

PROSPECTS

Job profile

Psychological wellbeing practitioner

You'll need excellent interpersonal skills and experience of working with people with mental health conditions to work as a psychological wellbeing practitioner (PWP)

As a PWP you'll assess and support adults who are experiencing common mental health difficulties such as mild to moderate symptoms of depression, anxiety and low mood. You'll offer a range of low-intensity, cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT)-based interventions that will help your patients to manage their own recovery.

You'll work with a large number of people in a practical way, with each client session lasting 20 to 30 minutes on average. A fully-qualified PWP can expect to help more than 250 patients every year.

Managing referrals and signposting to other agencies are common parts of the role and you'll need to work closely with other health-care professionals, such as high-intensity therapists, employment advisers, other therapists and support staff.

Responsibilities

As a PWP, you'll need to:

- undertake patient-centred interviews to identify areas where they wish to see change
- make accurate assessments of the risk patients poses to themselves and others
- make decisions on the suitability of new referrals, referring clients to alternative services or 'stepping up' their treatment to high-intensity psychological therapy if necessary
- devise a shared treatment plan with your patient that's delivered via a range of methods such as face-to-face, online or over the telephone
- provide low-intensity interventions, such as psycho-educational interventions, guided self-help and computerised CBT
- attend multidisciplinary meetings about referrals or clients in treatment
- develop strong professional relationships with primary and secondary care staff, such as general practice staff and mental health workers
- liaise with external agencies including housing, police, local authority, employers and employment support workers
- provide and receive information related to mental health and CBT to individuals or groups of clients, relatives, carers, members of the public and professionals
- educate and involve family members and others in your patient's treatment as necessary
- undertake clinical supervision on a regular basis in line with relevant professional guidelines and policies
- keep accurate records of clinical activity and use these in clinical decision making.

Salary

- Trainee PWPs start at £20,150 (Band 4) of the NHS Agenda for change (AfC) pay rates (<https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/about/careers-nhs/nhs-pay-and-benefits/agenda-change-pay-rates>).
- After qualification, salaries within the NHS progress to Band 5. You're likely to start on £23,023 and progress up one pay point annually until you reach £29,608 (the top of the scale).
- Senior PWPs can earn up to £36,644 (Band 6) for undertaking additional management and leadership responsibilities or a clinical specialism. There are some opportunities for highly-experienced PWPs in leadership roles to earn in excess of this amount.

The NHS pays a London high-cost area supplement at 20% of basic salary for inner London, 15% for outer London and 5% for fringe areas.

Salaries in the voluntary and independent sector may vary.

Figures are intended as a guide only.

Working hours

You can expect to work a standard 37.5 hours per week. There are some opportunities for part-time work.

What to expect

- The work can be challenging as you'll be working with distressed people with high emotional demands. Occasionally, you may encounter situations of potential personal risk, making supervision by colleagues important.
- Jobs are available throughout the UK, but more varied opportunities may be available in larger cities.
- You'll work for an Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) service, which is typically a GP practice, specialist mental health trust, charity or private sector provider. You'll typically work with patients on a one-to-one basis, in groups or/and provide support for a computerised CBT programme.
- The current workforce is predominantly women between the ages of 29 and 45. Men and people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds are currently underrepresented in the profession.
- Local travel between sites is common in some PWP roles. Absence from home overnight is unusual. Overseas work or travel is uncommon.

Qualifications

To qualify as a PWP, you'll need to complete an IAPT low intensity or PWP training course accredited by the British Psychological Society (BPS) on behalf of the IAPT programme (<https://www.england.nhs.uk/mental-health/adults/iapt/>).

Training courses are delivered by a number of universities and course titles vary. In order to get a place, you'll need to be employed as a trainee PWP by a local IAPT service. Selection is carried out jointly by the employer and university, and if you're successful you'll be offered a trainee job and place on the course. Search for trainee PWP jobs on NHS Jobs (<https://www.jobs.nhs.uk/>) or the websites of mental health charities.

Although you don't necessarily need a degree to do the training, in practice many trainees do have a relevant degree or an equivalent qualification. Commitment to supporting patients with mental health conditions and relevant work experience are equally important in securing a trainee place. Contact course providers for exact entry requirements.

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. Search for courses at BPS - Find an accredited course (<https://www.bps.org.uk/public/become-psychologist/accredited-courses?type=WPW&status=C>).

On completion, you'll be awarded either a postgraduate certificate (if you already have a degree) or a graduate-level qualification.

As the course is a requirement of the trainee role, it's usually funded by your employer. Individual course centres can advise about any self-funded places that may be available.

Skills

You'll need to show:

- the skills to develop good therapeutic relationships with clients
- team working skills and an aptitude for fostering good working relationships
- an interest in using clinical supervision and personal development positively and effectively
- the capacity to work under pressure
- the ability to be self-reflective
- regard for others and respect for individual rights of autonomy and confidentiality
- skills in communicating clearly and persuasively, both verbally and in writing
- the ability to liaise and network with a range of organisations and members of the public
- basic IT skills, including word processing and database packages
- a high level of enthusiasm and self-motivation

- good time management and organisational skills relating to the overall number of client contacts offered and clinical sessions carried out per week
- how to apply your knowledge of low-intensity therapeutic interventions to clinical problems.

