



IHRIM

Institute of Health Records & Information Management

IHRIM is committed to advancing the Health Records, Information Management, Clinical Coding and Information Governance professions through the provision of leadership, education, advocacy, qualifications and lifelong learning.

How To Become A Clinical Coder (UK)

To become a clinical coder in the UK, you will need a minimum requirement of GCSEs (including English, Maths, and Science), and strong IT skills to secure a trainee position within an NHS trust or private healthcare provider.

You will undergo 2–3 years of in-house training, learning medical terminology, anatomy, and coding standards (ICD-10/OPCS-4), culminating in the National Clinical Coding Qualification (NCCQ) to become an Accredited Clinical Coder (ACC).

Steps to Become a Clinical Coder in the UK

- **Get Qualified:** While specific degree-level or A Level qualifications aren't mandatory, good GCSEs (A-C or 9-4) are required. Background knowledge in medical terminology or anatomy is highly beneficial.
- **Apply for Trainee Positions:** Look for "Trainee Clinical Coder" roles on NHS Jobs website. These positions provide on-the-job training.
- **Complete Training:** Novice coders work under a 2–3-year development plan to gain the necessary skills and experience to sit the National Clinical Coding Qualification (NCCQ) exam.
- **Achieve Accreditation (ACC):** Pass the NCCQ exam, the only nationally recognised qualification in the UK.
- **Continuing Professional Development (CPD):** Maintain skills through mandatory refresher courses every three years and ongoing training on updated coding standards.

Essential Skills and Training

- **Medical Knowledge:** Proficiency in medical terminology, anatomy, and physiology.
- **Coding Systems:** Thorough knowledge of ICD-10 (diagnoses) and OPCS-4 (procedures) standards.
- **Attention to Detail:** Ability to accurately extract and interpret complex clinical information from patient records.
- **IT Proficiency:** Experience with electronic patient records and data entry.

Career Pathway for a Clinical Coder

- **Trainee Coder:** Usually starts at Band 3 or 4 on the Agenda for Change scale.
- **Accredited Clinical Coder (ACC):** Achieved after passing the NCCQ exam, often resulting in a move to Band 4 or 5.
- **Senior/Specialist Coder:** Further specialisation in specific clinical areas, auditing, or training.
- **Progression Pathways:** Clinical Coding Manager, Head of Service, Team Leader, Trainer, Auditor, Engagement Lead, Data Analyst

Key Resources

- **NHS Jobs Website:** To search for Trainee Clinical Coding roles.
- **IHRIM (Institute of Health Records and Information Management):** For information relating to the NCCQ.
- **Clinical Coding Standards Course:** A standard 21-day training course for new coders delivered by Approved Clinical Coding Trainers.
- **FEDIP (Federation for Informatics Professionals):** For professional registration.

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