CAREER CO-PILOT · HALF YEAR REPORT

NHS Non-Clinical Careers

What The First Half Of 2026 Actually Looked Like

JANUARY TO JUNE 2026

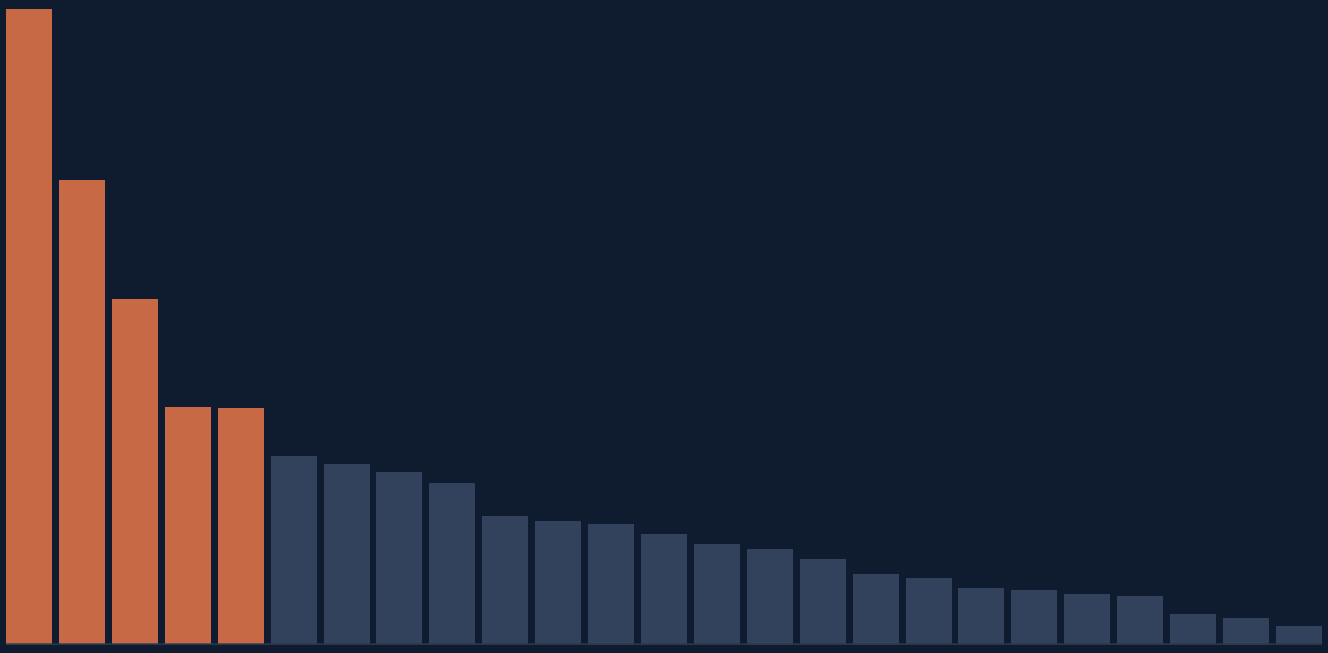
Published 31 August 2026

3,187
ROLES TRACKED
Closing Jan To Jun

25
CAREER AREAS
Every One Covered

552
EMPLOYERS
Advertised At Least Once

16
DAYS OPEN
Typical Advert Window



00

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01

THE SHORT VERSION

What The Numbers Say

Career Co-Pilot tracked **3,187 non-clinical NHS roles** closing between January and June 2026, across 25 career domains and 552 employers. Band 7 was the most common grade. The typical advert was open for 16 days.

Every figure comes from NHS job adverts Career Co-Pilot tracked and read between January and June 2026. It is not a survey and it is not every vacancy the NHS advertised. It is what we tracked, and we read the packs rather than the advert summaries.

> **The single most useful number here is 16 days.** That is how long a non-clinical NHS advert stays open, measured across 1,329 roles where the posting date was captured. It varies remarkably little by domain, from 14 to 19 days. Checking a jobs board once a week means missing roughly half of what appears.

Where The Roles Were

Five domains account for more than half of everything tracked. That concentration is itself worth knowing: a career change into NHS digital is, in volume terms, mostly a move into project delivery, analytics or research.



Clinical roles are excluded throughout. Career Co-Pilot covers the non-clinical NHS.

> **What this means for you.** If you are early in working out where to go, the top five are where the openings are, and that is a reason to look at them before a narrower area you have already decided on. If you are set on one of the smaller areas, plan for fewer roles and a longer search rather than concluding something is wrong with your application.

02

WHAT PEOPLE ACTUALLY ASK

The Question Behind Most Questions

Scout is the Career Co-Pilot assistant. It answers career questions from this same data, on the platform, on partner pages and on Telegram. Three hundred questions put to Scout between January and June were read and grouped. The distribution is not what a jobs board would predict.

> **Three per cent ask what roles are open. Forty per cent ask about skills, pay and what a role actually involves.** Those three are one question in different clothes: am I suitable, and is it worth it. Finding the vacancy is not what people are stuck on.

The eight per cent asking what else they can do with their background are the hardest to answer and the most specific. A clinical coding manager wanting into the decision-making side. A patient access coordinator facing redundancy. Somebody in aseptics asking what a pharmacy background opens up. A GP with an MBA asking which non-clinical paths fit. None of them can be answered by a list of vacancies.

