

Activity 2 Diversity of the profession

Activity sheet

Below are five short job descriptions for different nursing roles and five nurse profiles. Using the information in the job descriptions, can you identify the correct job title of the five nurse profiles?

Job descriptions

1. Mental health nurse

Mental health nurses provide support to people living with various mental health conditions, such as anxiety and depression, personality and eating disorders, and addiction to drugs or alcohol, in order to help them lead a positive life.

As a mental health nurse, you could work in the community, helping patients at GP surgeries, residential centres, in prisons or in their own home. Or you could work in a hospital, or on a ward or in a specialist unit.

You'll work as part of a team with psychiatrists, psychologists, occupational therapists, GPs, social workers and other health professionals.

It's definitely not a desk job. You'll be talking to people, assessing and planning their nursing care requirements, and building trusting relationships so that you can help them. You'll organise therapy sessions, helping patients take part in therapeutic activities such as art, drama and sport. You'll help them take their medication, keep records and monitor the results of their treatment. And you'll give advice and support to patients' families too.

Mental health is one of the most challenging areas of healthcare you can work in. But it's a vital part of the NHS and through your work, you can positively affect people's lives.

2. Learning disability nurse

Learning disability nurses provide specialist healthcare and support to people with a learning disability, as well as their families and staff teams, to help them live a fulfilling life.

As a learning disability nurse you'll work with people of all ages, in their homes, in schools and workplaces, in residential centres, hospitals and even prisons. You'll work as part of a team with GPs, psychologists, social workers, teachers, occupational therapists, speech and language therapists and healthcare assistants.

Learning disability nurses help people with learning disabilities to live as independently as possible. They assess and plan care requirements and help patients with practical things such as getting dressed, preparing food and using public transport. They make sure people in their care have access to the right health services, treatment or therapy. They also help those living with learning disabilities to take part in activities and groups, so they can get the most out of life, and may help to teach them the skills to get a job.

Learning disability nursing is quite different to other fields of nursing. It's about working with each patient to develop an individual care plan that will enable them to reach their full potential.

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3. Research nurse

Research nurses are at the forefront of new healthcare discoveries. They work on clinical research, helping to develop new treatments and types of care. They play a vital role in ensuring the studies run smoothly and that participants are safe and fully informed.

Most research nurses work within hospitals, but some may work on trials for care provided in the community, involving visiting GP surgeries, community clinics or even patients' homes. They work as part of multidisciplinary teams.

Research nurses help identify patients suitable to take part in clinical trials, and then work with each patient's doctor to provide information and help them decide if they want to take part. Once a patient is enrolled into the study, the research nurse ensures that the trial is carried out correctly and arranges the patient's assessments, including treatment, x-rays, scans and blood samples.

A big area of research is the treatment of different types of cancer, known as oncology. As an oncology research nurse you may work on local, national or even international trials. Clinical trials in oncology support investigate various ways to provide treatment such as chemotherapy, radiotherapy or hormone therapy.

Research nurses in other areas of medicine may work on many different diseases. You might have to work fast to help a patient decide whether to take part in a trial. For example, a new stroke treatment may need patients who suffered their stroke only a few hours ago. But you must still take the time to give patients and their families all the information they need to make a decision.

The field of medical research can be very rewarding and fulfilling, contributing to the development of treatments with the potential to make patients' lives and health better.

4. General practice nurse

Practice nurses work in GP surgeries where they are an important part of delivering care to people of all ages. They work with people to make a decision about their health and then implement treatment and care plans using a wide range of specialist skills, such as calling for investigations to be done.

As a general practice nurse, your typical responsibilities will include carrying out physical examinations and tests, such as cervical screenings, pregnancy tests, blood pressure and patient samples, swabs and specimens. You'll diagnose and treat illnesses and wounds, and give immunisations. You may run clinics for specific ailments like asthma and diabetes, and you'll give advice to patients on staying healthy, losing weight and stopping smoking.

General practice nurses work in the heart of the community, with people at all stages of life. They help to ensure that conditions and ailments are treated successfully, and support patients in making healthier life choices.

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5. Charge nurse

Charge nurses are experienced registered nurses who have managerial duties and responsibilities. They are responsible for managing, supervising and assisting the nursing staff, as well as providing administrative support and patient care.

A charge nurse most often works in a hospital or a similar healthcare environment such as nursing homes and other long-term care facilities. Typical co-workers include nurses, associate nurses, care support workers, therapists, nutritional experts and doctors.

As a charge nurse, you are effectively the manager of your department or hospital unit. Your duties will include managing all aspects of nursing responsibilities during each shift, monitoring patients coming in and out of hospital, and directing and overseeing the nurses and support staff. You'll probably be expected to plan and maintain staff schedules, work on the unit's budget and monitor supplies and medicines.

To make it to the position of charge nurse, you'll need to have first qualified as a registered nurse. But then you'll also need to have displayed leadership, management and communication skills while you built up experience.

This is a highly responsible role. For the right person, it offers the chance to use your knowledge and experience to improve the service for both patients and staff.

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Nurse profiles

Joanne

My name's Joanne and I've been working as a _____ for 3 years. I chose this career because I knew I wanted to help people and I didn't want to be stuck behind a desk!

To be good at this job, you've got to be a really good listener – even when a patient is distressed, you've got to stay calm and try to work out what's upsetting them.

My favourite part of my job is running the football sessions with patients. You see them develop and grow, get fit, join in with others. It's a great way to get patients to trust each other and me – it's basically 90 minutes of therapy, in the fresh air!

Arjun

I'm Arjun and I've been qualified as a _____ for 6 months now. I'm really enjoying it – I wanted to work in the community. I get to take patients out and do activities with them – no two days are the same.

One of my patients loves going to the local farm park and the staff there know him and give him achievable jobs to do – it's really good for helping him build skills. I never expected my job would include feeding lambs when I started my degree!

The best thing about my job is spending plenty of time with each patient, really getting to know them and working to help them get the most out of life.

Aaliyah

I'm Aaliyah, I'm a _____ and I've been doing it for 6 years. I'm hospital based, so I work closely with the rest of the team around each patient, helping to assess suitability and keep the patient informed.

I'd say the most important skill in my job is good communication skills. It's often a stressful time for the patient and their loved ones, and you need to make sure they understand the options and can make an informed decision.

Many of the patients I work with are seriously ill, so it's not all happy endings. But when a treatment makes a difference, and you know you've not only helped that patient but contributed towards something that can go on to help others, there's no better reward.

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Lilly

I'm Lilly and I'm a _____. I've been a registered nurse for almost 15 years and I worked in a hospital setting for the first 10 years, but once I had my kids I wanted to work closer to home and with more regular hours. This job lets me carry on doing what I love.

I really enjoy working in the community – I close by so I know lots of the faces that come in. It's brilliant when you see a patient out and about, fully recovered and you know you were part of that. I particularly enjoy helping patients make healthy changes like quitting smoking – you get to know people, which really helps you to find the support that is right for the individual.

Matt

My name's Matt, I'm 38 and I'm a _____. I worked for a few years as a staff nurse and had a lot of experience when then this role came up. My kids were starting secondary school and I was ready for a new challenge, so it came at just the right time for me.

There's always something new in this role – in a way it's more varied than hands-on nursing although I still do some of that too. To be good at it, you need good people skills and you need to be super organised. I've had to learn to delegate and to recognise people's strengths – a department is only as strong as its staff team.

There's a lot of responsibility comes with this job – basically on a lot of things the buck stops with me.