

Careers in Mental Health

If you are interested in how people think and behave and want to use the study of psychology to help people with mental ill health, a career in the psychological professions could be for you.

Our '[Careers with Psychology](#)' leaflet outlines the chartered Psychologist roles from Clinical Psychologist to Sport & Exercise Psychologist.

This leaflet provides an overview of roles within the other main groups of the psychological professions workforce who support people with mental health difficulties.



1. Children's Wellbeing Practitioner

[Children's Wellbeing Practitioner](#) (CWP) support children and young people with low to moderate mental health difficulties such as anxiety, low mood and behavioural difficulties. They provide interventions such as guided self-help and therapeutic activities, alongside sign-posting and referring to other mental health services, when required.

To train as a CWP, you will need to search and apply for Trainee Children's Wellbeing Practitioner posts on the [NHS jobs website](#).

You do not need a degree to train although if you have a degree you would usually undertake a postgraduate certificate, rather than an undergraduate level qualification which is offered for trainees without a degree.

You will need experience of working with children and young people to support their mental health. A knowledge of child and adolescent development, good communications skills and the ability to study at undergraduate level are also required.

During your one-year training programme, you'll gain a range of experience and work closely with a trained supervisor to help you engage in self-reflection, seek and respond to feedback, and develop your professional knowledge and skills.

2. Education Mental Health Practitioner

[Education Mental Health Practitioners](#) deliver high-quality, evidence-based early interventions for children and young people experiencing mental health problems within their school or college and referring on to specialist support as necessary. They work across education and healthcare settings to provide early intervention mental health support. These new roles support the Government's priority of increasing access to and availability of mental health and wellbeing support for children and young people.

To train as an EMHP, you will need to search and apply for Trainee Education Mental Health Practitioner posts on the [NHS jobs website](#).

You can train for a postgraduate or graduate diploma, depending on whether or not you already have a degree qualification. Although you don't need a degree to apply for this training programme, you'll need to demonstrate your ability to work at degree level and have experience of working with children and young people to support their mental health.

The 12-month course is NHS funded and consists of a combination of study at university and supervised practice learning experience, gaining knowledge and understanding across both education and mental health services.

3. Mental Health & Wellbeing Practitioner

[Mental Health & Wellbeing Practitioners](#) provide evidence-based interventions and co-ordinate care plans for adults with severe mental health problems. They are based in the community with a role supporting adults to live fulfilling lives. They do not offer psychological therapy but deliver psychological wellbeing interventions to patients referred by GPs and other local services to help them recover and improve their lives. Interventions may centre around problem solving, improving sleep, managing emotions, confidence building and eating disorders. Support will be provided at clinics, community centres and patient's own homes as well as online.

To train as a MHWP you will need to search for Trainee Mental Health & Wellbeing Practitioner opportunities on the [NHS jobs website](#). You will need to demonstrate your ability to study at degree level or above.

You will need an offer of employment as a Trainee Mental Health & Wellbeing Practitioner to apply for a Postgraduate Certificate in Mental Health & Wellbeing Practitioner course.

The training programme will last a year, typically with one day per week at university and the remainder of the week working on specific training tasks in a community mental health service.

4. Psychological Wellbeing Practitioner

[Psychological wellbeing practitioners](#) (PWP) are trained to assess and support people with common mental health problems to manage their recovery. You will work within NHS Talking Therapies for Anxiety and Depression (formerly IAPT) which provides evidence-based therapies for people with anxiety and depression. You will support people by conducting patient interviews, carrying out risk assessments and helping patients to identify areas where they wish to change how they feel, think or behave.

To train as a PWP you will need to search for Trainee/Apprentice Psychological Wellbeing Practitioner opportunities on the [NHS jobs website](#). Training is open to people with a range of experience, but experience of working with people with mental health problems is preferred and good interpersonal skills are essential.

If you have a degree you can undertake a postgraduate certificate. If you do not have a degree, you can do an equivalent graduate level qualification or a level 6 apprenticeship. The apprenticeship is intended for people without a degree with useful life experience. All PWPs need to meet the national requirement for registration either with the [BPS](#) or [BACP](#).

Training usually lasts around a year and consists of 45 days of academic work (one day per week at university) and four days a week in supervised practice within your workplace.

5. Youth Intensive Psychological Practitioner

[Youth Intensive Psychological Practitioners](#) provide psychological assessment and psychologically informed interventions support for young people (13–17 years old) with severe mental health problems. Based in inpatient and intensive home treatment services, they have an important role in supporting young people towards recovery. They will work as part of multidisciplinary team, supervised by Clinical Psychologists, to help patients lead fulfilling lives by ensuring they can access the support they need. This is a new role currently being piloted across England where practitioners use assessment, engagement and formulation skills to map the patients difficulties.