As training often involves local travel, having a full driving licence and access to a car is important.

Work experience

Competition for trainee PWP places is strong and experience of working with ill mental health is essential. Consider looking for opportunities in primary care services such as community support worker roles.

Evidence of long-term volunteering is also helpful as it shows that you're emotionally strong and committed to working with people with mental health issues. These types of vacancies can be found in the not-for-profit and health sector.

It's sometimes possible to talk to a PWP or to do some work shadowing in your local IAPT service. Use NHS Choices to find your local psychological therapies service ([https://www.nhs.uk/Service-Search/Psychological-therapies-\(IAPT\)/LocationSearch/10008](https://www.nhs.uk/Service-Search/Psychological-therapies-(IAPT)/LocationSearch/10008)).

Employers

You could work in a variety of different settings, including:

- GP surgeries
- health centres
- psychological treatment centres.

You may be employed directly by the NHS or by a charity that has been commissioned to deliver IAPT services on behalf of the NHS, such as Mind, Turning Point or Rethink. There are also some opportunities to work within HM Prison Service or the private sector.

Look for job vacancies at:

- Mind (<http://www.mind.org.uk/vacancies-and-volunteering/>)
- NHS Jobs (<http://www.jobs.nhs.uk/>)
- Rethink (<https://www.rethink.org/get-involved/work-for-us>)
- Turning Point (<https://careers.turning-point.co.uk/>)

Local press and hospital websites also advertise vacancies.

You can set up an email alert with NHS Jobs to receive notification of PWP vacancies in your area. Further advice about local training and recruitment opportunities can be gained from contacting your local psychological therapies services.

Professional development

As a newly qualified PWP you'll be encouraged to take courses to further develop your knowledge and skills. This post-qualification training can be either short courses, lasting up to one week, or longer courses leading to a diploma or Masters.

You'll be expected to identify your own continuing professional development (CPD) needs, which may include a range of in-service and external training opportunities. You can also do further training in areas covered in your initial training in order to specialise in a particular area, such as working with people with sleep difficulties, insomnia or generalised anxiety disorder (GAD).

With experience, you could undergo training in supervisory, management and leadership skills to oversee the work of other PWPs. Alternatively, you could develop specialist skills in working with specific groups of clients, such as those with a learning disability, veterans or those with medically unexplained symptoms, or in a specialist area such as in a prison. Either way, expertise beyond the core PWP role is required and you'll need to undertake CPD training.

However, CPD is not limited to training courses and you'll also be encouraged to take part in other activities that contribute towards your professional development such as shadowing others, reviewing literature, being mentored or working on specific projects.

Career prospects

This is a relatively new job role and options for career development as a PWP were initially limited. However, the role is evolving and there are now increasing opportunities for career progression into senior and lead roles.

Career prospects are generally good and there is a clear progression route in place within the NHS. In order to advance through the pay bands you need to show that you have the required skills, experience and knowledge.

With experience you can apply for senior and lead PWP roles by undertaking additional duties, involving:

- supervision
- management
- service leadership
- training
- specialism
- education and research.

Options to specialise include working in areas such as perinatal mental health or with particular groups of patients, such as older adults, people with long-term health conditions or black and ethnic minority communities.

Some qualified PWPs go on to train in psychological therapies, for example high intensity CBT, counselling or alternative areas such as clinical psychology. For most PWPs, movement into roles delivering high-intensity therapies will take over two years after qualifying, as this is the minimum time required to develop psychological wellbeing skills.



Written by AGCAS editors

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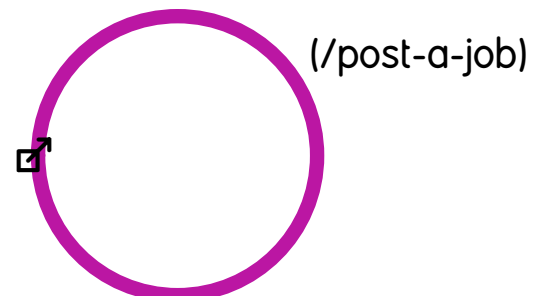


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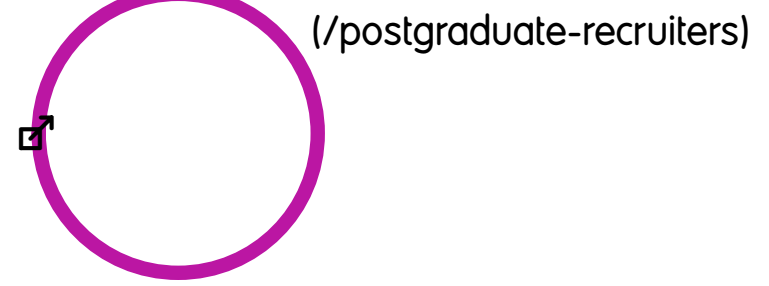
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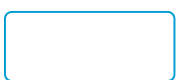
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