

Choosing Occupational Health as a Career | May 2026

Occupational health (OH) is a rewarding and interesting career, that allows a good work/life balance. Whatever your background or interest, there is a career perfect for you. The OH world is friendly, with more people than you think willing to help and support you. Take a look at this [new to OH job seeker guide](#). There is a free mentoring service [here](#) - visit the [website](#) to sign on (a short video about the service is [here](#)). SOM membership supports your career development e.g. offering placements, workplace visits, and support groups for DoCC Meds and Portfolio doctors - [join here](#) or [contact us](#). Do sign up to our [OH Nurse Connect bulletin](#) or [OH GP Connect bulletin](#) if you are a nurse or GP with an interest in OH.

SOM Careers Event 2025 - click on the links below to download the presentation slides:

- [About the National School of Occupational Health \(NSOH\)](#)
- [Careers in OH](#)
- [Heales Medical Nurse Programme](#)
- [How to get into OH and Transferable Skills](#)
- [OH Careers for Allied Health Professionals](#)
- [About the SOM](#)
- [What is Occupational Health?](#)
- [What are recruiters looking for?](#)
- [Occupational Medicine Specialist Training](#)
- [Portfolio Pathway](#)
- [OH Career via the Portfolio Pathway](#)
- [Hospital Consultant to OH Physician](#)

A full recording, for doctors is [here](#), and nurses [here](#); Take a look at these two free Webinars: [Careers in OH](#) and [Support for OH Nursing Students](#).

Introduction to Occupational Health, July 2025. SOM held a session for clinicians and students interested in understanding more about what OH is and the different specialisms, recording [here](#). Click on the links below to download the presentation slides:

- [The fascinating world of Occupational Medicine – Dr Richard Peters](#)
- [Intro to OH – Dr Lara Shemtob](#)
- [My Career in OH – Dr Lucy Wright](#)
- [Case Study - Career path – Chris Rhodes](#)
- [OH Physiotherapists and OH Therapists – Jo Vallom-Smith](#)
- [Common OH Issues / OH Strategies and Interventions – Dr Jacqueline Thompson](#)
- [Getting into OH – Chris Rhodes](#)

Funding - NHS employers may be able to offer funding and some OH providers pay for training. Do look at www.gov.uk/apply-for-student-finance, to apply for student financial support. There are also scholarships available from the SOM at <https://www.som.org.uk/som-occupational-health-and-medicine-scholarships> and the Florence Nightingale Scholarship <https://florence-nightingale-foundation.org.uk/scholarships/>.

There are jobs advertised at <https://www.som.org.uk/current-vacancies>.

1 List of Courses – check courses for more detail

Also see <https://eastmidlandsdeanery.nhs.uk/occupational-health/careers-occupational-health>

Course	Duration	Qualification
Multidisciplinary		
Middlesex University Occupational Health and Safety https://tinyurl.com/y8833ecj - Accredited by the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health, which means you can become a graduate member of the institution when you complete the course and can then gain chartered membership after two years' professional development.	1 year FT or 2 years PT	MSc
University of Nottingham, Workplace Health and Wellbeing (online)	PG Dip 2 years part time	PG Cert/ PG Dip / MSc/

<p>https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/pgstudy/course/taught/workplace-health-and-wellbeing-msc</p> <p>Entry Requirements: An undergraduate degree in any subject at 2:2 or higher (or equivalent). This Level 7 online part-time course helps you develop a theory- and evidence-based approach to the creation of healthy workplaces that foster wellbeing and organisational effectiveness. To hear from graduates about how the course has influenced their career see: https://echo360.org.uk/public/media/d6330610-92cd-4342-87bb-20ee492d9cbb</p>	<p>MSc 3 years part time</p>	<p>DocWHW</p>
<p>Health Partners Academy: Remote Case Manager Training Academy - designed specifically for nurses, occupational therapists and physiotherapists looking to advance their career into occupational health and work at Health Partners. Previous working experience in occupational health is not required for appointment. Eligibility criteria for the role is available via the website. <u>Remote Case Manager Academy Course Health Partners Group</u></p>	<p>8 weeks full time attendance</p>	<p>Paid employment contract initially as an 8-week Trainee remote case manager, then as a fully competent Remote Case Manager upon completion of the programme</p>
<p>University of Manchester Occupational Health https://www.manchester.ac.uk/study/masters/courses/list/18226/mph-occupational-health/</p>	<p>Distance learning - 1 yr FT, 2 yr PT, 3-5 yr PT</p>	<p>MPH</p>
<p>Doctors</p>		
<p>Training – http://www.fom.ac.uk/education/speciality-training/prospective-trainees</p> <p>Portfolio – see http://www.fom.ac.uk/education/cesr</p>		
<p>Manchester University https://tinyurl.com/yaqyqt9u</p>	<p>Online, blended learning MSc Occupational Medicine - 1 year full-time, 2 or 3 years part-time (September start date) CPD Occupational Medicine - ~6 months part time (September and March start dates) - option to transfer credits and continue to postgraduate courses for a postgraduate certificate (PGCert), Postgraduate Diploma</p>	<p>MSc, (PGDip, PGCert exit awards) and CPD</p>

