

Real-life story - Danelle Pettman

Danelle was always interested in psychology but it was meeting clinical psychologists that gave her the idea that it could be the career for her.



Danelle Pettman Trainee clinical psychologist
Employer or university iCope Islington, London
Salary range £25k-£35k

How I got into the role

I enjoyed studying biology and philosophy at school which included elements of psychology. I then studied psychology at A level as well as undergraduate and master's degrees. Meeting clinical psychologists was the point where I thought it might be the career for me. The social interaction of the role excited me and I loved the idea of putting different psychological theories into action.

I had several voluntary and paid roles in research and clinical settings before I started my clinical psychology training. Each had an influence on my clinical interests and the decision to undertake the training. This included a research trial to reduce cannabis use in young people suffering from psychosis.

What I do

I am usually at my placement three days a week. A typical day may involve one-to-one and group assessments and treatment with clients. I am currently working with older adults so one-

to-one work may involve offering a [cognitive behavioural therapy](#) ^[1] (CBT) or perhaps some narrative or systemic work. The group work I am involved with is based in the community and is focused on promoting living positively in later life. There are also meetings, telephone calls for liaison work and administration which are important skills to learn in terms of running services.

The other two days of the week are usually research days which I really enjoy because I might be in lectures, writing a research proposal or reading in the library.

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The best bits and challenges

The best part about my training is the breadth of work but can also be a challenge. Clinical psychology is so vast that you can experience working with lots of different clients. Sometimes it can mean being a clinician, a student and a researcher. Switching between these different roles and having the confidence in each can sometimes be hard but always rewarding.

I also love that psychologists are encouraged to continue their professional development throughout their career. This offers a variety of career options.

Career plans and top tips for others

If I am honest, I am still trying to figure out what I would like to do. Clinical psychology is so varied that I know many people who have changed their specialism later in their career. Saying this, I am really interested in working with adolescents and it might be an area I would like to explore further.

Clinical psychology needs different people with different attributes. This means that people take different routes into training. Pursuing a career in clinical psychology is a very personal decision so you need to make sure that it is right thing for you. Do your research, talk to clinical psychologists and explore the field before thinking about training.

One thing to remember is that clinical psychology is not just about doing clinical work. You could also be working as a supervisor, manager or teacher for example.

Life outside work

Striking a work/life balance is really important in clinical psychology so I have lots of hobbies and interests. I like evening classes and have done Swedish lessons, photography and pottery. I also like to regularly plan trips away from London to make sure I am getting a break.

Source URL: <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/psychological-therapies/roles/clinical-psychologist/real-life-story-danelle-pettman>

Links

[1] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Cognitive_behavioural_therapy