

## Real-life story - Jill Maynard

Having set up her own successful business that focuses on nutrition and exercise, Jill knows that there are many ways to help people to improve their health.



Jill Maynard Clinical exercise physiologist - company director

**Employer or university** Self-employed - own business

**Salary range** Unknown

### How I got into the role

I have been interested in health since doing work experience in our local hospital's A&E department, while at college. I trained as a medical secretary but whilst volunteering as an assistant youth worker for the YMCA, I became involved in an exercise programme. This sparked my interest in fitness and health, so over several years I undertook a number of exercise and fitness courses. When my daughter was three months old, I saw a degree course advertised in Fitness and Health and signed up. On completion of my degree I worked for the London Borough of Tower Hamlets as a healthy lifestyle manager. At the same time I became a qualified BACPR exercise instructor (British Association of Cardiovascular and Prevention Rehabilitation).

Whilst working in Tower Hamlets I realised that more could be done to encourage fitness and lifestyle changes in the population. Funding was going towards helping people who already had cardiovascular conditions, so I saw an opening for a health gym that anyone could attend and benefit from. We moved to Maidstone and in 2003 I had the opportunity to rent some premises and start my own business. Coming from an entrepreneurial background, it was in the blood to set up my own business. It was hard going at first but I stuck with it. Now we are a well-established family business providing exercise, nutrition and mental wellbeing support and education. We have a fitness and exercise centre, including a gym and studio, where a variety of programmes are delivered.

## What I do

A typical day is very busy working with people on an individual basis or in groups. We try to improve people's life experience through exercise, using programmes developed specifically to meet their needs. Most clients have medical conditions: raised blood pressure, cardio-vascular problems, or neurological problems like multiple sclerosis, acquired brain injury or stroke. We also work with people experiencing mental health problems or weight management issues. Exercise helps to improve people's mental health because it makes the body release endorphins that give a sense of wellbeing.

Clients are usually referred to us by their GP but people can also self-refer. Our services are commissioned (ordered and paid for) by the Public Health Department, which is part of the county council. Additionally, the borough council commissions us to provide some services, and we do some work for the Royal Society of Public Health. The council has a remit to reduce obesity in children aged 2-17 years, and we are commissioned to deliver healthy lifestyle programmes to children and their parents either in schools or at our centre.

The main beneficiaries of our services are our clients, they can be any age between two and 90 years or even older. Anyone can benefit from increasing their level of exercise. Since we help commissioners to meet their objectives, they too benefit from our services. Because it has been proved that exercise reduces the risk factors for ill health, our services reduce the need for drugs and medical interventions, benefiting patients, GPs and NHS budgets.

Your health is your wealth.

## The best bits and challenges

The best bit about my job is meeting people and helping them improve their health and quality of life. On the other hand, the people I meet can also be the biggest challenge; many have complex needs. You have to be a good listener with lots of patience and the ability to remain very calm.

It can sometimes be very challenging to motivate people and keep them motivated, particularly when they have poor mental health.

Another challenge is the lack of funding for stroke [1] patients; NHS rehabilitation services can be limited but, given the right help, people with a stroke [1] can continue to improve. For many this has to be a privately funded programme. We deliver self-funded exercise rehabilitation for those who have had a stroke [1]. It's heart-breaking to turn people away because there's no funding to help those on low incomes.

I am most proud of completing my undergraduate degree while having three children under five years, and helping to establish the phase 3 and 4 cardiac rehabilitation courses in Tower Hamlets. I'm proud that I set up my own business 12 years ago and that I achieved my MSc in Nutrition, Public Health and Exercise in 2012.

## Life outside work

I think that it is important to maintain a healthy work-life balance; I make sure that I have at least one day off a week. I love walking, gardening and comedy, and exercise gives me a sense of wellbeing and reduces

any stress. It helps me to put things into perspective. If you feel good you are better able to help others.

## **Career plans and top tips for others**

I particularly enjoy delivering training, so I'll probably try to do more of that. I'd like to do a research project, maybe a case study and write a paper.

Start with a basic course and then build on that. Be prepared to persevere. You will need a lot of patience but the rewards are amazing.?

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**Source URL:** <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/public-health/roles-public-health/public-health-practitioner/real-life-story-jill-maynard>

### **Links**

[1] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Stroke>