

Radiography Careers



A lot of people don't know what a radiographer does. It's nothing to do with radar and everything to do with investigating why people are ill or treating cancer.

Radiographers are at the heart of modern medicine.



What does a diagnostic radiographer do?

If you have an accident and go to hospital, the chances are that you will see a diagnostic radiographer. They produce images that are used to diagnose injury or disease.

- X-ray – looks through tissue to examine bones, cavities and foreign objects
- Fluoroscopy – images the digestive system providing a live motion x-ray
- CT (computed tomography) – creates a 3-D image which can be split into individual slices
- MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) – builds a 2-D or 3-D map of different tissue types within the body
- Ultrasound – well known for it's use in obstetrics and gynaecology. Also used to check circulation and examine the heart
- Angiography – used to investigate blood vessels

What does a therapy radiographer do?

Some cancers are best treated with drugs, some with surgery and others respond well to precisely targeted doses of radiation. Frequently, a combination of methods are used to complement each other.

A radiographer may shrink a tumour to allow a surgeon to remove it.

A key member of a dedicated oncology team, the therapy radiographer uses radiation in highly controlled conditions.

The radiographer is usually involved in every aspect of the treatment, including pre-treatment preparation, planning, the delivery of the radiation, and the follow-up stages.

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Why should I be a radiographer?

Both diagnostic and therapeutic radiographers provide essential services to millions of people. Without them, modern healthcare would collapse.

Without detailed images of what is happening inside the body, treatments would not be as effective, or valuable time may be lost.

Six out of 10 patients who receive radiotherapy treatment for cancer are cured. A therapy radiographer and the oncology team give cancer patients hope and a second chance.

Radiographers meet new people constantly and are highly regarded by patients for their professionalism and the support they provide.

Every day they use the latest technology and manage machines that cost millions of pounds.

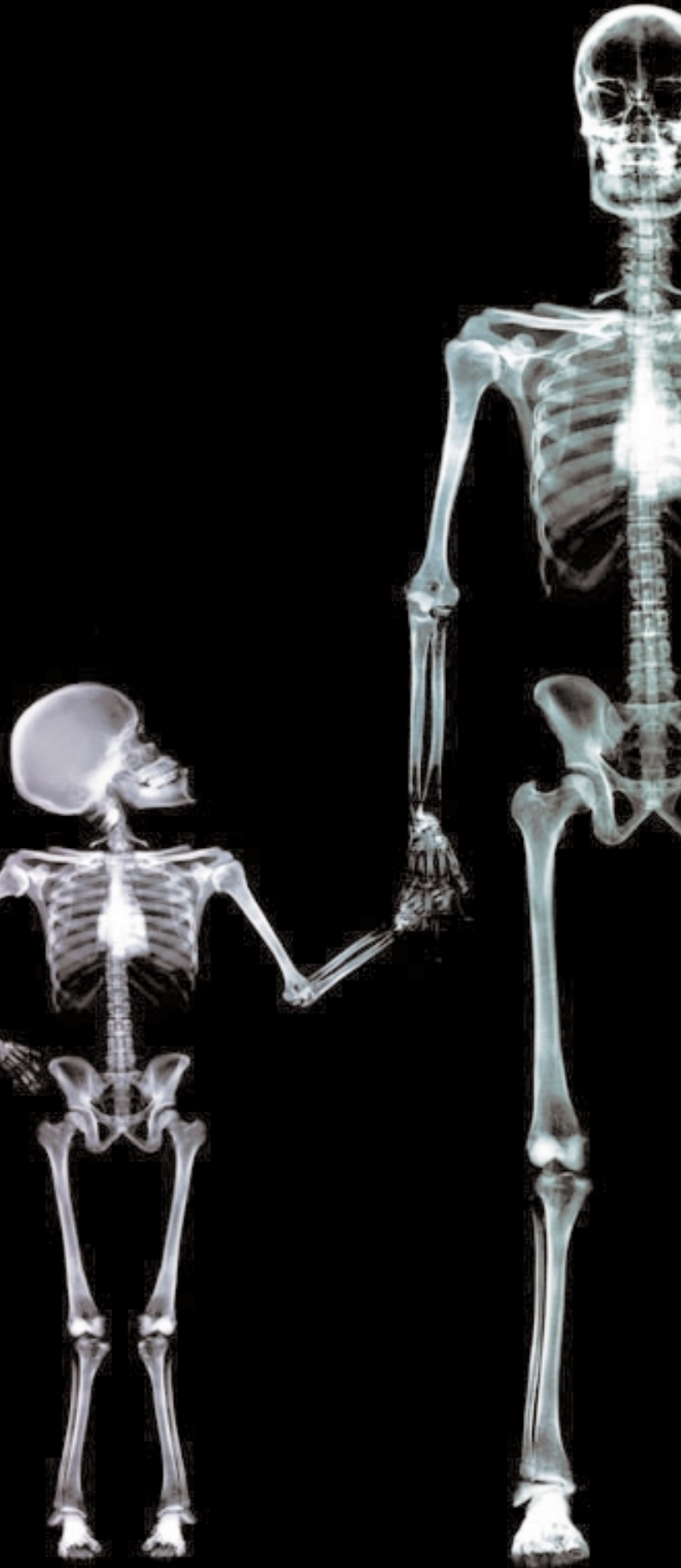
Promotion opportunities are excellent with a grading structure that sees the individual's salary increase as they move up the profession. There are also management opportunities and consultant radiography posts are planned. Top level pay is £35,000 or more.

