

Health Visitor

Health visitors (known in Scotland as public health nurses) are qualified nurses who promote the health of the whole community. Their work can include:



- visiting people who are elderly, disabled or suffering from long-term illnesses to advise them on issues such as healthy eating, keeping warm and exercise
- advising parents with children under five years old on areas such as hygiene, safety, feeding, sleeping, teething, immunisation and managing difficult behaviour
- advising people on problems such as post-natal depression, bereavement, serious illness, family conflict, disability, violent relationships and giving up smoking
- being alert to problems that might affect the health of clients, such as poor hygiene, damp housing or inadequate heating, and helping to solve such problems
- co-ordinating child immunisation programmes
- organising special clinics or drop-in centres
- running health promotion groups.

Health visitors work closely with others, such as GPs, district nurses, social workers, school nurses, occupational therapists and housing officials.

In Scotland, the jobs of some public health nurses extend beyond health visiting, eg they may also work in school nursing.

Health visitors usually work 37.5 hours a week, from 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday. They may need to do some evening work at clinics, drop-in centres and support groups. Flexible working hours and part-time work are often available.

Most health visitors cover the geographical area of a GP practice. They spend most of the time visiting people in their homes and running clinics and support groups in GP surgeries or medical centres and community halls. A driving licence is usually necessary.

Salaries range from around £21,630 a year for a newly-qualified health visitor, to over £50,000 a year for a health visitor consultant. Extra payment is made for overtime, shifts, being on call and working in or near London. Health visitors should:

- get on well with people of all ages and backgrounds
- be interested in health and social issues
- have excellent communication and listening skills
- work well alone and as part of a team
- have physical and mental stamina.

Health visitors work for the National Health Service (NHS) throughout the UK.

Health visitors are qualified registered nurses or midwives, with at least one year's post-registration experience. For more general information about becoming a nurse or midwife, see **Nurse** or **Midwife**.

There is no upper age limit for entry to health visiting.

Training is by studying for a degree level qualification in public health nursing (health visiting for nurses). Courses last one year full time, or two years part time.

Health visitors can be promoted to managing a team of health visitors, to health visitor consultants or to other management roles in the NHS. They can also move into nurse education or research.