	(PGDip), or Master of Science (MSc) award in Occupational Medicine	
Diploma in Occupational Medicine http://www.fom.ac.uk/education/examinations/diplomas/doccmcd	2 weeks	FOM DOccMed
<u>Health Partners Academy: Occupational Physician - Career Entry – Doctors in Development Programme</u> The Occupational Physician - Career Entry – Doctors in Development Programme supports the transition of medical doctors into occupational health practice, providing a pathway for you to work at Health Partners Group and become part of our team of Occupational Health Physicians on successful completion of the course. We know that moving away from mainstream clinical work can feel like a big step, which is why this programme is designed to provide the support and structure you need to confidently excel within the occupational health industry. Link: <u>Occupational Physician - Career Entry – Doctors in Development Programme Health Partners Group</u>	6 months	Paid clinical development opportunity full or part-time (minimum 3 days/week)
Nurses		
Diploma in Occupational Health Practice at https://www.fom.ac.uk/education/examinations/diplomas/dipohprac	2 weeks	FOM DOHPrac
University of Chester <u>Specialist Community Public Health Nursing (SCPHN) University of Chester</u> Post Graduate Diploma is delivered live online (Distance Learning), providing practical support to qualified nurses to deliver advanced practice in a community setting, and undertaking quality improvement or service evaluations. On completion of this course, you will have met the NMC requirements of a SCPHN Occupational Health Nurse	2 years	BSc Hons/ MSc / (SCPHN)
University of Derby <u>Specialist Community Public Health Nurse – Occupational Health</u> On completion of this course, you will have met the NMC requirements of a SCPHN Occupational Health Nurse and will be on Part 3 of the NMC Register. <u>PG Dip in Occupational Health Practice</u> - A Specialist Qualification for Workplace Health	1 year FT or 2 years PT	PG Diploma – Full Masters possible with 1 additional year

<p>designed for <u>Registered Nurses and Midwives, Allied Health Professionals (AHPs), Doctors, and other suitably qualified practitioners</u> who are considering, or are in the early stages of, a career in Occupational Health and wellbeing. (OH Techs with a degree may be considered.)</p> <p>BSc (Hons) Occupational Health Nursing (Top-up)- a flexible online degree designed for registered nurses working in Occupational Health (OH) who want to enhance their knowledge, gain a full honours degree and progress their career. Depending on your previous qualification (Diploma or Advanced Diploma), you will complete either 60 or 120 credits to achieve your BSc (Hons) degree while continuing to work in your professional role. Delivered entirely at academic level 6</p>	<p>2 years PT</p> <p>1- or 2-years dependent upon level of previous studies</p>	<p>PG Diploma</p> <p>BSc (Hons)</p>
<p>Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen – multidisciplinary course</p> <p>https://www.rgu.ac.uk/study/courses/bsc-occupational-health as of Sept 2026 (Validation is on 14th May) offering a MSc/ PG Dip Advanced Occupational Health Practice - open the multidisciplinary workforce.</p>	<p>2 years PT Distance learning</p>	<p>BSc Non NMC</p>
<p>Brunel University, London</p> <p>https://www.brunel.ac.uk/study/courses/specialist-community-public-health-nursing-pgdip-and-msc</p>	<p>1 year FT or 2 years PT</p>	<p>BSc (SCPHN)/ PgDip / MSc</p>
<p>University of Cumbria- multidisciplinary courses</p> <p><u>Graduate Diploma Occupational Health: Practice Development - University of Cumbria</u></p> <p><u>BSc (Hons) Occupational Health: Practice Development (Top-up) - University of Cumbria</u></p> <p><u>University Advanced Diploma Occupational Health: Practice Development - University of Cumbria</u></p>	<p>GDOH:PD FT 1-4 years. PT 2-4 years.</p> <p>OH:PD (top -up) 2 years PT</p> <p>Online PT: 2 years.</p>	<p>Graduate Diploma</p> <p>BSc Hons</p> <p>University Advanced Diploma</p>
<p>University of Chester – SCPHN - OH</p> <p>https://www.chester.ac.uk/study/course-search/specialist-community-public-health-nursing-</p>	<p>2 years.</p>	<p>BSc or Graduate Diploma</p>

