

Compare roles in health

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Occupational therapist [1]

As an occupational therapist, you'll help people who have difficulties carrying out day-to-day activities because of a disability, illness, trauma, ageing, and a range of long-term conditions.

Training and qualifications required

You need to take approved training to become an occupational therapist. This could be an approved degree in occupational therapy (courses take three or four years full-time and are also available part-time). If you already have a relevant degree and healthcare experience, you can take a Masters in occupational therapy. These courses usually take two years. To get onto a full-time occupational therapy degree course you usually need two or three A levels or equivalent, along with five GCSEs (grades 9-4/A-C), including English language, maths and science. Each institution sets its own entry requirements, so it's important to check carefully. A degree apprenticeship in occupational therapy has also been approved and offers an alternative to full-time university study. You would apply to healthcare and social care providers for these apprenticeships. Level 3 qualifications would usually be required.

Expected working hours and salary range

You would start on band 5 of the NHS Agenda for Change pay system. With experience, further qualifications and training, you could apply for more specialist and senior posts at bands 6 and 7. Occupational therapists working at consultant level will typically be on band 8A or 8B. Occupational therapists in the NHS work around 37.5 hours a week and may be expected to work flexibly over a 7 day period.

Desirable skills and values

You'll need skills in communication and organisational. You also need patience, enthusiasm, creativity and the ability to work well within a team.

Prospects

You'll work across a range of settings; elderly care, physical and mental health settings, paediatrics, brain injury and learning disability to name a few. Occupational therapists are found in the public, private and voluntary sectors and also in independent practice. There are also opportunities to become involved in

research and education. You'll work within multidisciplinary teams or as service managers in health or social care.

Related roles

- Art therapist/art psychotherapist [2]
- Music therapist [3]
- Mental health nurse [4]
- Social worker [5]

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