soon as possible. However, being enrolled on the Senior Healthcare Support Worker Apprenticeship will enable you to progress quickly, as you will be on a formal programme of clinical development.

Q. What are the training requirements when joining AWP as a HCSW?

Aside from an apprenticeship, you will undertake a range of statutory and mandatory training such as Moving & Handling, Fire Safety, Display Screen Awareness, Information Governance and the NHS Care Certificate. You will also receive an organisational induction as well as a local, team-based one.

Q. Do you accept training from other Trusts including the Care Certificate?

Yes. The Care Certificate is transferrable across care settings, and any training completed with another organisation can be 'mapped' to AWP's core training standards for support workers.

Q. Can I complete the Care Certificate if I work part time?

Yes. The Care Certificate is a feature of all support worker inductions, and it forms the first part of your clinical development journey. If you work part-time, you will be given support to agree a realistic timescale for completion.

Q. Will I automatically be upgraded after achieving the Care Certificate?

Not automatically. The Care Certificate is a national competency framework, not a qualification as such. It should be seen as the first stage of a development journey, which may be linked to progression towards a more advanced or senior support worker role.

Q. What are the hours for a HCSW role?

A. If you are offered 'full time' hours, these are 37.5 hours per week and include shift working. This will include working weekends and Bank Holidays.

Typical shift patterns are: Early Shift (7:00 – 15:00), Late Shift (13:30 – 21:30) and Night Shift (21:00 – 07:30). Each shift includes a 30 minute break.

Q. Can I work part time?

Some teams and wards are able to offer part time hours. Please discuss this with the panel at your interview.

Q. Are there Bank jobs available?

Yes, Bank roles are available. If you are interested in a Bank role please speak to the interview panel. Note – apprenticeships are not available with Bank positions currently.

Q. Once you start in a permanent role, how quickly can you join the bank?

As soon as you have started your role, you can contact the Bank Office to request to join the Bank as well.

Q. Do I need to be able to drive?

It's not essential to be able to drive to be a HCSW, however, some of our sites are trickier to access using public transport. If you are worried about this - please discuss it with the panel at your interview.

Q. Do I need a car to work in the Community?

Having access to a car is certainly a great advantage in a community team. In our urban areas such as Bath, Swindon and Bristol, it may be possible to visit community service users by cycling or on public transport, but a car is highly recommended (certainly if you work in a rural community team).

Q. Can you rotate around wards or do you stay on one ward?

Most of our support worker posts are in specific teams (either wards or community teams). It is however a really good idea to work in a range of different settings – it will help you to understand more about service users' journey through services – and you can do this by working bank shifts in addition to your contracted hours.

Q. I am an older applicant – is my age a restriction?

A. No, we welcome applications from all ages, there is no retirement age or age limit for applicants. If you are worried about whether you feel physically fit enough to do the HCSW role - please discuss it with the panel at your interview.

Q. Do I have to pay for clearance from the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)?

No, we will pay for your initial DBS certificate. If you join us as a HCSW you may decide to join the 'DBS Update Service'; the cost of this is currently £13 per year and you must apply within 28 day of the date of your certificate. Further details can be found on gov.uk [here](#)

Q. Do HCSWs have to administer drugs?

No. You will not be required to administer any form of medication in your support worker role. You will have an opportunity to support service users to discuss their medication and how they experience it (including helping to monitor any possible side-effects)

Q. Will I have to wear a uniform?

If you work on one of our older people's wards you will be required to wear a uniform. At present, in most other teams, staff are expected to dress in ordinary day-to-day clothes, ensuring that they appear tidy and professional. **(Due to Covid-19, there are some exceptions to the usual process. Please ask about this in your interview, or prior to starting your new role).**

Q. What support is available at AWP for employees?

We understand how important it is to stay well, so we are committed to supporting your wellbeing. You will have access to a free employee support service 24 hours a day, seven days a week. They will guide and support you on legal and consumer issues, sickness absence and bereavement, child and elder care, relationships, stress and much more.

Q. What benefits are available to staff?

The NHS has attractive terms and conditions of employment; the NHS pay framework is attractive, the pension scheme is great, and, recognising that people in the NHS work hard, when you join, you start on 27 days paid leave per year (pro rata if you are part time). After five years your leave increases to 29 days, and after 10 years you will have 33 days of holiday a year, plus the public holidays. AWP contributes approximately 20% of salary towards your pension scheme each year. If you are ineligible for the NHS Pension Scheme (because you are a returning NHS pensioner) you will be enrolled into the NEST pension scheme.

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As an NHS employee, you and your family will be able to take advantage of an extensive range of discounts from national and local organisations, encompassing wide-ranging products and services including 50% off some big brands.

Q. How do I get my job offer?

Most of our recruitment is being done online at present, with only a few face-to-face interviews. You will receive an invitation to attend a 'virtual' recruitment event including joining instructions and further information. The interview panel will be made up of AWP team and ward managers, clinical staff and on occasion HR staff.

Q. Do you pay mileage expenses for induction?

Induction is currently being undertaken 'virtually' so mileage expenses are not incurred.

Q. What happens if I am offered a job?

You will receive a conditional offer of employment from the Recruitment Team via email and your pre-employment checks will be undertaken. As part of this process we will take up references, complete an ID, Right to Work and DBS check and medical check. You will be required to provide your ID documents together with a photo for your ID card, and complete tax and bank details forms. To avoid any delay in your appointment, we ask that you provide your ID and complete any forms as quickly as possible. Once your clearances have been completed and are satisfactory, you will receive an unconditional offer and a start date will be agreed. Your contract of employment will be issued once your start date has been agreed.

Q. How long does the recruitment process take?

From the point of receiving an offer letter, the recruitment process can take between 2 and 6 weeks, depending on how quickly you can get your ID and any forms to us. The biggest delay to clearing new starters is usually the DBS result, the ID and the references. As a result it's really helpful if you can complete your DBS application and submit it as quickly as possible, provide your ID promptly and that you contact your referees to ask them to respond to reference requests quickly.

Q. Are pre-employment checks, including references, transferrable from other Trusts?

AWP has an arrangement with a number of partnership organisations whereby we confidentially share previous pre-employment information relating to your existing job, in order to support an efficient recruitment process for candidates when offered a new position with us. These organisations include University Hospitals Bristol NHS Foundation Trust, North Bristol NHS Trust, Western Area Health Trust, NHS South Central and West Commissioning Support Unit, Bristol City Council, South Gloucestershire Council, North Somerset Council, Sirona Care & Health and Royal United Hospitals Bath.

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Q. How do you take up references?

We request written references from your referees. Sometimes, if we wish to get people into post quickly, we will take a verbal reference and then follow this up with a written request.