What They Asked	Count	Share
What skills or qualifications do I need	**47**	**16%**
What does this band pay, and what should I aim for	**41**	**14%**
What does this role actually involve	**31**	**10%**
What is this employer or trust like	**25**	**8%**
What else can I do with my background	**23**	**8%**
What roles are open right now	**9**	**3%**
Help me with my CV or supporting statement	**9**	**3%**
Will this employer sponsor a visa	**9**	**3%**
Interview preparation	**5**	**2%**

A question can carry more than one theme. Roughly half the sample is greetings, follow-ups and questions about how Scout itself works, which are not counted here.

The Objection That Comes Next

One line recurred often enough to be worth answering here: *but these posts want NHS experience*. It is a reasonable reading of a job advert and it is mostly wrong, and the skills data later in this report is why. Across all twenty-five domains the essential criteria are dominated by communication, stakeholder management and leadership. NHS-specific knowledge appears overwhelmingly under desirable, not essential. Somebody already working in the NHS in any capacity has more of the essential list than the advert makes obvious.

03

HOW TO SEARCH

The Words These Roles Are Advertised Under

The most practical table in this report. NHS Jobs searches on title text, so knowing the exact phrases a domain advertises under is worth more than knowing the domain exists. Counts are how many times that title appeared in the period.

Career Area	Most Advertised Titles
Project & Programme Management	Project Manager (59) · Senior Project Manager (31)
Clinical Research & Trials	Clinical Research Nurse (27) · Research Nurse (25) · Research Assistant (9)
Data, Analytics & BI	Data Administrator (17) · Data Quality Administrator (15) · Data Quality Officer (10)
Business Development	Business Manager (22) · Digital Business Partner (7) · Practice Business Manager (6)
Leadership & Management	Service Manager (19) · Business Manager (11) · Business Administrator (5)
PMO & Project Support	Project Support Officer (18) · Business Support Officer (6) · Project Administrator (6)
Education & Training	HR Business Partner (18) · Digital Trainer (6) · Clinical Systems Trainer (4)
Communications & Engagement	Service and Interaction Design Lead (8) · Senior Content Designer and Technical Writer (6) · Senior Communications Officer (5)
Business Analysis	Business Analyst (12) · Senior Business Analyst (8) · Senior Digital Business Analyst (2)
Clinical Safety & Patient Safety	Clinical Safety Officer (6) · Patient Safety Manager (6) · Patient Safety Partner (4)
Change & Transformation	Transformation Programme Manager (5) · Transformation Manager (5) · Transformational (Management) Lead (4)
Clinical Systems & Applications	System Administrator (5) · Clinical Systems Manager (4) · IT - Clinical Systems Analyst (4)
Digital Transformation	Digital Clinical Lead (5) · Head of Digital Transformation (5) · Head of Digital Operations (4)
Information Governance	Information Governance and Data Specialist (Digital) (6) · Information Governance Manager (5) · Information Governance Officer (4)
Procurement & Commercial	Procurement Manager (5) · Procurement Business Officer (5) · Finance Business Partner (4)
Clinical Informatics	Pharmacy Informatics Manager (5) · Advanced Clinical Informatics Pharmacist (4) · Informatics – ICT Director (3)

Career Area	Most Advertised Titles
Product Management	Product Owner (maternity cover) (5) · Product Analyst (3) · Clinical Systems Product Specialist (2)
Applications Support	Business Systems Lead (3) · System Administrator (3) · Systems Support Specialist (3)
AI, ML & Data Science	Data Scientist (4) · Epidemiological Data Scientist (Advanced) (2) · Senior Data Scientist (2)
Clinical Governance & Compliance	Clinical Governance Manager (3) · Governance Administrator (2) · Governance Officer - Medicines Safety, Optimisation & Governance (2)
Cyber Security	Cyber Security Analyst (3) · Data and Cyber Security Policy Implementation Lead (2) · Cyber Security Analyst - Threat Intelligence (2)

Four career areas are not shown: no single title recurred often enough to report, which is itself a signal that they advertise under many different names.

> **What this means for you.** Search these exact phrases rather than the name of the career area. NHS Jobs matches on title text, so searching "digital transformation" misses a post advertised as "Transformation Programme Manager". Set up alerts on two or three of these per area rather than one broad one.

04

WHERE THE WORK IS

Where Each Career Area Advertises

London leads every area, but by less than its reputation suggests.

The location field is free text and employers put whatever they like in it. 9 entries naming a building rather than a place - New Century House, Elizabeth II Court, Time Square - have been removed rather than reported as locations. Region-level analysis needs the postcode, which we only began capturing in the second half of the year, and appears in the next report, covering July to December 2026.

> **What this means for you.** Check your own area before assuming a move is required. If it is thin where you live, the same skills advertise under a different title close by, which is what the previous page is for.

Career Area	Where Roles Concentrated
Project & Programme Management	London (48) · Leeds (16)
Data, Analytics & BI	London (32) · West Yorkshire (11) · Manchester (10)
Clinical Research & Trials	London (24) · Cambridge (8) · Cardiff (6)
Digital Transformation	London (16) · Grimsby (5) · Doncaster (5)
Change & Transformation	London (10) · Worcestershire (6)
Clinical Systems & Applications	Manchester (9) · London (7) · West Yorkshire (4)
Leadership & Management	London (11) · Middlesex (4) · Gloucestershire (4)
Business Development	Leeds (6) · London (6) · West Yorkshire (5)
PMO & Project Support	London (9) · Queen Alexandra Hospital (4) · Liverpool (4)
Software Development	West Yorkshire (8) · Reading (5) · Grimsby (2)
Cyber Security	Royal Berkshire Hospital (3)
Clinical Safety & Patient Safety	London (6) · Manchester (4) · Norwich (3)
Education & Training	Cardiff (5) · Leicester (4) · Horndean (4)
Procurement & Commercial	Cardiff (5) · London (4) · NHS Commercial Solutions (3)
Applications Support	Norwich (4) · Manchester (4)
Clinical Informatics	London (7) · Sunderland (2) · Manchester (2)
Communications & Engagement	London (4) · Cardiff (4) · East Surrey Hospital (3)
Information Governance	Cheshire (4) · York Hospital (2)
AI, ML & Data Science	London (5) · Stafford (2) · West Yorkshire (2)

