Child and adolescent psychiatry

Child and adolescent psychiatrists treat children and young people up to the age of 18 with a range of mental health conditions such as autism spectrum disorder, depression and eating disorders.

Their work makes a significant difference to the lives of very vulnerable children and young people.

Life as a child and adolescent psychiatrist

It's an interesting role full of complex challenges and you’ll need to combine the rigours and science of medicine with the creativity of therapy.

You'll need to adapt and take different approaches to different patients with a wide range of problems including:

- neuro-developmental problems arising in childhood
- attention deficit hyperactivity disorder ([ADHD](#))
- autism and learning disability
- tic disorders
- emotional and behavioural problems
- disruptive behaviour
- feeding and toileting difficulties
- depression
- anxiety and OCD (obsessive compulsive disorder)
- response to trauma or life adjustment (such as domestic violence and divorce)
- attachment disorders
- other significant mental health problems
- eating disorders
- psychosis
- self-harm and attempted suicide

You’ll work within a large multidisciplinary team and alongside a patient’s family and carers, their schoolteachers and other specialists such as a paediatricians. You’ll be expected to provide advice and leadership to the wider team, often delivering your expertise to other professionals rather than the patient themselves.

You’ll be responsible for advocating for children and young people and improving public
mental health. So, you’ll need an excellent understanding of legal frameworks, educational provision and safeguarding.

How much can I earn?

You’ll first earn a salary when you start your foundation training after medical school. The basic salary ranges from £29,384 to £34,012. Once you start your specialty training as a child and adolescent psychiatrist employed by the NHS, you can expect to earn a salary of at least £40,257, which can increase to between £84,559 and £114,003 as a consultant.

How about the benefits?

- make a difference
- flexible and part-time working
- high income early in your career
- work anywhere in the world
- excellent pension scheme
- good holiday entitlement
- NHS discounts in shops and restaurants

Must-have skills

- excellent communication skills to manage a wide range of relationships with colleagues, and patients and their families
- emotional resilience, a calm temperament and the ability to work well under pressure
- teamwork and the capacity to lead multidisciplinary teams
- problem-solving and diagnostic skills
- outstanding organisational ability and effective decision-making skills
- first-class time and resource management for the benefit of patients

Entry requirements

Your first step is medical school. Typically, you’ll need excellent GCSEs and three A or A* passes at A level including chemistry for a five-year undergraduate degree in medicine. Many medical schools also ask for biology and others may require maths or physics.

If you already have a degree, you could study for a four-year postgraduate degree in medicine.

You’ll need to pass an interview and admissions test. You’ll be asked to show how you demonstrate the NHS values such as compassion and respect.

Some medical schools look to recruit a mix of students from different backgrounds and geographical areas, so your educational and economic background and family circumstances could be considered as part of your application.
"My job is unpredictable, challenging and extremely varied. 50% of mental health issues are detectable at the age of 14 and 75% by the age of 18. Early intervention can make all the difference, even to potentially serious illnesses such as psychosis."

Read Rory’s story [3].

What are my chances of starting a career in general medicine?

There are approximately 627 child and adolescent psychiatrists working in the NHS in England. In 2020, there were 72 applications for 56 specialty training places.

How to become a child and adolescent psychiatrist

After medical school, you’ll join the paid two-year foundation programme [4] where you’ll work in six placements in different settings.

After your foundation programme, you can apply for paid specialty training [5] to become a child and adolescent psychiatrist, which will take a minimum of six years.

You may be able to train part time, for example for health reasons or if you have family or caring responsibilities.

Where a career as a child and adolescent psychiatrist can take you

There are no formal sub-specialties within child and adolescent psychiatry. However, there are a number of growing special interest areas including:

- inpatient
- infant mental health
- neuro-developmental
- learning disability
- eating disorders
- forensic
- substance misuse
- liaison

You could specialise or conduct research, teach medical students or postgraduate students in training and get involved in research at universities, the NHS or private sector.
Live vacancies

Consultant in Child & Adolescent Psychiatry
Milton Keynes, MK6 5NG
Salary:
£84559.00 to £114003.00 a year N/A
Type:
Permanent
Employer:
Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust
Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant in Child & Adolescent Psychiatry job (opens in a new window) [6]

Consultant - Child & Adolescent Psychiatry
Lowestoft, NR33 8AG
Salary:
£84559.00 to £114003.00 a year gross per annum pro rata
Type:
Permanent
Employer:
Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust
Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant - Child & Adolescent Psychiatry job (opens in a new window) [7]

Consultant in Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
Edgware, HA8 0AD
Salary:
£88364.00 to £119113.00 a year per annum
Type:
Permanent
Employer:
Barnet Enfield and Haringey Mental Health Trust
Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant in Child and Adolescent Psychiatry job (opens in a new window) [8]

Consultant in Child & Adolescent Psychiatry
Harlow, CM20 1DG
Salary:
£84559.00 to £114003.00 a year per annum
Type:
  Permanent
Employer:  
  NELFT NHS Foundation Trust
Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant in Child & Adolescent Psychiatry job  
(opens in a new window) [9]

**Consultant in Child and Adolescent Psychiatry**

Southampton, SO16 6YD

Salary:  
  £84559.00 to £114003.00 a year Per Annum
Type:  
  Permanent
Employer:  
  University Hospital Southampton NHS Foundation Trust
Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant in Child and Adolescent Psychiatry job  
(opens in a new window) [10]

**Consultant in Child and Adolescent Psychiatry**

Chelmsford, CM1 1QH

Salary:  
  £84559.00 to £114003.00 a year per annum
Type:  
  Permanent
Employer:  
  NELFT NHS Foundation Trust
Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant in Child and Adolescent Psychiatry job  
(opens in a new window) [11]

**Further information**

These organisations have further information about being a doctor in child and adolescent psychiatry, particularly as your career progresses. Take a look.

- The Association for Child and Adolescent Mental Health [12]
- British Medical Association [13]
- BMJ Careers [14]
- General Medical Council [15]
- Royal College of Psychiatrists [16]
Other roles that may interest you

- General practitioner [17]
- Paediatrician [18]
- Neurologist [19]
- General psychiatry [20]

Source URL: https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/doctors/roles-doctors/psychiatry/child-and-adolescent-psychiatry

Links
[1] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#ADHD
[16] https://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/become-a-psychiatrist/choose-psychiatry/what-is-psychiatry/types-of-psychiatrist/child-and-adolescent