

Green Careers in the NHS

Future Change Makers



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Welcome

As the UK's largest employer, the NHS accounts for 4–5% of the country's carbon footprint. We are the world's **first** health service to commit to reaching **net-zero carbon emissions by 2045**. We take our responsibility to sustainability seriously, whether this is through saving money through reduced energy costs or better understanding how patients are affected by air pollution.

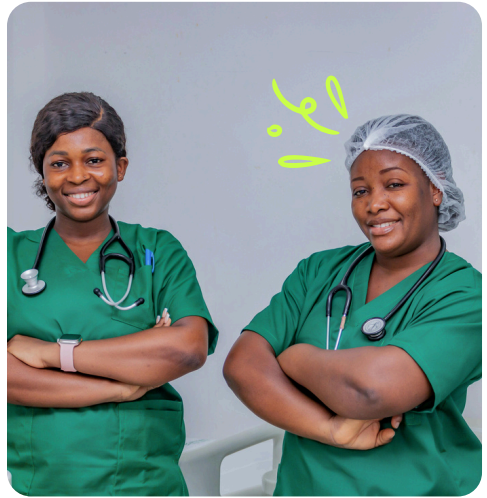
But we can't do it alone. We need passionate, creative individuals like **you** to help us build a healthier, greener future.



Why Green Careers Matter in Healthcare

Climate change is a **health emergency**. It affects the air we breathe, the food we eat, and the places we live. That's why sustainability is now a key part of everything we do in the NHS, from how we build hospitals to how we deliver care.

Green careers in the NHS are about making a difference. Whether you're designing eco-friendly buildings, reducing waste in operating theatres, or using digital tools to cut travel, every role can help **protect the planet** and **improve lives**.



We're proud to be part of a growing movement to make the NHS more sustainable. This guide is here to show you that no matter your interests – science, tech, design, or caring for others – there's a green career for you in the NHS. We hope it inspires you to explore the exciting opportunities ahead."

– Claire Flavell, Group Associate Director – Education & Talent, Lincolnshire Community and Hospitals NHS Group

What is a Green Career in the NHS?

A green career in the NHS is any role that helps reduce the environmental impact of healthcare while improving patient care. These roles support the NHS' goal to become the **world's first net-zero health system**, meaning it will no longer contribute to climate change through carbon emissions.

Sustainability is part of **every** NHS role, whether you're reducing waste, saving energy, or helping patients access care digitally.

The NHS is responsible for **4–5%** of the UK's total carbon emissions.

Over **£300 million** worth of medicines go unused each year, contributing to waste and pollution.

In 2020, the NHS committed to reaching net zero:

- By 2040 for emissions it will directly control.
- By 2045 for emissions it can influence.

NHS-related travel makes up **3.5% of all road miles** in England, affecting air quality and public health.



Career Case Studies

Clinical Roles

Even traditional healthcare roles can support sustainability. Here are some real examples:

Pharmacists

The East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust started a long-term Medicines Value Programme to make the use of expensive medicines more efficient and sustainable.

They introduced changes like switching to cheaper versions of costly biologic drugs and standardising drug doses to cut down on waste and streamline pharmacy work.

Since the programme began, it has saved £3.7 million, reduced medicine waste, improved patient safety, and strengthened teamwork between pharmacy staff, clinical teams, and patients.



Allied Health Professionals

The Home Enteral Feeding Team (HEFT) at Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust looks after about 500 patients who need tube feeding.

They checked what would happen if they switched from single-use bottles to reusable ones and used giving sets for longer. This change could save **24,722 kg of CO₂e every year** if done throughout the Trust, while also improving care and being more sustainable.



Doctors & Nurses

In 2022, a team at Solihull Hospital performed the **world's first net zero carbon operation**.

By making changes to their standard practice, this groundbreaking surgical team reduced the carbon output by almost **80%** (equivalent to a diesel car travelling around 5,500 miles), with no impact on the outcome for their patient.

Non-Clinical Roles

Behind the scenes, many NHS staff are working to make healthcare greener:

Estates & Facilities

United Lincolnshire Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust won the 2021 Innovation Award for their sustainability efforts.

They received £2.6 million to replace 12,000 lights with energy-saving LED ones, cutting energy use and costs. This helps lower their carbon footprint and saves money for patient care.

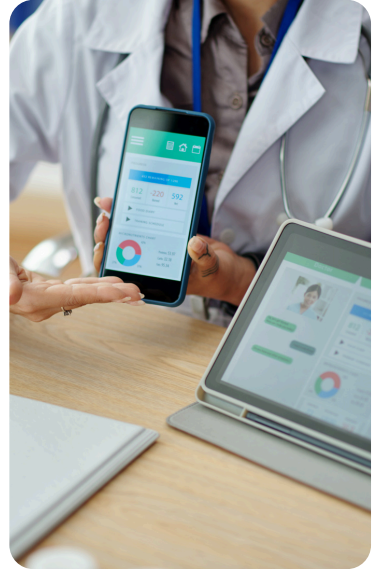
Working with Veolia, they've also improved energy systems by installing LED lights and a new heat and power unit. These changes are expected to **save £1.4 million each year** and reduce carbon emissions by **7,712 tonnes**.