Career Area	Where Roles Concentrated
Product Management	Manchester (3) · Birmingham (3) · Sutton in Ashfield (3)
Business Analysis	London (4) · Bristol (2) · Seaton Delaval (2)
Clinical Governance & Compliance	Royal Derby Hospital (3) · 104-106 Church Street (2) · Royal Liverpool site (2)
Quality Improvement	King's Mill Hospital (3) · Barchester Healthcare (2) · The Manston Short-Term Holding Facility (2)
Early Careers	Enki Medical Practice (1) · London (1) · Manchester (1)

05

SENIORITY

What Level These Roles Were

Band 7 is the centre of gravity. Bands 6 to 8a together account for 56 per cent of the roles that state a band, which is the range most clinical staff would move across into rather than down from.

This covers the 2,485 roles that name a band. 702 of the 3,187 tracked do not: medical grades, very senior manager posts, bank and agency work and non-NHS employers on the same platform frequently advertise without one.



Band values are normalised before counting. The source records the same band in up to four forms, and counting them separately would report Band 8a as the most common grade rather than Band 7. A further 55 roles state a band that cannot be resolved to a single grade, most of them a bare "Band 8", and are excluded from this chart rather than assigned to a neighbour.

What this means for you. Most people moving across from clinical work are looking at Band 6 to 8a, and that is where most of the roles are. If you are applying two bands below where you sit now to get in, the data does not support that as necessary: the volume is at your level, not beneath it.

How Long You Get To Apply

Measured on the 1,329 roles carrying a posting date, 42 per cent of the total. Domains with fewer than twenty such roles are not shown separately.



What this means for you. Check twice a week, not weekly. A fortnight between looks means missing most of a cycle. And have your evidence ready before you need it: a written list of what you have led, changed, measured and improved, with the numbers attached. The supporting statement itself has to answer the person specification in front of you, but nobody can recall six years of work from memory inside a two week window, and that is where good candidates lose the application.

06

WHO WAS HIRING

The Employers Advertising Most

552 organisations advertised at least one non-clinical role in the period. The fifteen below account for 18 per cent of the total, so the market is far less concentrated among employers than it is among domains.

Employer	Roles
Leeds Teaching Hospitals	**58**
Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust	**54**
NHS England	**52**
Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust	**42**
UK Health Security Agency	**41**
Barts Health NHS Trust	**38**
Cambridge University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust	**38**
Midlands Partnership NHS Foundation Trust	**37**
East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust	**36**
University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust	**33**
Health Research Authority	**32**
Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust	**30**
NHS Blood and Transplant	**29**
The Mid Yorkshire Teaching NHS Trust	**29**
St George's University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust	**28**

Sponsor Licence Coverage

Of the 552 employers, 233 appear on the Home Office Register of Licensed Sponsors under a directly matching name. The true figure is higher: many NHS organisations are registered under a former name, an abbreviation, or with the words in a different order, and matching those requires the alias work Career Co-Pilot maintains rather than a simple name comparison. Treat this as a floor, not a rate.

07

WHAT EMPLOYERS ASKED FOR

Skills That Travel Across Domains

Read from the person specification in each job pack rather than the advert text. A skill appearing across many domains is one that transfers; a skill confined to one is what makes that domain specialist.

> **The essential list is almost entirely generic.** Communication, stakeholder management and leadership appear as essential criteria in all twenty-five domains. The technical and domain-specific skills sit under desirable, not essential. For somebody moving out of clinical practice that inverts the usual advice: the barrier to being shortlisted is rarely the specialist skill, and a clinical career already evidences most of what is being asked for.

Essential Criteria

Skill	Domains	Mentions
Communication	**25**	**854**
Stakeholder Management	**25**	**655**
Leadership	**25**	**386**
Microsoft Office	**25**	**350**
Time Management	**24**	**452**
Problem Solving	**24**	**358**
Negotiation	**24**	**250**
Teamwork	**24**	**248**
Project Management	**23**	**388**
Data Analysis	**23**	**374**
Organisation	**23**	**212**
Analytical Thinking	**23**	**151**
Autonomous Working	**23**	**141**
Change Management	**22**	**272**
Report Writing	**22**	**176**
Presentation Skills	**21**	**183**

Desirable Criteria

Where the domain specifics live, and where the acquirable things are. Welsh language appears across nineteen domains: the Welsh health boards advertise on the same platform, and for a bilingual applicant that is a genuine advantage nobody lists on a CV.

Skill	Domains	Mentions
Project Management	**21**	**94**
Change Management	**21**	**82**
Welsh language	**19**	**69**
Leadership	**19**	**66**
Mentoring	**17**	**54**
Stakeholder Management	**17**	**42**
Training Delivery	**16**	**57**
Data Analysis	**14**	**41**
Presentation Skills	**13**	**33**
Database Management	**13**	**24**
Quality Improvement	**12**	**29**
Budget Management	**12**	**27**
Teaching	**10**	**33**
SystmOne	**10**	**18**
SQL	**9**	**25**
Agile	**8**	**23**
Power BI	**7**	**25**
Python	**7**	**16**

Certifications

Counted across every domain. Named qualifications recur far less than the discussion of them suggests: a degree or equivalent experience is the most common requirement by a wide margin.