British radiographers are recognised as being among the best in the world. Many foreign countries recruit from the UK.

A radiography degree is a passport to a job. Radiography students pay no tuition fees and you can qualify for an NHS bursary.



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What makes a good radiographer?

Both diagnostic and therapy radiographers need a range of skills.

You need to be able to communicate with other members of the team and to provide support for patients who may be frightened, or uncertain about what is going to happen.

Therapy radiographers in particular get to know patients because they see them regularly through the course of treatment. It is important they can develop a rapport with the individual and their family.

- The confidence (with appropriate training) to work with leading-edge technology
- The ability to learn new skills and adapt-radiography is constantly changing
- An interest in the sciences such as biology, anatomy and physiology is important



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What do I have to do to qualify?

Entry to a BSc degree course in either diagnostic or therapeutic radiography usually requires at least three GCSEs at grade C or above and at least two A levels or equivalent. Alternatively, you could have a BTEC in a relevant subject. Some universities have access courses for mature students who do not have the necessary academic qualifications.

Courses are usually for three years. Ideally, you should have an interest in science and maths skills can also be helpful.

Subjects studied include anatomy, physiology and pathology; science and instrumentation;

social sciences; image interpretation, as well as aspects of patient care, including first aid and counselling skills.

A significant part of the three years is spent working in radiography departments. There is time spent in the classroom of course, but you get to work with qualified radiographers and patients as quickly as possible.



Is there a future?

After qualifying, there is a range of specialist options.

Choices for therapeutic radiographers include treatment planning, treatment delivery, treatment review and palliative care.

For diagnostic radiographers there are choices such as trauma/accident and emergency, CT scanning,



MRI, nuclear medicine, breast screening and medical ultrasound.

Radiographers may also choose to move into teaching, research, quality assurance, or management.

In recent years, radiographers have developed their role and taken on greater responsibilities.

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RADIOGRAPHERS



What about funding?

Universities have a number of NHS-funded places for degree-level students.

If you are offered one of these, then your share of the tuition fees will be paid for you. You would also be eligible for a reduced rate, non-means-tested student loan and might be eligible for a means-tested NHS bursary. Bursary amounts are assessed individually by the Department of Health to take account of income and personal circumstances and of the length of terms and vacations.

You normally apply for these through the radiography education centre at which the course is to be studied.

If an NHS bursary is not available, apply for a grant from your local education authority.