--occupational-health-nursing-pgdip/		
University of West of England SCPHN – OH https://courses.uwe.ac.uk/B71L12/specialist-community-public-health-nursing	2 years FT or 3 years PT	MSc (SCPHN)
Occupational Therapists		
See Events RCOT , and for more specialist FCE training, Work Health Academy , and Functional Capacity Evaluation certification course – Form Health Whilst "on-the-job" training and awareness of OH ethics and relevant legislation is essential, no formal additional qualifications are required, as the pre-reg training is sufficient to undertake vocational assessments as soon as qualified. OTs often choose to undertake specialist training; however none are prerequisites.	Varied	
OH Physiotherapists		
All physiotherapists working in the UK must be registered with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC). In order to gain registration, applicants need to have a physiotherapy qualification from an HCPC approved programme: https://www.hcpc-uk.org/education/approved-programmes/ . For those who have qualified as a physiotherapist outside of the UK and want to practice in the UK, they must complete an International Application to the HCPC to gain registration https://www.hcpc-uk.org/registration/getting-on-the-register/international-applications/ . Physiotherapists can gain post-graduate training in Occupational Health through a number of different routes. The primary route is to complete ACPOHE's Occupational Health Essentials Course and then progress to Technical and Registered Membership through with further courses: www.acpohe.org.uk/courses . Other options are courses or qualifications in Ergonomics, Human Factors, Manual Handling, Occupational Health, Vocational Rehabilitation or a gaining a NEBOSH Certificate.	Typically 3 years FT or 2 years FT for an MSc if a related undergraduate degree is already held. Some universities offer PT learning over 4-6 years. Typically short courses. Postgraduate MSc or PGDip typically 1 year FT	BSc (Hons) or MSc in Physiotherapy Technical or Registered ACPOHE Member. Postgraduate MSc or PGDip.
OH Psychologists		

<p>Find an accredited course at https://tinyurl.com/ycnm5tnh. Examples of courses include Kings College London https://www.kcl.ac.uk/study/postgraduate-taught/courses/organisational-psychiatry-and-psychology-msc University of Nottingham at https://tinyurl.com/y8xynexl; Occupational Psychology MSc Postgraduate taught; Professional Course Nottingham Trent University</p> <p>Birkbeck University - Professional Practice in Occupational Psychology</p> <p>University of East London Occupational and Organisational Psychology MSc</p> <p>University of Roehampton - Occupational and Business Psychology MSc</p>		MSc
OH Technicians		
<p>The Open Awards Level 3 Certificate for Occupational Health Technicians developed by SOM/partners is delivered by https://compass-ms.co.uk/l3-oh-t-certificate/ and EOPH (tbc) https://eoph.co.uk/</p> <p>Health Screen Level 3 Occupational Health Technician Training short course</p>		

2 Qualifications needed to become an OH professional

Doctors – might wish to complete a Diploma in Occupational Medicine, designed for those who are working part-time in, or have an interest in, occupational medicine. To qualify as a specialist in occupational medicine, doctors need to register with the Faculty of Occupational Medicine (FOM) and undertake a speciality training programme approved by the General Medical Council (GMC). Once successfully completed, this makes doctors eligible both for Membership in the Faculty (MFOM) and for entry to the GMC Specialist Register. An alternative route to becoming a specialist is through a Portfolio application to the GMC Specialist Register. SOM has a support group for these candidates. The mean average salary for OH doctors is over £120,000.

OH Nurses. Progression is more likely with a qualification, and it is possible to undertake training whilst employed. There is a foundation course available through the FOM Diploma in Occupational Health practice. More formal qualifications with a greater possibility of progression are through the NMC Specialist Community Public Health Nursing (SCPHN) route or through alternate, non-NMC OH degrees such as a BSc, PGDip, or MSc. These courses may take 1 year full-time, or 2 years part-time. The SCPHN qualification requires a practice placement. Some OH employers provide “on-the-job” training and foundation courses. Educational requirements and the OH nurse career paths are currently under review by the National School of OH and the Faculty of OH Nursing. Average salaries for OH nurses are in the region of £38,000 with managerial roles earning on average £48,000.

