

Careers in health informatics

Making exceptional
service the standard



Contents

A career in the NHS	3
A career in health informatics	4
Introducing NHS Informatics Merseyside	5
Which role is right for you?	6
Real life stories	8
Next steps and progressing your career	11



A career in the NHS

The NHS was launched in 1948. It was born out of a long-held ideal that good healthcare should be available to all, regardless of wealth – one of the NHS's core principles.

With the exception of some charges, such as prescriptions, optical services and dental services, the NHS in England remains free at the point of use for all UK residents. This currently stands at more than 64.6 million people in the UK and 54.3 million people in England alone.

You might be surprised to learn that within the NHS there are over 350 different careers.

Some roles provide direct contact with patients, while others are part of a vast support network, working together to support the delivery of healthcare and the prevention of ill health.

Some jobs are in hospitals, others are based in the community and increasingly, health and care services are integrated or co-ordinated in order to provide a seamless service for people with a range of needs.

Whatever your academic background, you can find a role that's right for you.

FACT: The NHS is the UK's largest employer, employing roughly 1.5 million people, and remains the fifth largest employer in the world.



A career in health informatics

All members of the healthcare team, including healthcare professionals, managers and administrators, rely on fast, accurate information to deliver the best care they can. Using IT creatively to achieve this means health informatics is one of the bedrocks of health.

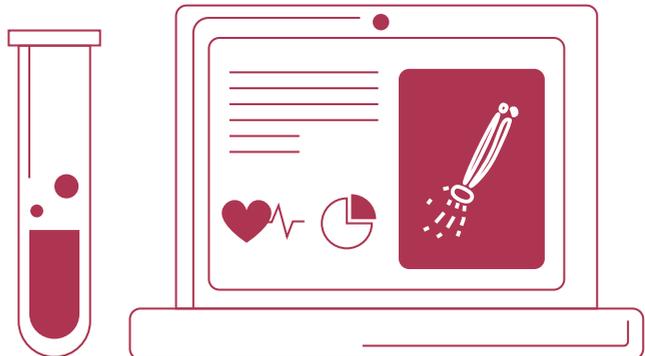
Health informatics is the intelligent use of information and technology to provide better care.

If you love working with information technology, are good at analysing data or enjoy exploring new innovations, a career in health informatics could be right for you.

Every day in the health sector, information has to be collected, managed, used and shared. Good patient care depends on this fast and accurate flow of information.

As such, health informatics has become one of the fastest growing areas in the NHS, forming a vital part of the wider healthcare team by providing the information management and technology expertise needed that others rely on to perform their roles.

Whether the job is to provide technical support or to deliver a cutting-edge IT project, health informatics staff are responsible for the non-stop cycle of information.



Introducing NHS Informatics Merseyside

NHS Informatics Merseyside is an established NHS healthcare technology organisation based in Merseyside, North West England.

Founded in 2006, Informatics Merseyside employs more than 200 informatics staff who work with health care professionals to ensure they have access to timely and accurate information to make informed decisions about care delivery.

Across Informatics Merseyside, health informatics staff perform a wide range of roles. They support clinicians in finding new ways of delivering vital services, such as

laboratory test results, x-rays and drug dispensing, while also making these processes faster and more fool-proof. They develop systems to free up clinicians from routine paperwork, allowing them to spend more time treating patients. They also run the systems that allow staff to communicate with each other and provide training on the latest technological developments. In fact, there is very little happening in health today that does not involve informatics.

For further information about Informatics Merseyside, please visit: www.imerseyside.nhs.uk

Information about specific roles within health informatics can be found overleaf. Alternatively, please visit the Health Careers website: www.healthcareers.nhs.uk

“I’m lucky enough to be part of a forward thinking, dynamic organisation of people, who are contributing to positive change in the way patient care is delivered through the innovative use of technology.”

Kristen Watson-Mattocks, Communications Manager (undergraduate placement student), NHS Informatics Merseyside



Which role is right for you?

There are a large number of roles within health informatics. Some roles require high levels of technical expertise, while others require creative flair or the ability to help and support others by communicating information effectively. Read more about some of the roles within health informatics below. Further information can be found on the Health Careers website: www.healthcareers.nhs.uk

Service desk

The service desk acts as the primary contact point for all IT services and enquiries. The role of a service desk engineer includes logging requests for support and resolving IT issues, providing technical advice and guidance, and escalating calls and assigning requests.

