

Creative therapy support roles

Arts and crafts can be used as part of a person's therapy as a way of helping them deal with their issues.

This page has information on the role of creative therapy support workers, including entry requirements and skills needed.

Working life

Art, music and drama can be particularly helpful when there are things people cannot say in words. This could be because the emotions are too distressing. Or it may be because the patient has difficulties with communication.



Arts and crafts can help people's self-awareness, confidence and self-esteem. Taking part in an activity alone or with others can give people great pleasure and satisfaction.

Job titles vary, for example you might work as:

- activities co-ordinator
- activity co-ordinator
- activities support worker
- activities facilitator
- activity assistant
- creative assistant
- activity worker

You'll typically plan activity programmes based on patients needs, abilities and preferences. This might include, for example, art, music, cookery or photography. You will help groups and individuals to take part in the activities.

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In the NHS, many staff in roles related to the creative therapies work with adults with mental health issues. Other creative staff may work with

- elderly people, including those with dementia
- children and young people with mental health issues or disabilities

Where will I work?

You may be based in hospitals, hospices or residential care homes.

Who will I work with?

You will work as part of a team with healthcare professionals which could include nurses [1], doctors [2], occupational therapists [3], psychiatrists [4], psychologists [5] and arts therapists (art [6], music [7] or dramatherapists [8]).

Entry requirements

There are no set entry requirements but employers expect good literacy and numeracy. They may ask for GCSEs (or equivalent) in maths and English.

Employers also ask for an interest and ability in one or more areas of arts or crafts, such as art, music, drama, cookery, gardening, photography etc. They may also ask for a qualification in health or social care such as an NVQ or BTEC, or equivalent.

Employers usually ask for experience in working in the arts in a care or therapy setting. This is particularly important for roles working with people with mental health issues. Your experience could be from paid or voluntary work.

Some staff enter by working as healthcare assistants or occupational therapy assistants in jobs which may include creative therapies.

Personal characteristics and skills needed

Staff in roles related to the creative therapies need to be:

- creative
- patient and caring
- able to motivate people
- accepting of other people's lifestyles
- willing to work with people from all walks of life
- happy to talk to and work with groups
- flexible
- able to work in a team but use their own initiative
- able to follow procedures
- able to deal with people with challenging behaviour

You'll also need

- arts and crafts skills
- good communication skills
- good organisational skills

Training and development

You will be given the training you need to do the job, including an introduction to the department and its procedures. You will also have training in relevant issues such as mental health or disability.

- Pay and conditions

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Creative therapies support staff working in the NHS are paid on the [Agenda for Change \(AfC\)](#) ^[9] pay system. It isn't possible to be precise about salaries as job titles vary and it all depends on the exact role you're working in. However, they would typically start on [AfC](#) ^[10] band 2 or 3. With further training and experience, you could apply for more senior positions.

Most staff in roles related to the creative therapies in the NHS work standard hours which are likely to be around 37.5 a week. They may work some evenings or weekends.

Terms and conditions will usually be different for creative therapies support staff working outside of the NHS.

- Where the role can lead

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You could apply to train as an [art](#) [6], [music](#) [7] or [dramatherapist](#) [8] or as an [occupational therapist](#) [3].

- Job market and vacancies

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Most NHS trusts advertise their vacancies on [NHS Jobs](#) [11] and some advertise on their own websites. You can find a list of NHS organisations on [NHS Choices](#) [12].

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 NHS values apply in your everyday work.

[Find out more about NHS values](#) [13].

- Further information

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- [British Association of Art Therapists](#) [14]
- [British Association for Dramatherapists](#) [15]
- [British Association for Music Therapy](#) [16]
- [Royal College of Occupational Therapists](#) [17]

Other roles that may interest you

- [Art therapist/art psychotherapist](#) [18]
- [Dramatherapist](#) [19]
- [Music therapist](#) [20]
- [Occupational therapy support worker](#) [21]

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Links

[1] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/nursing>

[2] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/anaesthesia>

[3] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/allied-health-professionals/occupational-therapist>

[4] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/psychiatry>

[5] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/psychological-therapies>

[6] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/allied-health-professionals/art-therapist>

[7] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/allied-health-professionals/music-therapist>

- [8] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/allied-health-professionals/dramatherapist>
- [9] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/about/careers-nhs/nhs-pay-and-benefits/agenda-change-pay-rates>
- [10] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#AfC>
- [11] <http://www.jobs.nhs.uk/>
- [12] <http://www.nhs.uk/aboutnhs/howthenhsworks/authoritiesandtrusts/Pages/Authoritiesandtrusts.aspx>
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- [20] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/allied-health-professionals/roles-allied-health-professions/music-therapist>
- [21] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/Explore-roles/wider-healthcare-team/roles-wider-healthcare-team/clinical-support-staff/occupational-therapy-support-worker>