Occupational Health Physiotherapists keep people healthy, safe and able to work by combining clinical musculoskeletal expertise with specialist knowledge of job demands ergonomics and human movement. They assess and treat all musculoskeletal conditions, provide functional assessments and rehabilitation, identify barriers to work, and make effective work recommendations and advice. As proactive workplace health specialists, they also deliver ergonomics advice, manual handling training and injury-prevention programmes. Their practice is holistic, grounded in the bio-psycho-social model, ensuring that physical, psychological and social factors are all addressed. To practise in the UK, they must be HCPC-registered physiotherapists with a recognised physiotherapy degree, supported by postgraduate occupational health training such as ACPOHE’s Occupational Health Essentials and progression to Technical or Registered Membership, which demonstrates advanced work-focused competence. Salary varies by role and experience, but the average is estimated at £42,000 per year.

Occupational Therapists –Occupational Therapists (OTs) in work settings support people to stay in or return to work after injury, illness, or long-term conditions. They assess job tasks and work environments, contribute to rehabilitation programmes, and recommend adjustments such as job redesign or ergonomic changes. Using a holistic biopsychosocial approach, and as professionals dual-trained in physical and mental health, they are well placed to address the complex demands of modern work. Ts must be HCPC registered. To become an OT, you complete a degree or degree apprenticeship in occupational therapy, or a postgraduate programme if you already hold a degree in another subject. Further information: [Health and work | RCOT](#); [VRA – Resources - Vocational Rehabilitation Association UK](#); <https://www.otforoh.com/are-you-an-ot> and <https://www.otforoh.com/are-you-an-ot>. Average salaries are around £40,000

Occupational Health Psychologist. Occupational Therapists in work settings support employees to remain in or return to work following injury, illness, or long-term health conditions by focusing on the interaction between the individual, their job tasks, and the working environment. They carry out functional and job task assessments, contribute to return-to-work and vocational rehabilitation programmes, and advise on reasonable adjustments, job redesign, and workplace or ergonomic modifications. Occupational Therapists take a holistic biopsychosocial approach, considering physical, cognitive, and psychosocial demands of work, and often contribute to health promotion, injury prevention, and workplace wellbeing initiatives. To work in occupational health they must be HCPC-registered, often with additional experience or training in vocational rehabilitation or work rehabilitation. Average UK salaries are typically around £40,000–£45,000, depending on experience and sector.

OH Technicians work as part of a team. They undertake health surveillance clinics including spirometry, audiology and vision screening supervised by an OH nurse or Physician, who remains accountable for interpreting these results and determining fitness to work. The role may expand to involve blood pressure monitoring, phlebotomy, cholesterol, and urine testing. This role involves working on their own initiative and may include site visits. The technician must provide accurate written, electronic, and verbal reports always observing confidentiality. See self-assessment against competencies and escalation criteria for OH technicians at [OH Technician Skills Self-Assessment | The Society of Occupational Medicine \(som.org.uk\)](#) Average salaries for OH technicians are around £25,000.

3 Some initial advice...

“Get as much practical experience as possible and find a good mentor. Also, be prepared to do lots of research and reading!” Suzanne Douglas - Senior Staff Health Advisor (Oxfam)

“Read around the speciality first, get a good contemporary OH book and join relevant groups/forums. If possible, shadow another OH practitioner and read the RCN OH nurses’ competencies for reference”. Jane Williams - Occupational Health Advisor (NHS)

“Be open-minded and to let opportunities develop your interests” Dr Paul Davies - Occupational Health Physician

“Understand the dynamics of the organisation they are working for, as well as the conflicting pressures and demands on the staff. This helps maintain a balanced perspective.” Martin Jelfs - OH Psychotherapist (Independent)

4 What OH professionals do

- Advise on the effects of work on health and health on work
- Support management of long-term sickness absence, frequent short term sickness absence, performance concerns and workplace accidents
- Contribute to workplace policy development
- Visit workplaces to advise on health
- Assess the fitness of employees to undertake specific tasks and recommend relevant adjustments that may be required in the workplace to support people with disabilities to undertake their job role
- Monitor the health of employees by undertaking ongoing health surveillance and health monitoring, particularly for employees who work with certain chemicals, and materials and could be exposed to noise or vibration because of work processes
- Assess individual cases of injuries and illnesses and develop return-to-work strategies
- Provide training to organisations and their managers on how to make the best of OH Services
- Engage with organisations to assess the effectiveness of delivery of OH Services and look for ways to bridge gaps between business needs and OH provision
- Collaborate with managers and human resource personnel to help to keep people well at work – physically and mentally. If there are problems, either with the workplace or with an employee’s fitness, the OH professional’s role is to advise on adjustments to the workplace, and/or to give appropriate advice and support to the employee. OH professionals assess employees who are injured or become ill at work by:
 - Providing advice on health education, health and safety and sickness absence
 - Conducting risk assessments in conjunction with the health and safety team
 - Managing employee health records and statistics.