Certification	Domains	Mentions
Degree or equivalent	**23**	**250**
PRINCE2 (all levels)	**23**	**323**
Master's degree	**20**	**201**

Certification	Domains	Mentions
ECDL	**17**	**78**
NMC registration	**15**	**75**
MSP	**11**	**70**
Project management qualification	**19**	**50**
GCSE English	**15**	**49**
NVQ Level 3	**15**	**46**
GPhC registration	**12**	**38**
ITIL (all levels)	**14**	**68**

Where the source records the same qualification under more than one spelling, the counts are combined.

> **What this means for you.** Do not buy a certification before you have applied. A degree or equivalent experience is the most common requirement by a wide margin, and the named qualifications appear far less than the conversation about them suggests. Write the essential criteria into your supporting statement in the words the person specification uses, and get the certification once a role you want actually asks for it.

08

BEYOND THE ADVERTS

Who Is Winning NHS Contracts

1,603 contract awards were published by NHS organisations in the period. This section is the only forward-looking part of the report: a trust that has just bought a system will hire against it, usually three to six months later. It is also a list of employers outside the NHS that a clinician would not otherwise come across.

Supplier	Awards	Value (£m)
GXO Logistics	**2**	**420.9**
Epic	**2**	**274.4**
IBM United Kingdom	**3**	**216.2**
Roche Diagnostics	**8**	**188.4**
Nervecentre Software	**3**	**115.0**
Altera Healthcare IT	**2**	**54.1**
DH OpCo (Dedalus)	**1**	**52.1**
Hippo Digital	**4**	**50.9**
G4S Secure Solutions	**1**	**48.1**
TPXimpact	**2**	**36.1**
Opcare	**3**	**19.8**
Softcat	**51**	**19.3**
Alcidion	**1**	**18.8**
Insulet International	**1**	**16.2**

Framework agreements are excluded from every figure above. Ten of the 1,603 awards are frameworks, and a framework records a ceiling for a programme running years into the future rather than money committed. Including them put the six-month total at £37.8bn, roughly a fifth of the entire NHS budget, on the strength of a single row.

What The Contracts Were For

Categorisation in the published data is limited: 91 per cent of awards are recorded only as general digital and technology spend. Of those that are categorised, EPR implementation is the largest by value.

Category	Awards	Value (£m)
Other digital and technology	**1,464**	**1,311.2**
EPR implementation	**45**	**278.1**
Training and education	**44**	**442.2**
AI and analytics	**12**	**165.7**
Cyber security	**11**	**12.9**
Information governance	**8**	**8.8**
Clinical systems	**2**	**6.5**
Data platform	**4**	**0.7**
Digital transformation	**2**	**1.3**
Software development	**1**	**4.5**

Reading the contract titles instead gives a coarser but more honest picture of the largest bucket.

What The Uncategorised Awards Were For	Awards
Support, maintenance and managed service	**251**
Hardware, devices and equipment	**98**
Software, licences and platforms	**84**
Network, infrastructure and hosting	**42**
Workforce, recruitment and agency	**15**
Consultancy and professional services	**14**
No description specific enough to categorise	**960**

Support and maintenance is the largest identifiable group. Two thirds still carry no description specific enough to place, which is a fact about NHS procurement publishing rather than about NHS spending.

Further Ahead: The Tender Pipeline

An award says a trust has bought something. A tender says it intends to, and appears eight to sixteen months earlier. We tracked 3,862 NHS tender notices published in the period, of which 338 score six or above on likelihood of creating roles.

No value is reported for tenders. The published estimates include framework ceilings and there is no flag in the source to separate them, which put the six-month total above the entire NHS budget. A number that cannot be checked is not worth printing, so the counts are given and the money is not.

> **What this means for you.** A trust that has just bought a system hires against it, usually three to six months later, and those posts are written before anybody outside the programme knows they are coming. Watching awards in your area is the closest thing to advance notice of a vacancy. The supplier column is also a list of employers: every name on it hires people who understand the NHS, and most of them are easier to reach than a trust.

09

THE AI QUESTION

Noise Against Hiring

Two things were counted over the same six months. How often AI appeared in the specialist health technology press, and how often it appeared in an NHS job title. They do not agree.

20x AI appears in one in five specialist health tech headlines and in one job title in a hundred. The conversation is running roughly twenty times ahead of the hiring.

Where AI Appeared	Count	Share
Specialist health tech headlines (Digital Health News, HTN)	**57 of 278**	**20.5%**
NHS non-clinical job titles	**32 of 3,187**	**1.0%**

Matched on whole words. An unanchored search for "AI" also finds it inside Training and Attention to Detail, which inflated an earlier count of this by five roles. Data science is counted separately at 30 roles: it is an established discipline rather than an AI signal, and folding it in would overstate the same thing in the other direction.

What The Press Was Writing About

Two hundred and seventy-eight headlines from the two specialist sources we track most closely, themed. A headline can carry more than one theme.

Theme	Headlines
AI, ambient voice and copilots	**57**
EPR and clinical systems	**33**
Contracts, tenders and procurement	**26**
Workforce, training and appointments	**10**
Cyber security and information governance	**8**
The NHS App and patient-facing digital	**8**
Data platforms and analytics	**6**
Virtual wards and remote monitoring	**3**

And What The Adverts Actually Asked For

Every AI-related skill in the extraction corpus, with the number of career areas it appears in. The list is short and the counts are small, which is the finding.

