Assistant psychologist

Assistant psychologists undertake a variety of roles in supporting people with mental health problems.

This page has information on the role of an assistant psychologist. There is also information on the entry requirements and training.

Working life

The exact role will depend on the needs of the local population. Typically, you’ll provide clinical support under the direct supervision of a qualified psychologist who would usually retain clinical responsibility for patients and service users.

You’ll work as part of a multidisciplinary team and may be involved with:

- carrying out neuropsychological assessments
- contributing to multidisciplinary discussions about a client’s diagnosis, treatment, risk
assessment and care plan issues
- undertaking specified behavioural observations and assessments
- seeking and acquiring specific information by reading notes, investigating histories etc
- carrying out specified treatment and intervention programmes with clients or groups of clients
- working with client's carers, relatives and others involved in their care including mental health workers
- researching and gathering information

In addition, they would be expected to maintain clear written records, draft reports, letters and summaries of assessments and observations of treatments. Assistant psychologists also work with professionals from the NHS, social services and other agencies.

You’ll provide clinical support under the direct supervision of a qualified psychologist

Entry requirements
Applicants for these posts usually need a degree in psychology, ideally one recognised by the British Psychological Society (BPS).

Universities are usually flexible about the A-levels, A/S, GNVQ or Scottish Higher subjects needed for entry onto psychology degrees. Undergraduates will need to be able to handle scientific concepts, be numerate and have excellent writing skills. Biology, mathematics, English, history, economics or similar arts or social science subjects are all useful preparation for a psychology degree.

At level 2, maths GCSE at grades 4-9 (C or above) or the Scottish Standard Grade are usually required.

Skills needed
You’ll need a range of skills, including a knowledge of psychological theory, an interest in how people think and behave and the ability to relate to a wide range of people including patients and colleagues. You'll need to be a patient and sympathetic.

You’ll also need to be able to demonstrate the values of the NHS Constitution. [1]

Who will I work with?
You will usually work as part of a multi-disciplinary team, which will typically include psychologists (clinical [2], counselling [3], forensic [4] or health [5]), social workers [6], occupational therapists [7], mental health nurses [8] and psychiatrists [9].

Where will I work?
In the UK, assistant psychologists typically work in healthcare - often for the NHS. You could also work in education, human resources, forensic settings or the third/not-for-profit sector.

- **Pay and conditions Expand / Collapse**
  Most jobs in the NHS are covered by the Agenda for Change (AfC) [10] pay scales. Assistant psychologists in the NHS will usually be at band 4 and work standard hours of 37.5 per week. Terms and conditions can vary for employers outside of the NHS.

- **Where the role can lead Expand / Collapse**
  Working as an assistant psychologist can lead to training as a fully qualified clinical psychologist [11], health psychologist [5], counselling psychologist [3] or forensic psychologist [4], because you’ll have gained practical, hands-on experience while working under the direct supervision of an experienced professional. You may also be able to apply to train as a psychological wellbeing practitioner [12] for the same reasons.

- **Job market and vacancies Expand / Collapse**
  Vacancies are likely to be very competitive. Gaining some experience [13] will help your application stand out.

  Assistant psychologist posts are advertised on the [NHS Jobs website] [14]. The [BPS] website also has job vacancies. [15]

  In any job application, you will need to be able to demonstrate the values of the [NHS Constitution] [1].

- **Further information Expand / Collapse**
  - [British Psychological Society] [16]
  - [UCAS] [17]

**Other roles that may interest you**

- [Counselling psychologist] [3]
- [Forensic psychologist] [4]
- [Health psychologist] [5]
- [Creative therapy support roles] [18]

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

Links
[1] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/about/working-health/nhs-constitution
professions/occupational-therapist