They may work alone or as part of a team of health experts including Occupational Hygienists, Wellbeing Specialists, Musculoskeletal and Mental Health professionals. They may work in a large organisation (like a hospital, local authority, or the military), or for a private OH firm used by smaller employers. They may also set up their own OH business or become self-employed. With experience, there are opportunities to progress to a management position, leading a team of OH staff, running an OH Centre or sitting on a board advising on the integration of employee wellbeing into the overall business strategy.

5 Career Vignettes

Clare Haddow – Occupational Health Advisor - Having newly qualified as a nurse I worked as a school nurse at Dulwich College, it was the first time I thought about people at work and their jobs. This was the catalyst for me to decide to study for my Occupational Health Nursing Certificate at Manchester Polytechnic. My husband decided to do an MBA at the London Business School, so adapted my OH skills to work as a housemistress for a Kent Boarding school while giving us a roof over our heads, as my husband studied. The Headmaster recognised my OH qualifications and paid for me to study at Christchurch in Canterbury and I completed a Certificate in Health Education, so I could develop their Personal and Social Education program for 11-18-year-old girls. I continued working in OH setting up a new OH service for BBC North. My husband's job moved us from Ilkley to Bristol, and I worked for Wincanton Distribution (part-time) covering the southwest. I then worked part-time for BUPA Hospital in Bristol developing their OH service. I now work full-time for my own company with a great team of Associates. There are so many possibilities in OH and never a dull moment. OH is a profession that allows you to adapt to life's needs and develop to where you want to go within the profession.

Christine Poulter – Occupational Health Advisor - Through serendipity and due to transferable skills, I was offered a role as an OH Nurse in an NHS foundation trust. The NHS sponsored my initial training, and I consolidated my learning within the NHS. As I considered it might be difficult to gain a senior managerial role without diverse experience, I left the security of my NHS role to work in manufacturing within the private sector and higher education. I then completed further studies for an MSc in Occupational Health and Management. More recently, I am combining setting up my own practice with contract work. OH is not necessarily the easy option as viewed by many of my colleagues. Even my health professional colleagues confuse the difference between Occupational Therapy and OH; such remains the lack of awareness. No two days are ever the same. The role is most rewarding. There is no shortage of work in this growing industry.

Lorna Owens – Occupational Health Physiotherapist - I started working in the field of Occupational Health in 2017, after working in the NHS in Knowsley, Merseyside for 5 years. The varied workload and new environments I work in have provided me with some great new challenges. It has been great to adapt my skills to managing an occupational caseload, getting out into the workplace, and making my assessments and rehabilitation more functional and work focus. I have also found it beneficial to be able to link regularly with the managers at the different companies and other members of the OH team. Having this open dialogue really helps support people at work, it is a rewarding part of my role, and I see this reflected in the employee outcomes. Within a short period of time, I quickly saw the benefit of OH physiotherapy for people at work. This is effectively about preventing problems in the first place, something we all know that physios are very well placed to do.

Sally Beardsmore - Occupational Health Technician, HomeServe - I started working part-time as an administrator after studying midwifery at university. After 18 months in the role, I moved to work full-time for the Group Safety Director as a health & safety support officer. After two years in the role, I moved to work as a health trainer and offered mini 'know your numbers' health checks to all our UK staff. The role expanded and I began to offer more than just health checks as I trained with the NHS as a stop-smoking advisor. HomeServe brought occupational health in-house and I moved to work as an OH Technician. I have recently passed the audiometry and spirometry exams and will be studying for the NEBOSH later this year.

Dr Shairana Naleem MBBS, MSc Medical Education, MFOM, FHEA, FRCP – Senior Medical Director, Health Partners Group - I previously worked as a Consultant Physician in Acute Internal Medicine for 5 years at a large London NHS Trust whereas higher specialty training lead I was providing a lot of pastoral support to front-line junior doctors in development. This alongside my growing concern over a lack of support for women's health issues contributed to sparking my interest in Occupational Health and I initially completed the DOccMed in 2018; subsequently I decided to enter higher specialty training full time for 4 years in Occupational Medicine at St Thomas' with a view to transitioning specialty and gaining further expertise in this field. Becoming an Accredited Specialist in Occupational Health enabled me to gain massive insights on global health issues, strategy and laid strong foundations for me to work exclusively in the private sector for a prestigious provider overseeing large contracts as a Chief Medical Officer, also providing opportunities to undertake dedicated Occupational health research and collaborate nationally on educational initiatives. Not only has this specialty change enhanced my career professionally and opened doors for advocacy, but it has provided me with excellent work-life balance enriching my wellbeing on a personal level.