Search for Trainee Youth Intensive Psychological Practitioner posts on the [NHS jobs website](#). You will need to demonstrate your ability to study at degree level or above and direct experience of people who use mental health and care services.

You will need an offer of employment as a Trainee Youth Intensive Psychological Practitioner & have completed a BPS accredited psychology course to apply for a Youth Intensive Psychological Practitioner Postgraduate Certificate.

The training lasts a year and involves a combination of university study and gaining practice skills under supervision in both inpatient and intensive community treatment settings.

1. Counsellor

[Counsellors](#) help people to explore feelings and emotions often related to their experiences. This allows clients to reflect on what is happening to them and consider alternative ways of doing things. Counsellors do not give advice but help clients to examine their choices and find their own way to make a positive change. Some Counsellors specialise in working with particular problems whilst others work with particular age groups. Within the NHS most counsellors work in an NHS Talking Therapies for Anxiety and Depression Service (formerly IAPT).

There are currently no set entry requirements but most employers look for practitioners with recognised professional counselling qualifications and membership of a professional body such as [BACP](#) (British Association for Counselling & Psychotherapy), [UKCP](#) (UK Council for Psychotherapy) or the [NCS](#) (National Counselling Society).

There are different types and levels of courses available including at diploma, degree and postgraduate level. The BACP recommends that a three-stage training route is followed, which comprises of the following courses:

1. **Introduction to counselling (Level 2):** provides basic counselling skills and an overview of training before committing to a full counselling course. Typically, lasts 8 to 12 weeks and is available at further education (FE) colleges.
2. **Certificate in counselling (Level 3):** provides theoretical understanding of counselling at a deeper level, develops counselling skills and prepares for the core training at the next stage. Courses last a year when studied part time at FE colleges.
3. **Core Practitioner Training (Level 4 or above):** courses at this level should meet BACP requirements of being at least one-year full time or two years part time, with a minimum of 100 hours in a supervised placement. The course may be at diploma, degree or postgraduate level. Qualifications that meet these requirements enable you to get membership with the BACP.

A degree in a related subject, such as nursing, psychology, social work or education may be useful in the career and might help you to get onto a counselling course. However, previous counselling experience and evidence that you have the necessary personal qualities, commitment & self-awareness can be just as important.

2. Cognitive Behavioural Therapist

[Cognitive Behavioural Therapists](#) are trained to assess and support children, young people and adults with common mental health and severe mental health problems. CBT is a talking therapy that aims to help people manage their problems by changing the way they think and behave. It is most commonly used to treat anxiety and depression, but it can be used for other mental health problems like psychosis, or physical health problems such as chronic pain.

Therapists are employed by Adult NHS Talking Therapies for Anxiety & Depression (Formerly known as IAPT), NHS services, NHS Children and Young People's Mental Health Services (formerly known as CAMHS) and third sector organisations commissioned by the NHS. Therapy might be offered in GP practices, healthcare centres and other community venues.

Search for Trainee CBT Therapist or Trainee High Intensity Therapist posts on the [NHS jobs website](#).

Training courses are offered by a range of universities and other training providers. They typically last a year and involve 60 days training whilst employed by a local NHS commissioned service.

There are nationally-funded ways to train as a CBT therapist:

- NHS Talking Therapies CBT therapist normally need to complete a high intensity NHS Talking Therapies postgraduate diploma training course.
- CBT therapists with adults with severe mental health problems, normally need to complete a postgraduate diploma in CBT for people with psychosis or bipolar disorder, a diagnosis of personality disorder or eating disorders.
- Children and Young People's CBT therapists normally need to complete a children and young people postgraduate diploma training course.

You will normally need a degree to join the postgraduate diploma courses but it's also possible to become a CBT therapist by gaining an equivalent accreditation from other training and experience.

3. High Intensity Therapist

[High intensity therapists](#) support individuals of all ages and cultural backgrounds who are experiencing mental health conditions, in particular moderate to severe depression and anxiety. They offer a range of high-intensity cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) based interventions, such as imagery rescripting and exposure therapy, to help patients manage their own recovery.

Search for Trainee High Intensity Therapist posts on the [NHS jobs website](#) and on third-sector websites such as Mind, Rethink and Turning Point.

To practise as a High Intensity Therapist you must successfully complete a BABCP [accredited postgraduate diploma](#) in CBT or one of the other therapies. The diploma lasts one-year full time, or two years part time. Each week you'll spend a combination of days at university and in a clinical setting undergoing supervised practice.

To get a place on a training course, you'll need a registered qualification at graduate level in nursing, social work, occupational therapy, counselling, psychotherapy or clinical psychology or provide a portfolio of evidence showing that your skills, experience and competencies meet the BABCP's Knowledge Skills and Attitude [requirements](#).