Skill	Areas	Mentions
Power BI	**9**	**62**
Python	**7**	**44**
Data Science	**1**	**10**
Artificial Intelligence	**4**	**10**
Machine Learning	**2**	**7**
Generative AI	**1**	**6**
Test Automation	**2**	**4**
RPA	**2**	**3**
RPA Platforms	**2**	**3**
AI/ML Integration	**1**	**3**
Predictive Analytics	**2**	**3**
AI-Assisted Development	**2**	**3**
AI Governance	**2**	**2**
AI Workflow Enhancement	**2**	**2**
Process Automation	**1**	**2**

The NHS has not agreed what to call this yet. The corpus holds AI, AI Tools, AI Governance, AI Implementation, AI-Enabled Workflows, AI Workflow Enhancement, Artificial Intelligence and Artificial Intelligence Development as separate named skills, most with one or two mentions each. That is what an emerging requirement looks like before it settles: not absent, but not yet standardised enough for anybody to write a job specification around it.

What this means for you. Do not retrain for AI on the strength of the coverage. Thirty-two roles named it in the title across the whole half year, spread across several career areas rather than concentrated in one, so there is no single door marked AI to walk through. The realistic route in is the opposite direction: get into a digital team through a role that exists in volume, and be there when the AI work arrives. Power BI at 62 mentions and Python at 44 are worth more today than any AI credential, and both appear under desirable rather than essential, so neither is a barrier to applying now.

10

SINCE THE WINDOW CLOSED

What We Have Started Tracking

This report covers what we tracked between January and June. Several sources came into the corpus during or after that period, so they are not in the figures above and it would be misleading to present them as though they were. They are listed here because they will be in the December report, and because somebody reading this may be looking outside England now.

Source	Tracking From	Live Now
NHS Scotland	August 2026	244 live roles
Health and Social Care NI	August 2026	54 live roles
NHS Wales	In the window	117 live roles
Suppliers to the NHS	May 2026	58 live roles
International	In the window	1,812 live roles

Beyond The NHS

The international feed is the one with real depth: 882 employers and 1,812 live roles, of which 1,324 were added during the reporting window. It is where these same skills go when they leave the NHS. Oracle, Cognizant, IQVIA, Labcorp and Norstella between them advertised more digital health roles than most NHS trusts, and none of them require NHS experience to apply.

Do These Skills Travel?

We do not extract person specifications from international adverts, but every row carries a short description, and 6,442 of them can be searched for the same terms our NHS extractions record. The two are not directly comparable and the difference matters: one is a structured read of a full person specification, the other a keyword search of a few hundred characters. What is comparable is which terms rank highly within each.

Term	NHS Job Packs	International Adverts
Stakeholder management	**83.9%**	**1.4%**
SQL	**11.3%**	**1.5%**
Power BI or Tableau	**6.4%**	**0.3%**
EPR or EHR	**5.0%**	**6.5%**
Python	**4.6%**	**1.3%**
Clinical terminology	**3.9%**	**0.2%**
Clinical safety	**3.6%**	**0.4%**
HL7	**1.8%**	**4.5%**
FHIR	**1.4%**	**4.8%**
Interoperability	**1.4%**	**0.0%**

NHS figures are the share of 1,535 job packs whose extracted skills include the term. International figures are the share of 6,442 advert descriptions containing it.

The NHS asks for relationship skills. Other markets ask for standards. Stakeholder management appears in 84 per cent of NHS job packs and 1.4 per cent of international adverts. HL7 and FHIR run the other way, roughly three times more prominent abroad than here. Some of that is the difference in what we are reading, but not all of it: the ranking within each market is the same measurement done twice.

What this means for you. If you are thinking about relocating, the technical standards matter more than they do here. HL7 and FHIR are named in adverts in sixteen countries and are the closest thing to a portable credential in this field. If you are staying, the reverse holds: the NHS is asking for the thing a clinical career already builds, and no certification substitutes for it. Either way it is worth knowing which of your skills are local and which are not.

What this means for you. If the NHS route is slow, the companies selling into it are not. The international and supplier feeds are new enough that we are not yet making claims about their shape, but they are on the live board today and worth searching alongside NHS Jobs rather than after it.

11

IF YOU ALREADY WORK IN HEALTHCARE

Where Your Background Already Fits

Eight per cent of the questions put to Scout in this period were a version of the same one: I do this job, what else can I do with it. It is the hardest question in careers advice and the least well served, because the honest answer is usually a shrug.

There is a better answer in the data. Some NHS roles name a clinical background in the title of a non-clinical post: Clinical Research Nurse, Digital Nurse on an EPR programme, Clinical Coding Business Analyst, Advanced Clinical Informatics Pharmacist. These are posts the NHS itself has written to bridge two worlds, and they are the door.

Nursing and midwifery

143 roles named this background in a non-clinical post

Career Area	Roles	For Example
Clinical Research & Trials	**112**	Clinical Research Nurse
Digital Transformation	**11**	Digital Nurse, EPR Project
Clinical Informatics	**4**	Chief Nursing Information Officer
Project & Programme Management	**4**	Cancer Project Nurse

Laboratory and clinical science

38 roles named this background in a non-clinical post

Career Area	Roles	For Example
AI, ML & Data Science	**14**	Data Scientist
Data, Analytics & BI	**10**	Senior Data Scientist
Clinical Research & Trials	**4**	Research Scientist
Software Development	**4**	3D Digital Biomedical Engineer

Clinical coding

19 roles named this background in a non-clinical post

Career Area	Roles	For Example
Clinical Informatics	**12**	Clinical Coding Trainer
Data, Analytics & BI	**5**	Clinical Coding and Data Quality Supervisor
Business Analysis	**2**	Clinical Coding Business Analyst

