Clinical psychologist

Clinical psychology deals with a wide range of mental and physical health problems including addiction, anxiety, depression, learning difficulties and relationship issues.

This page has information on the role of a clinical psychologist. There are also links to further information.

Working life

Psychology is the study of how people think and behave – a combination of science and practice. Using direct observation, interviews and techniques such as psychometric testing, you’ll make an assessment of a patient’s problem. Treatment requires the cooperation of the patient and you will work in partnership with them to treat and manage their condition. This will usually take place over a series of sessions.

“One of the great advantages about working as a psychologist in the NHS, is that you can usually find job opportunities wherever you go”. Louise Fountain, consultant clinical psychologist

Read Louise’s story  [1]

Clinical psychologists are trained to work with individuals of different ages with behavioural, emotional and/or psychological distress which disrupts their everyday functioning and well-being. They aim to reduce distress and to enhance and promote psychological well-being, minimise exclusion and inequalities and enable service users to engage in meaningful relationships and valued work and leisure activities.

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As a clinical psychologist, you will draw on your scientific knowledge to bring about positive change. Treatments such as cognitive behavioural therapy [2] are now offered to people with range of mental health problems including anxiety and depression as well as more severe problems such as personality disorders.

Who will I work with?
You will work with individuals (including children, adults and older adults), couples, families and groups and at an organisational and community level.

You may work as part of a multi-professional team including doctors [3], nurses [4] and allied health professionals [5].

Many clinical psychologists also work in academia, teaching and researching in their area of expertise.

**Where will I work?**

You are likely to work in some, or all, of the following settings:

- in hospitals
- in local clinics and health centres
- in community mental health teams
- in social services, schools and prisons
- Improving Access to Psychology Therapy (IAPT [6]) services.

You will also liaise with members of community mental healthcare teams and other agencies such as the probation service and social services.

**Want to learn more?**

- Find out about the entry requirements for clinical psychology. [7]
- Find out about the training and development opportunities in clinical psychology. [8]

- **Pay and conditions**

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  Most jobs in the NHS are covered by the Agenda for Change (AfC) [9] pay scales. This pay system covers all staff except doctors, dentists and the most senior managers.

  While training, clinical psychologists will be paid at band 6 and after completing their training, they will be paid at band 7. Clinical psychologists in the NHS will usually work standard hours of 37.5 per week. Terms and conditions can vary for employers outside of the NHS.

- **Where the role can lead**

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  Clinical psychologists work largely in health and social care settings including hospitals, health centres, community mental health teams, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and social services.

  They often work as part of a team with other health professionals and practitioners. Most clinical psychologists are employed by the National Health Service (NHS), but some work in private practice.

  After qualifying and gaining some clinical experience, you may decide to specialise in a particular
area of work, such as working with offenders or people with addictive behaviours. You could apply for a trainee high intensity therapist [10] position, enabling you to work under the Improving Access to Psychological Therapies Initiative (IAPT [6]).

Some clinical psychologists decide to go into supervisory roles, clinical management [11] or clinical academic research [12].

- Job market and vacancies

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In January 2018, there were 22,960 practitioner psychologists registered with the Health and Care Professions Council [13].

The last recorded figures from 2011 show that there are over 8,000 NHS staff working in clinical psychology - a 16% increase since 2005. The British Psychological Society says that 95% of all clinical psychologists work in the NHS.

Most NHS organisations advertise their job vacancies on NHS Jobs [14], including those who run NHS services. Some advertise on their own websites. You can find a list of NHS organisations at NHS Choices. [15]

If you're applying for a role either directly in the NHS or in an organisation that provides NHS services, you'll be asked to show how you think the values of the NHS Constitution [16] apply in your everyday work. The same will be true if you are applying for a university course funded by the NHS. Find out more about NHS values [17].

- Further information

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- British Psychological Society [18]
- Health and Care Professions Council [19]
- Clearing House for Postgraduate Courses in Clinical Psychology [20]

Other roles that may interest you

- Counselling psychologist [21]
- Forensic psychologist [22]
- Health psychologist [23]
- Psychotherapist [24]

Source URL: https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/psychological-therapies/roles/clinical-psychologist

Links
[12] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/career-planning/developing-your-health-career/clinical-academic-careers
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