Most trainees gain the necessary evidence through working as a PWP (Psychological Wellbeing Practitioner). If you've qualified as a PWP, you'll need two years' post-qualification experience before applying for high intensity therapy training.

4. Psychotherapist

[Psychotherapists](#) work with individuals, couples, families and groups to help them overcome a range of psychological and emotional issues. They use personal treatment plans and a variety of non-medical treatments to address the client's thought processes, feelings and behaviour, understand inner conflicts and find new ways to alleviate and deal with distress.

Applicants will need an honours degree completed to a high standard in a relevant subject (such as psychology, nursing, medicine, social work and sociology) and have previous experience from working in a related area, such as social work, mental health professions, psychology and psychiatry.

A postgraduate qualification is essential. To secure a position within a recognised public institution, training that conforms to standards set by the [UKCP](#) (UK Council for Psychotherapy), the [ACP](#) (Association of Child Psychotherapists) or the [BCP](#) (British Psychoanalytic Council) is usually required.

Psychotherapy training courses normally last four years of study and clinical training, part-time. Prospective employers will specify which psychology qualification they seek in their job adverts, so it can be useful to consult job postings on NHS Jobs before deciding on a training course.

Other NHS Therapists

1. Assistant Psychologist

[Assistant Psychologists](#) (APs) undertake a variety of roles in supporting people with mental health problems. They work under the direct supervision of a qualified psychologist to provide clinical support patients and service users. They may conduct neuropsychological assessments, undertake specified behavioural observations and assessments, and carry out specified treatment and intervention programmes with clients or groups of clients.

Search for Assistant Psychologist roles on the [NHS jobs website](#). You'll need to be a BPS accredited psychology graduate and have 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.

2. Clinical Associate in Psychology

[Clinical Associate in Psychology](#) (CAP) are new roles for specialist mental health professionals whose duties include assessing, formulating, and treating clients within specified ranges of conditions and age, either in primary care/adult mental health settings or in a range of areas involving children, young people, and their families. They are able to practice autonomously with appropriate support, working within their scope of practice, under the supervision of a registered clinical psychologist. Although their role can be used in a variety of settings, in practice CAPS tends to be trained to work with particular groups of people.

Search for 'Clinical Associate Psychologist Apprenticeship', 'Trainee Clinical Associate Psychologist' or 'Clinical Associate in Psychology' on the [NHS jobs website](#).

To apply for training roles you will need to have achieved a BPS accredited psychology course and have experience of working in health, mental health and/or psychological service settings.

Training is an 18-month full-time, level 7-degree apprenticeship, which leads to a Master's qualification. Training is hosted by an employer, such as an NHS trust, alongside training on a university-validated degree programme.

3. Peer Support Worker

[Peer Support Workers](#) are people who use their own lived experience of mental health problems to support others. They use their own experience and empathy to help people and their families with mental health problems. Peer support workers are part of a patient's care team to provide support and inspiration for recovery. The role depends on the type of service based in but might include working one to one, supporting group work, helping patients to develop goals and engage with activities.

Search for Peer Support Worker posts on the [NHS jobs website](#). You will need relevant lived experience and be willing to receive training. You will then undertake a training programme delivered by other people with lived experience with support from the NHS and on-the-job training as appropriate.

Further Information

Finding Experience

Relevant experience will be important for all the job roles mentioned above. This might start whilst you are still studying, through volunteering or part time work. In addition you may well need to gain further experience as a support worker or similar before entering these roles.

Search for volunteering opportunities on:

- www.doit.life/
- www.worcsu.com/volunteer/

See our '**Building Work Experience for Professional Psychology Doctorates**' leaflet for local organisations who have taken students previously available from **firstpoint**.

Contact organisations, charities, support groups and helplines who provide advice/services to see if they can offer you some experience.

Finding Jobs

Many of the job roles indicated above are advertised at

- www.jobs.nhs.uk/

In addition, look at support worker roles with professional bodies, charities, and local authority websites. In the Worcestershire area look at:

- www.wmjobs.co.uk
- www.onside-advocacy.org.uk/
- www.barnardos.org.uk/work-with-us

For more detailed information about the careers mentioned in this leaflet:

- <https://careers.bps.org.uk/>
- www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/Explore-roles
- www.prospects.ac.uk/job-profiles

For list of the different types of therapy go to:

- www.bacp.co.uk/about-therapy/types-of-therapy

Also see the following leaflets all available from **firstpoint** or www.worc.ac.uk/careers:

- '[Careers with Psychology](#)'
- '[Building Work Experience for Psychology Doctorates](#)'
- '[Working with People](#)'
- '[Working with Children & Young People](#)'

If you would like to book a careers appointment to discuss your options, please visit: <https://worcester.targetconnect.net>

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