Working in the NHS

Roles within the NHS in a mental health capacity include Graduate Mental Health Worker and Low/High Intensity Psychological Therapy Worker.

The NHS also has a new Improving Access to Psychological Therapies scheme which looks promising for the employment of psychology grads. See www.iapt.nhs.uk for information. You can read more about these in the Layard report ‘Increasing Access to Psychological Therapies’ (IAPT) - www.iapt.nhs.uk/silo/files/improving-access-to-psychological-therapy-initial-evaluation-of-the-two-demonstration-sites.pdf

The following websites are good sources of information on working in a mental health capacity within the NHS:

NHS Jobs
www.jobs.nhs.uk
The NHS’ main job site, where all vacancies within the service are advertised.

Careers in Psychological Therapies
https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/psychological-therapies
Landing page on the NHS website, which directs you to individual occupational profiles for careers in psychological therapies.

Primary Care Graduate Mental Health Worker profile
Occupational profile of the role, with details of day to day work, entry requirements and typical salaries.

Psychological Wellbeing Practitioner profile
Similar to the above profile, although this differs in that it notes that the NHS will train people into the role who don’t possess specific qualifications, but have the right academic credentials or life experience.

IAPT Career Progression
A section of the IAPT’s website (who are described in the first paragraph) detailing how you could typically progress from a Psychological Wellbeing Practitioner to a High Intensity Trainee.

Clinical psychologists

Most clinical psychologists work in the NHS, which has a clearly defined career structure, but some work in private practice. The work is often directly with people, both individually or in groups, assessing their needs and providing therapies based on psychological theories and research. For more information on working as a clinical psychologist, see our “Doctorate in Clinical Psychology” hand out.

Mental health nursing

There are a number of different places that employ mental health nurses, including Drug/Alcohol Rehabilitation Centres and prisons.

Some Mental Health Nurses go on to work in the community as a Community Psychiatric Nurses (CPN), others train to be counselling therapists. There is also a really big push in the NHS to promote Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) so many health workers are training to be CBT practitioners.

Trainee low intensity therapy workers

These are relatively new posts within the NHS, designed to increase access to psychological therapies. Training is usually offered as part of the job, via university attendance. The low intensity roles can provide progression to high intensity roles, with training provided in a post grad qualification. You can search on NHS jobs (www.jobs.nhs.uk) for all these types of roles. Alternatively, more information about these trainee positions, nationally and regionally, can be found at the NHS’ Improving Access to Psychological Therapies website (www.iapt.nhs.uk/workforce/low-intensity)

Mental health charities

Mental health charities whose primary focus is on campaigning and awareness, such as Rethink, often have roles in fundraising, policy and research (and a number of other roles traditionally available in the third sector).

If you’re more interested in the advising element of working for a mental health charity, then try charities such as the Richmond Trust, or other organisations where all the clients have mental health issues. Alternatively, look for charities dealing with people with other issues (such as homelessness).
but who often have mental health problems as a subset to the main one. Such organisations take on people who are experienced with mental health issues and then train them in the guidance aspect via NVQ.

MIND runs on minimal staffing and is reliant on voluntary staff such as trainees or recently qualified professionals on placements. Clinical Supervisors/Project Managers work locally on an employed basis but these roles are few and far between. There may be head office roles such as specialist information officers, policy advisers, project managers etc.

Project worker jobs also exist in charities. Some focus on specific social problems like substance abuse, domestic violence, while others focus on specific sensory problems that can impact on mental health, such as Deafblind UK.

Mentalhealthcare (http://www.mentalhealthcare.org.uk/home) is a website set up in conjunction with researchers at the IoPPN which aims to support the friends and family of those affected by mental health issues. Though there isn’t any information directly related to careers on the website, it contains a lot of useful information, definitions, possible treatment options and more.

Further opportunities
Counselling psychology is a fairly new division of psychology, only really in the last fifteen years identifying itself as a separate field. All counselling psychologists need to have a minimum of a 2:1 degree in psychology or counselling & psychology. They then undertake further training, either at Master’s level or doctoral level in counselling psychology.

There are freelance individuals/small consultancies that perform the role of Mental Health Consultant, though not many of these exist, and would tend to be people who already have experience in a more traditional mental health job.

The Probation Service offers paid training programmes, for which understanding of mental health problems would be useful.

King’s CareerConnect
www.kcl.ac.uk/careerconnect

King’s CareerConnect is our exclusive online career portal enabling students and recent alumni to engage with our services. Once logged in, you can access our vacancy board and search hundreds of part-time roles, placements, internships and graduate-level opportunities, book one-to-one careers or application guidance appointments, apply for exclusive King’s Internships and view our full events calendar to book attendance at our many events throughout the year.

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