Pharmacy 15 roles named this background in a non-clinical post

Career Area	Roles	For Example
Clinical Informatics	**5**	Advanced Clinical Informatics Pharmacist
Project & Programme Management	**4**	Programme Manager, Pharmacy Trials
Clinical Research & Trials	**4**	Clinical Trials and Medicines Lead
Change & Transformation	**1**	Digital Medicines Clinical Change Lead

Two things to read carefully. Most of these are bridge roles rather than exits: 112 of the 143 nursing ones are Clinical Research Nurse posts, which still use the registration and still involve patients. That is a move sideways into a different kind of clinical work, not a move out of it, and anybody looking for a clean break should know that before applying. And this only finds routes where the title happens to name the background, so a nurse who became a Project Manager is invisible here. Treat the table as a floor rather than a map.

A fifth route was tested and is not shown. Searching for "patient" returned 64 roles, but narrowing to the words a patient administrator would recognise, patient access, booking, waiting list, RTT, medical secretary, health records, returned none. The 64 were Patient Safety Manager and similar: roles about patients rather than routes for someone working in patient administration. We are not going to invent one.

> **What this means for you.** If your background is above, apply into the area where the bridging roles already exist rather than the one that sounds most like a fresh start. A Clinical Research Nurse post is not a lesser version of leaving clinical work, it is the version somebody will actually shortlist you for. If your background is not above, that is a gap in what we can see rather than proof no route exists, and the search terms in section three are the better tool.

12

WHAT THE WORK IS REALLY LIKE

Three Roles, Described From The Job Packs

Ten per cent of questions asked what a role actually involves, and it is the hardest thing to find out before you are in it. Job adverts describe a post as an employer would like it read. Reading several packs for the same role and band shows what recurs, which is closer to the truth.

Clinical Research Nurse Band 6

Read from 9 job packs. The single largest bridge route in this report: 112 of the roles that name a clinical background sit here.

The day. Coordinating a caseload of studies across inpatient and outpatient settings. Assessing participants before treatment, administering investigational therapies and monitoring side effects against protocol and ICH GCP. Collecting and processing biological samples, completing Case Report Forms in electronic data capture systems, and liaising with multidisciplinary teams, study sponsors and participants. Also education and advocacy for participants through the trial, and supervising junior nursing colleagues.

The hard part. Running concurrent studies across multiple specialties while coordinating participant visits, data deadlines and protocol amendments at the same time. Communicating trial information to people who are seriously or chronically ill, particularly around informed consent and adverse events. And holding rigorous regulatory compliance across several sponsors while still delivering hands-on clinical care, which is a persistent dual demand on the same hours.

What moving up asks for. Band 7 typically wants leadership of a research portfolio or specialist area, experience of study set-up and feasibility, and line management. Also contribution to strategic research development, leading audit or service improvement, and a relevant postgraduate qualification or equivalent specialist expertise.

Project Manager Band 6

Read from 7 job packs. The most advertised title in the corpus. Project Manager appeared 59 times in six months, more than any other.

The day. Coordinating activity across multiple workstreams, facilitating governance meetings, and producing reports and dashboards for senior stakeholders and programme boards. Liaising and negotiating with clinical, operational and corporate teams to manage risks and resolve issues. Monitoring plans, managing interdependencies, and acting as the focal point for stakeholder communication.

The hard part. Holding multiple competing priorities across multi-workstream programmes without losing quality or deadlines. Aligning stakeholder groups whose priorities genuinely conflict, including clinicians, operational managers and third-party suppliers. And delivering inside constrained NHS budgets and staff capacity while still driving change.

What moving up asks for. Band 7 wants larger programmes or several concurrent projects, and strategic stakeholder engagement at executive or board level. Also PRINCE2 Practitioner or MSP or work towards them, evidence of benefits realisation, shaping governance frameworks, and mentoring Band 6 colleagues.

Data Science Manager Band 8b

Read from 6 job packs. What the senior end of the analytics route actually involves, at a band most people never see described.

The day. Senior technical oversight across an advanced analytics function, acting as the conduit between non-analytical domain experts and specialist data science staff. Designing and optimising models in SQL, Python and R on platforms including Databricks, TensorFlow and PyTorch, while supervising the team’s coding practice for reproducibility, governance and automation. Presenting complex analysis to senior management and stakeholders, and managing workstreams and milestones.

The hard part. Bridging the communication gap between domain experts and specialist data scientists, which means translating statistical output into something a non-analyst can act on. Keeping pipelines reproducible, governed and automated at scale while also overseeing other people’s code quality. And balancing line management against the strategic design of the service itself.

What moving up asks for. Band 8c and above wants strategic leadership across multiple analytical functions rather than technical oversight of one team, shaping organisational data science strategy and influencing at directorate level. Evidence of large-scale transformation, securing investment in advanced analytics, and developing senior managers beneath you.

These three are not a selection from a wide field. 1,375 role profiles exist, but most are built from a single job pack, only thirteen are built from five or more, and six of those thirteen carry a full description. Four of the six are project management, so three are shown and the fourth appears below as a ladder. The rest of the library needs more packs before it says anything a job advert does not.

One Ladder, Fully Evidenced

Project management is the only career area where every rung has enough packs behind it to describe. It is worth reading even if project management is not where you are heading, because it shows what changes between bands rather than what each band is called.

Band 6 7 packs

Coordinating workstreams, governance meetings, reports and dashboards. The focal point for stakeholder communication.