Desktop support

IT support requests which cannot be resolved immediately by the service desk are referred to desktop support. Typical requests may include the setting up of PCs and other equipment, and installing software.

Technical support

Technical support maintain the IT infrastructure which is the platform on which all IT systems and applications, digital technologies, user devices and printers are centrally connected and maintained. Technical support manage the day-to-day maintenance of servers and work proactively to identify, as early as possible, any likely technical problems which may arise.

Project and programme management

Health informatics projects aim to deliver robust and accessible systems that support the delivery of patient care. The project and programme managers implement these projects from start to successful completion, ensuring that projects produce the required deliverables within the quality, time and cost constraints.

IT security

IT security ensures the correct level of protection is in place to safeguard the integrity and availability of information systems and business data. The role involves undertaking security reviews and assessments, developing policies and processes to support the NHS Information Governance Toolkit and the provision of advice and support surrounding all aspects of cyber and IT security management.

System support

The further development of business and clinical applications is a common and important part of the system life-cycle, which is usually undertaken to introduce additional functionality. System support staff provide advice on the options available, providing specialist support from initial planning through to the implementation and on-going management of a system. System support also has a Registration Authority (RA) function that deals with system access controls through the provision and management of Smartcards.

Web and SharePoint development

Websites provide an important mechanism for communicating important news and information relating to health and care services. Developers design, build, test and support the on-going development and functionality of websites, intranets and web-based team collaboration tools, such as SharePoint.

IT training

Technology offers significant benefits to health and health care. Health professionals need to be trained to use technology for these benefits to be realised. IT trainers help improve computer literacy and train IT users in the latest systems, applications and software.

Voice and data

The voice and data service enables devices, applications, systems and people to communicate, connect and interact with each other across multiple locations. A fibre-based network underpins the digital infrastructure, allowing data, voice and information to flow seamlessly and securely across systems and devices. Technicians manage this network infrastructure and the maintenance of the associated cabling. They also provide support for a wide variety of telecommunications products including IP telephony and messaging, mobile telephony, secure data network connectivity and corporate Wi-Fi.

System integration

System integration is becoming an increasingly important and growing area of health informatics and involves enabling systems to communicate with each other and share information. Integration roles involve working with healthcare professionals to develop system integration interfaces for core business and clinical systems using integration engines. This work involves analysing and scoping integration requirements, designing interface processes to improve information flows between systems, the development of interfaces and the on-going support and maintenance.

Real life story #1

Ryan Lomax

Account Manager
NHS Informatics Merseyside

Entry route

Health Informatics Apprenticeship

How I got into the role

I was previously working in a bank and decided that I wanted a change of career path. I had previously completed an A-level qualification in IT and thought that this would be a good route to follow. I saw an advert for the apprenticeship in a local paper and thought it was something different and a good opportunity to learn and obtain practical experience in the workplace. At the time, I didn't know what the word 'informatics' actually meant so I did a little bit of research and found that it involved a mix of different IT skills which obviously would provide me with opportunities for learning across a number of different roles. As part of my apprenticeship, I completed a placement with a Merseyside healthcare team supporting the roll out of Choose and Book - a service that lets you choose your hospital or clinic and book your first appointment. I then completed a further placement in a GP practice supporting them with their data quality reviews. As a result of this experience, I was successful in securing my first NHS job as an Information Facilitator and worked across a number of different practices providing data quality and IT support.

What I do

I have now performed a number of different health informatics roles – starting off in data quality, IT training and then moved into project management. Today, I am working as an Account Manager for Informatics Merseyside working with six different NHS partner organisations managing our IT provision to them – ensuring they are receiving the services agreed as well as acting as an escalation point for any problems they may have.



The best bits

The best thing about working in the NHS has definitely been the variety of job roles and opportunities available to learn and develop. It's also been great being able to meet and work with so many wonderful people along the way and crazy to think that when I started out all those years ago I was just a young apprentice with no idea of what I wanted to do!

Real life story #2

Lucy Gormally

Integration Coordinator
NHS Informatics Merseyside

Entry route

Health Informatics Apprenticeship

How I got into the role

IT had always been something that interested me and I had completed qualifications in the subject at GCSE and A-level. When I finished college I didn't really want to go to University, as I didn't think it was right for me, so I chose to do an apprenticeship instead. I completed a one-year course, which involved a mixture of classroom learning in college and a work placement that helped develop my practical experience. My placement was with NHS Informatics Merseyside. I remember being very anxious as it was my first proper job and I didn't really know what to expect. To my relief, everyone was very welcoming which helped me to settle in. I was given a mentor on my first day, who was really supportive, helping me with any questions that I had. I first worked within IT training, booking people onto training sessions. I then worked in system support, working on various clinical systems and fixing day-to-day problems.