In Northern Ireland, students should apply to their local education authority for a mandatory award. See next page for the address in your country to apply for funding.

Which universities have courses?

Go to www.radiographycareers.co.uk to download the Radiography Education and Training Directory of Courses. (92k PDF file).

It lists all UK validated and approved courses that lead to professional qualification and state registration

Apply through UCAS at:

The Universities and Colleges Admission Services,
PO Box 28
Cheltenham
Gloucestershire GL50 3SH.
Tel: 01242 223707
www.ucas.com

or get in touch with the university where you wish to study.

Want to know more?

Talk to NHS Careers

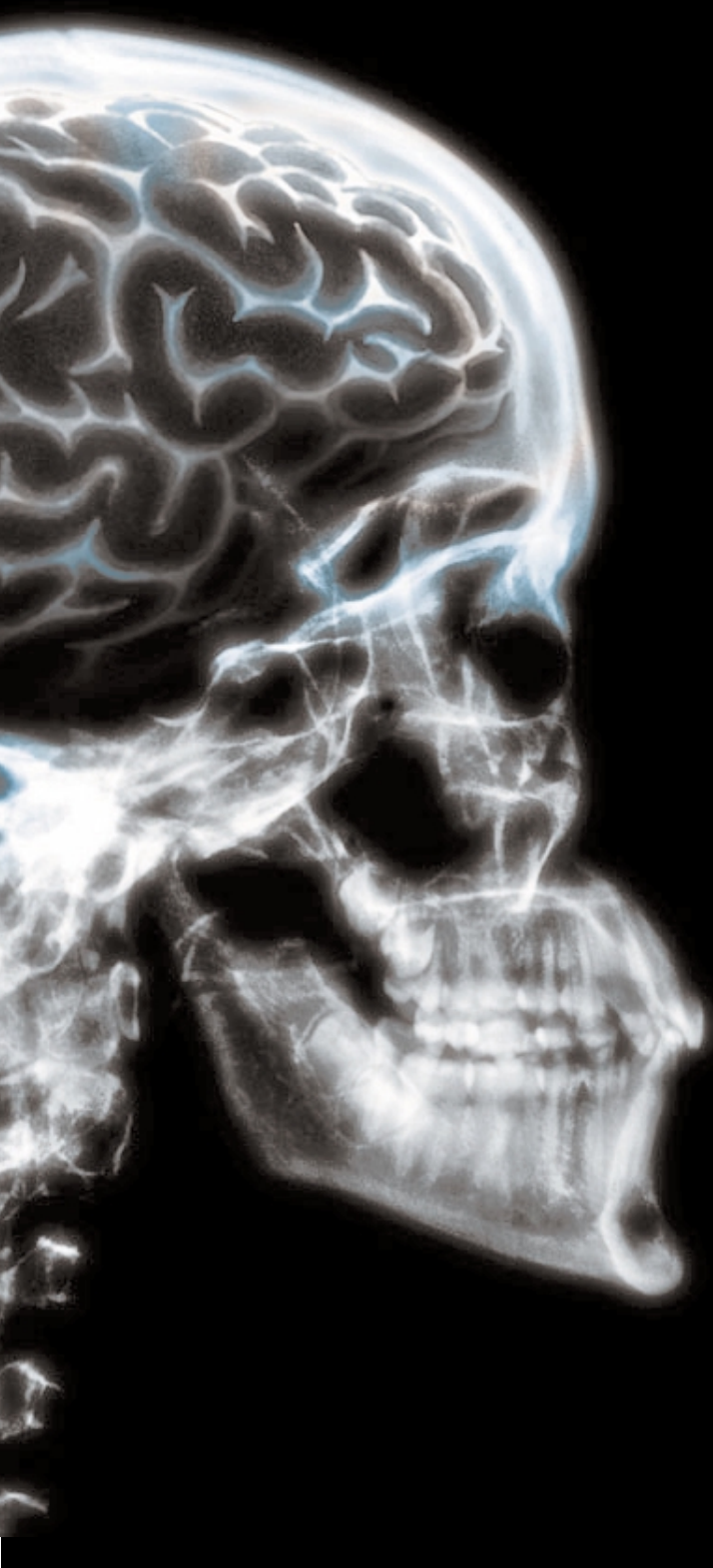
Call: 0845 6060655

Email: advice@nhscareers.nhs.uk

Web: www.nhscareers.nhs.uk

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What about funding?