Band 7 16 packs

Complex portfolios, PIDs and control documents, presenting to executive audiences, deputising for senior leaders. Negotiating with internal and external stakeholders and communicating contentious information sensitively, sometimes in hostile situations.

Band 8a 9 packs

Capital and transformation projects from inception to completion, budgets from 100,000 to 25 million pounds, chairing programme boards, and line managing junior and assistant project managers.

> **What this means for you.** What separates the bands is not technical skill, it is the size of the room. Band 6 coordinates and reports. Band 7 negotiates with people who do not want to be negotiated with, and presents to executives. Band 8a holds budgets and manages other managers. If you are working out which band to apply for, the honest test is not whether you could do the tasks, it is which of those three rooms you have already been in.

13

THE MONEY

What These Bands Actually Pay

Fourteen per cent of questions were about pay, and it is the thing most often left out of careers writing. Agenda for Change is public, so there is no reason to be vague about it. These are the 2026/27 rates for England. They apply to nursing, allied health, scientific, administrative and most non-clinical staff. They do not apply to doctors and dentists, who are on a separate contract, which matters a great deal to the comparison below.

Band	Bottom Of Band	Top Of Band
Band 3	**£25,760**	**£27,476**
Band 4	**£28,392**	**£31,157**
Band 5	**£32,073**	**£39,043**
Band 6	**£39,959**	**£48,117**
Band 7	**£49,387**	**£56,515**
Band 8a	**£57,528**	**£64,750**
Band 8b	**£66,582**	**£77,368**
Band 8c	**£79,504**	**£91,609**

Excludes High Cost Area Supplements, which add between 5 and 20 per cent in and around London and change the comparison materially if you work there. Bands 1, 2 and 9 are omitted: almost nothing in this corpus sits in them.

What this means for you. Whether a move costs you money depends entirely on which contract you are on now, and the answer is different for two people doing equally clinical work. If you are on Agenda for Change, a move at the same band is not a cut to basic pay, because the band is paid for the band rather than for the work. What does change is the unsocial hours enhancement. For anyone currently working nights, weekends or on call that is real money leaving the payslip while the headline salary stays identical, and it is the most common unpleasant surprise in this move. Work out your enhancements as a percentage of your take-home before you decide, not after. If you are a doctor or dentist you are not on Agenda for Change at all, and a move into a banded post usually is a substantial cut. A GP earning around 90,000 pounds moving into a Band 8a role is moving to a band that tops out at 64,750. That may still be the right decision for other reasons, but it should be made with the number in front of you rather than discovered afterwards.

The step points matter too. Each band has two or three pay steps and a move usually starts at the bottom of the new band, so somebody at the top of Band 6 moving to Band 7 gains around 1,270 pounds in year one rather than the 9,400 the band range suggests. The bands do not overlap: the top of each is below the bottom of the next, all the way from Band 3 to 8c.

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WHERE TO START

The First Month, In Order

Everything else in this report is a finding. This is a sequence. It assumes you are working full time, have no spare evenings, and are not sure any of this applies to you.

WEEK ONE

Read four job packs in an area you are considering.
Not to apply. The person specification is the only place the NHS writes down what it actually wants, and reading four tells you more about fit than any article. Use the search terms in section three to find them.

Write your evidence down before you need it.
One page: what you have led, changed, measured and improved, with numbers. This is not a CV and it is not a supporting statement. It is the raw material both are built from, and nobody can recall six years of work inside a two week advert window.

WEEK TWO

Set two alerts on titles, not on career areas.
NHS Jobs matches on title text. Pick the two phrases from section three that fit best and set an alert on each. Check twice a week.

Map your own background against the four routes.
If your background is in section eleven, start where the roles already are. If it is not, the hybrid titles still tell you which areas hire people who understand clinical work.

WEEK THREE

Apply to one role you are not sure you are ready for.
The essential criteria across all twenty-five areas are dominated by communication, stakeholder management and leadership. The evidence says most people underestimate how much of the essential list they already meet. One application tests that for real.

WEEK FOUR

Talk to one person doing the job.
Everything in this report describes a market. None of it tells you what a Tuesday looks like, whether the team is any good, or whether you would enjoy it. The data narrows the field. A conversation decides it.

> **Nothing on this page requires you to decide anything.** The most common reason people stay stuck is not a missing qualification, it is that the first step looks like committing to a career change. Reading four job packs commits you to nothing at all.

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WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT

Fifteen Things The Data Says To Do

Each of these follows from a figure elsewhere in this report, and the reasoning is given so it can be argued with.

What To Believe About Yourself

01 **Your clinical career already evidences most of the essential criteria.**
Communication, stakeholder management and leadership appear as essential in all twenty-five career areas. The technical and NHS-specific requirements sit under desirable. The most common objection we hear, that these posts want NHS experience, misreads the advert: for somebody already working in healthcare, the essential list is largely already met.

02 **Search the job title, not the career area.**
NHS Jobs matches on title text. Searching "digital transformation" misses a post advertised as Transformation Programme Manager, which appeared five times in six months. Section three lists the exact phrases each area uses. Set two or three narrow alerts rather than one broad one.

03 **Check twice a week.**
The typical advert is open sixteen days, and that barely varies by area. A weekly check misses roughly half a cycle, and a fortnightly one misses most of it. Trusts also close early once they have enough applicants, so the stated closing date is a ceiling rather than a promise.

04 **Do not buy a certification before you have applied for anything.**
A degree or equivalent experience is the most common qualification requirement by a wide margin. PRINCE2 appears across twenty-three areas but usually as desirable. Apply first, find out what is actually stopping you, then buy the certification a real role asked for.