What I do

On completing my apprenticeship, I returned to Informatics Merseyside working as a System Support Assistant. I have recently changed jobs and I am now working as an Integration Coordinator. This role involves supporting a range of clinical and non-clinical interfaces. During my time in the NHS, I feel I have learnt a great deal and progressed both personally and professionally. Within my job, I have been on different training courses such as HL7, ITIL and SQL, which have helped develop my skills and have also given me much more confidence within my job.



"Everyone was very welcoming and friendly which helped me settle in!"

The best bits

I really enjoy my job and look forward to learning new things and I like working for the NHS because even though I'm not front line staff I know that my work is contributing to the health and wellbeing of thousands of people every day. I enjoy working with my colleagues – people within Informatics Merseyside are very friendly and are always helping each other to succeed. I've even had a go at event management - helping manage delegate bookings for our annual iLINKS showcase event!

Real life story #3

Ryan Davies

SharePoint Administrator
NHS Informatics Merseyside

Entry route

Health Informatics Apprenticeship

How I got into the role

Whilst in school I always enjoyed IT lessons, it was always a lesson I looked forward to. When I was asked about going to University, I didn't really know what degree I wanted to do, so decided instead to look at some apprenticeships in the subject I enjoyed most, which was IT. I applied for my apprenticeship online; searching IT Apprenticeships took me to the .GOV apprenticeship site where there was plenty of IT courses available. I applied for about 3-4 before getting an interview for the NHS apprenticeship I went on to do. In college, I was taught basic IT skills, as well as the skills I would need to enter the workplace. My emotions when starting my work placement with NHS Informatics Merseyside included a mix of nerves, excitement and trepidation as to what to expect but I was soon reassured as everyone was so friendly and supportive. The first role I worked in was within system support where I provided advice and guidance, resolving any day-to-day issues being experienced with the systems supported. I then worked within web development before working specifically on SharePoint, a web-based, collaborative platform that integrates with Microsoft Office.

What I do

On completing my apprenticeship, I returned to Informatics Merseyside working as a SharePoint Administrator. I have completed courses in HTML and CSS and I am currently learning jQuery and Java. As well as providing administrative SharePoint site support, I am now starting to develop sites within SharePoint and have recently supported a large migration project to move all existing SharePoint sites to a new web server. This experience has been a great leap forward for me in terms of my skills and confidence.



"The experience has really boosted my confidence!"

The best bits

I actually really enjoy what I do which is so important - I chose a subject that I enjoyed and I am now pursuing a career in it, learning and developing every day! When I started, I was a relatively shy and quiet individual, and I am amazed at how far I have come in such a short space of time.

Next steps and progressing your career

Anyone can enjoy a career in health informatics, no matter what qualifications or previous work experience you have.

Health informatics staff work in every area of healthcare, across a large variety of roles. This means that the scope for people with different interests, skills and qualifications is enormous.

The entry requirements will vary depending on the job you are interested in. It is possible to enter some roles with no formal qualifications, while others will require very specific professional qualifications, relevant experience and a commitment to professional registration.

You can take up a career in health informatics straight from school, college or university, or from a previous unrelated career, entering at the appropriate level and choosing whether to remain at that level or progress after further study and experience.

Work placements and volunteering

Doing volunteer work or arranging a work placement is the best way to find out if a role 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.

You can find more information on gaining experience at: www.healthcareers.nhs.uk

Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships in health informatics combine on-the-job training and work experience while in paid employment, with formal off-the-job training. Apprenticeship vacancies in health can be found on the NHS Jobs website: www.jobs.nhs.uk and the Government Apprenticeships website: www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship

Graduate opportunities

The NHS Graduate Management Training Scheme has an option to specialise in informatics management. A strong academic background and sound management experience in health opens up opportunities in senior management positions in health informatics. For information visit: www.nhsgraduates.co.uk



Informatics Merseyside

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If you are interested in a career in health informatics, contact the Health Careers service on tel: 0345 60 60 655, e-mail: advice@healthcareers.nhs.uk or visit: www.healthcareers.nhs.uk

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