Students normally resident in England should apply to:

The NHS Student Grants Unit
22 Plymouth Road
Blackpool
FY3 7JS

Tel: 01253 655 655
Fax: 01253 655 660

Students normally resident in Wales should apply to:

The Welsh Health Common Services Agency
Education Purchasing Unit
Ground Floor CP2
Welsh Office
Cathays Park
Cardiff
CF1 3NQ

Tel: 01222 825111

Students normally resident in NI should apply to:

Department of Education for Northern Ireland
Rathgael House
Balloo Road
Bangor
Co Down
BT19 7PR

Tel: 01247 279418

Students normally resident in Scotland should apply to:

The Students Awards Agency for Scotland
3 Redheughs Rigg
South Gyle
Edinburgh
EH12 9HH

Tel: 0131 4768212

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Case Studies



David is a newly qualified therapy radiographer, which means that he doesn't earn 'big bucks'.

Starting pay varies from £16,000 to £18,500 a year, while in London and parts of the south of England, there are cost of living supplements that can push pay closer to £19,000 a year.

But he has no doubt that the job has other compensations.

"Radiography is a growing profession and job security is second to none. The number of radiographers that the National Health Service needs is steadily increasing."

How does he feel about working for the NHS?

"Don't believe everything you read. The National Health Service has its problems but I know that the professionals who work in it are providing an unrivalled standard of care," he says.

"Good radiographers have a genuinely caring attitude for the patients. The best ones treat people as if they were their own mum or dad."

He does warn students that if they are looking for an easy option, radiography is not it. "You have to work hard consistently. Students on other courses at my university only had to attend classes for eight hours a week. If you're studying radiography, it's eight hours a day, every day," he says.

"Like all students, we loved to party but if you have patients to see the next morning, you can't be out too late."



Suzanne qualified a year ago and has been working as a diagnostic radiographer in the Midlands.

Is it what she expected?

"Pretty much. Because you spend so much time in radiography departments when you're a student, you know what to expect and, in many ways, you've been doing the job already. Someone keeps a close eye on you and is always there

to answer questions - and get you out of awkward situations.

"The best way to find out if radiography is what you want to do is to have a few days work experience in a radiography department," she adds.

Most departments welcome giving people the opportunity to spend a week or so shadowing a working radiographer to get a feel for what the job is about.



Case Studies



Emma is a diagnostic radiographer working in a large general hospital. This is her second post.

“I wasn't interested in anything nine to five.

“We see patients with an enormous range of different injuries and conditions. For example, we do a lot of accident and emergency work, often the result of road accidents, and a lot of sports

injuries: rugby and riding are very popular in this area. Then there are the elderly people with hip fractures. We also see people from outpatient clinics, including those who are having investigations for digestive or urinary tract problems.

“I chose to work in diagnostics because, although I wanted to work with people, I am very interested in the technical side of radiography. Also, I think I would have found the long-term involvement with patients and the support element of therapeutic work quite demanding. In diagnostics, different people are coming in and out all the time, and I find this easier. It depends on what kind of person you are.

“What I like most about my job is the independence it gives you, particularly when you are working at night. You are in charge, setting your own pace and making your own decisions.”



Chrissie is a senior therapeutic radiographer in an oncology department.

“Radiography offers you plenty of opportunities to specialise. You can choose to move into treatment planning if you are more interested in the mathematical side, or you can stay within treatment itself if you prefer working with the patients.

“There are also plenty of new areas opening up and the chance to extend your role. I'm now carrying out treatment reviews on behalf of the consultants and prescribing drugs.”