05 **Do not apply two bands below where you sit.**
Bands 6 to 8a hold more than half of everything tracked, and Band 7 is the single most common grade. The volume is at the level you are already working at. Applying down to get in costs you money and does not open a door that was closed.

Where To Look, And How

06 **Follow the career area, not the employer.**
No single employer holds more than two per cent of the market. There is no shortlist of trusts to target, and a strategy built around three employers you admire will produce very few applications.

07 **Watch contract awards in your area.**
A trust that has just bought a system hires against it, usually three to six months later. Those posts are written before anyone outside the programme knows they are coming, and Contracts Finder publishes the award months before the advert appears.

08 **The supplier list is a list of employers.**
Every name in section eight hires people who understand how the NHS works, and most are easier to reach than a trust. If the NHS route is slow, the companies selling to it are hiring the same understanding.

09 **If you speak Welsh, say so.**
Welsh appears as a desirable criterion across nineteen career areas, because the Welsh health boards advertise on the same platform. It is one of the few genuine differentiators in the data that costs nothing to declare.

10 **Desirable does not mean required.**
The split between essential and desirable is the most under-read part of a job pack. Essential criteria are scored and you must evidence every one. Desirable criteria separate candidates who all met the essential list. Not holding a desirable is not a reason to skip the application.

How To Apply, And What Data Cannot Tell You

11 **Answer the person specification in its own order and its own words.**
NHS shortlisting is scored against the specification line by line, usually by someone working through a grid. A statement organised as a career narrative makes the scorer hunt for evidence, and what they cannot find they cannot score. Take the criteria in the order printed and answer each one.

12 **The three most asked questions are about you, not the market.**
Sixteen per cent of questions put to Scout are about skills and qualifications, fourteen about pay and banding, ten about what a role actually involves. Three per cent ask what is open. If you are stuck, the evidence says you are more likely stuck on whether you are suitable than on finding a vacancy, and those are solved differently.

13 **Read a job pack for a role you are not applying for.**
The person specification is the only place the NHS writes down what it actually wants, and it is public. Reading three or four in an area you are considering tells you more about whether it fits than any careers article, and it costs nothing.

14 **If you are internationally trained, check the register before the role.**
Sponsorship is decided by the employer holding a licence, not by the advert saying so. The Home Office register is published and searchable, and checking it first saves applying into a route that was never open.

15 **Nothing here beats asking someone doing the job.**
Every figure in this report describes a market. None of it tells you what a Tuesday looks like in that role, whether the team is any good, or whether you would enjoy it. The data narrows the field; a conversation decides it.

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ABOUT

Where This Data Comes From

Career Co-Pilot is a careers intelligence platform for healthcare professionals moving into non-clinical, digital and specialist roles. It tracks NHS vacancies across all four nations, reads the job packs rather than the advert summaries, and turns what employers actually asked for into something a person can act on. Around 880 healthcare professionals use it.

Scout

Scout is the assistant that answers career questions from this same data. It is where the three hundred questions in section two came from. It will not invent an answer: where the corpus is too thin to support a figure, it says so rather than estimating. Scout is on the platform, on partner pages, and on Telegram.

Where To Find It	Address
The platform	careercopilot.academy
Ask Scout	careercopilot.academy/ask
Live NHS roles	careercopilot.academy/jobs
Career Fit Finder	careercopilot.academy/career-fit
The report library	careercopilot.academy/insights
Scout on Telegram	t.me/CareerCoPilotBot

The Partners Who Make This Possible

Career Co-Pilot works with healthcare communities, training providers and professional networks who host a jobs board or a Scout page for their own members. Section two of this report exists because of them: the questions analysed there were asked on partner surfaces as much as on our own. No partner shares a membership list with us and none of the questions here are attributed to any individual or any community.

London Centre for Analytics · Clinops Academy · Digital-tasiku · Meliorem Academy · Regal Training · UK Public Health Job Directory · Locumspace

> **Want the detail behind any of this?** Every career area in this report has its own deep dive in the same series, covering band ladders, entry points, employers and the full skills picture for that area. They are free and they are at careercopilot.academy/insights. If something here raises a question the report does not answer, ask Scout: it reads the same data.

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METHOD

How This Was Built, And What It Does Not Say

What Is Counted

Every NHS non-clinical role Career Co-Pilot tracked with a closing date between 1 January and 30 June 2026. 3,187 roles. Roles are assigned to one of 25 career domains at the point of review. Clinical roles are excluded.

What Is Not Counted

Vacancies the NHS advertised that we did not track. No jobs board sees every vacancy, and any report claiming otherwise is claiming something it cannot check. The stronger claim, and the one made here, is that we read the job packs for what we did track.

The Advert Window

Measured as closing date minus posting date, on the 1,329 roles where the source published a posting date, 42 per cent of the total. Roles without one are excluded from that figure alone and counted everywhere else.

Monthly Volumes Are Not Comparable

Roles closing in January were largely advertised in December, before the period, and the tracking corpus grew through the period. Any month on month rise in this report reflects coverage as much as hiring, so no such trend is claimed.

Bands

Normalised before counting. The source records the same band in several forms and counting them separately materially changes which band appears most common.

Contract Awards

From Contracts Finder, published by the awarding organisation. Frameworks excluded from all totals. Many awards carry no published value, so award counts and value totals answer different questions and are shown separately.

Skills And Certifications

Extracted from the person specification in each job pack, not from the advert summary. Counts are of job packs read, not of vacancies advertised.

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Regal Training	UK Public Health Job Directory
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Career Co-Pilot is not affiliated with NHS England or NHS Digital. Figures are drawn from job adverts we tracked and read, not from every vacancy the NHS advertised.