Digital Transformation Teams

The NHS Digital and NHSX Transformation Team developed the Wayfinder Service NHS App. This app lets patients handle appointments online, cutting carbon emissions by over **1,100 tonnes CO₂e each year** – 97.8% less than using paper letters.

Moving to digital tools is crucial as it lowers paper usage, reduces travel, and decreases missed appointments.



Procurement Specialists

NHS Supply Chain started a program called the Evergreen Sustainable Supplier Assessment and set out five key requirements for suppliers.

Now, **94%** of their £4.4 billion spending involves suppliers with eco-friendly plans. This is important because buying sustainably affects the whole supply chain and helps cut down on indirect emissions. These steps are essential for creating a more sustainable NHS.

Your Path to a Green Career

The NHS is on a mission to become the **world's first net-zero health system**, and we need people like **you** to help us get there. Whether you're just starting or planning your next step, there are exciting ways to join the NHS and make a real difference for people and the planet.

University



If you're thinking about university, there are many degrees that can lead to green NHS careers:

- **Healthcare Science** – Work with cutting-edge technology to improve patient care and reduce waste.
- **Environmental Health** – Help protect communities from pollution and climate-related health risks.
- **Sustainable Design or Engineering** – Design eco-friendly hospitals and healthcare equipment.
- **Digital Health and Informatics** – Use data and tech to reduce travel, paper use, and emissions.

Many NHS roles require a degree, but they also offer placement opportunities, graduate schemes, and research roles focused on sustainability.

Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships are a fantastic way to start your NHS career while helping build a greener, more sustainable health service. You'll earn while you learn, gain hands-on experience, and contribute to the NHS's goal of reaching net zero carbon emissions.

Apprenticeships are available at different levels, from entry-level to degree-level, and they're open to school leavers, career changers, and anyone passionate about making a difference.

Here are four example apprenticeship pathways that support sustainability in different ways:

- **Pharmacy:** Help cut down on unused medicines and packaging waste.
- **Customer Service Practitioner:** Promote digital access to care, reduce travel, improve efficiency in patient communications.
- **Healthcare Science Practitioner:** Use data and innovation to reduce waste, improve efficiency, and support low-carbon care.
- **Business Administrator:** Help reduce paper use by supporting digital systems, assist with sustainability reporting, and contribute to eco-friendly office practices.





Entry-Level Roles

These roles are a brilliant way to get started in the NHS and build experience:

- **Healthcare Assistants:** Support patients while promoting sustainable care practices.
- **Porter:** Support efficient logistics, reduce unnecessary transport, and help implement low-emission delivery methods.
- **Estates Technicians:** Maintain hospital buildings and equipment with a focus on energy efficiency.
- **Admin and Support Roles:** Help teams go paperless and reduce travel through digital systems.

Many roles offer on-the-job training and can lead to further qualifications or apprenticeships.

What you Learn Today can Shape Tomorrow's NHS

To help the NHS reach net-zero, we need people with the **right skills**, not just in science and healthcare, but in creativity, problem-solving, and teamwork. Whether you're interested in clinical care, technology, or sustainability, these skills will help you thrive in a green NHS career.

Key Skills

- **Problem-Solving:** Find smart solutions to reduce waste, save energy, and improve patient care.
- **Innovation:** Think creatively to design greener ways of working, from digital tools to eco-friendly equipment.
- **Teamwork:** Work with others across departments to make sustainability part of everyday NHS life.
- **Environmental Awareness:** Understand how climate change affects health, and how your role can help protect people and the planet.

Speak to your Careers Advisor – from Science and Geography to D&T and IT – no matter what subjects you enjoy, there's a green NHS career that could be right for you.

How you can get Involved Now

Work Experience



- **What it is:** A short placement in an NHS department where you can observe, learn, and get a feel for different roles.
- **Why it matters:** You'll see how sustainability is part of everyday NHS work – from digital systems to waste reduction.
- **How to get started:** Visit [Work Experience | Lincolnshire Talent Academy](#) to express your interest in a placement.

Volunteering

- **What it is:** Giving your time to support NHS services, patients, or community health projects.
- **Why it matters:** Volunteers help reduce pressure on services and often support eco-friendly initiatives like gardening, recycling, or digital support.
- **How to get started:** Look for NHS volunteering opportunities through your local hospital, GP practice, or community health service.

Resources and Next Steps

Whether you're curious about apprenticeships, work experience, or university routes, there are plenty of resources to help you take the next step.

Useful Websites

- **Lincolnshire Talent Academy | Health Care Recruitment & Skills**: Explore careers, work experience and apprenticeships in Lincolnshire.
- **Health Careers – Guide for Students**: Explore NHS roles, get tips on applications, and find out how to gain experience.
- **Step into the NHS**: Discover over 350 NHS careers, watch real-life stories, and access resources for KS3 and KS4 students.
- **NHS Jobs – Student Opportunities**: Search for apprenticeships, work experience, and entry-level roles across the NHS.





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