

HEALTH PSYCHOLOGY

IF YOU'RE PASSIONATE ABOUT ENHANCING POPULATION HEALTH AND CREATING A BETTER HEALTH SERVICE, SUPPORTING PATIENTS WITH THEIR HEALTHCARE AND HELPING PEOPLE TO CHANGE THEIR HEALTH BEHAVIOURS, THEN YOU CAN MAKE IT HAPPEN AS A HEALTH PSYCHOLOGIST.

You'll use the skills and knowledge you've learned surrounding psychology and health to help people live healthier lives and/or manage long-term conditions. You might also help them to maintain health and reduce their risk of ill health by helping them to increase their physical activity, improve their diet, or sleep patterns, reduce excess alcohol consumption, and/or to stop smoking. You might also help people to take their medication as prescribed, manage chronic pain, and improve quality of life for those living with long-term conditions. You may also be supporting carers and families too; for example, by involving the wider family in healthy living interventions or patient care.

You could work within a multi-disciplinary team, for example, advising doctors on better ways to communicate with their patients or ways to optimise engagement with screening or treatment services and outcomes. You could also work in local authorities or central government, or within universities and academic settings advising on population-level policies, practices and behaviour change interventions.

Health Psychologists working with the public are regulated by the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) and must register with them in order to use the protected title.

HEALTH PSYCHOLOGISTS WORK WITH PEOPLE IN THE MANAGEMENT OF A RANGE OF HEALTH CONDITIONS AND HEALTH BEHAVIOURS, SUCH AS:

CHRONIC ILLNESSS

PAIN MANAGEMENT

HEART DISEASE

CANCER

DIABETES

OBESITY

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

EATING BEHAVIOUR

SUBSTANCE USE

MEDICATION ADHERENCE

SEXUAL HEALTH

VACINATION UPTAKE

WHERE COULD I WORK?

Health Psychologists work across a range of healthcare settings including primary, secondary or tertiary care within statutory, third sector, or private healthcare. Settings can vary from large-scale public health programmes to individual or small group consultations.

Health Psychologists also work in academia – teaching and researching in their area of expertise.

WHO COULD I WORK WITH?

As a Health Psychologist you'll work with individuals from all walks of life and age groups. This may be as a practitioner or indirectly through the development of behaviour change interventions, designed to have a positive impact on population or health professional behaviour, health systems and health outcomes.

You may also work as part of a team, including other health professionals, public health teams or as part of research teams in universities or industry.

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT HEALTH PSYCHOLOGY
CAREERS.BPS.ORG.UK/AREA/HEALTH

TRAINING TO BECOME CHARTERED IN HEALTH PSYCHOLOGY

You can gain Graduate Basis for Chartered membership (GBC) by completing a BPS-accredited undergraduate degree or conversion course. Specialist training options in health psychology includes:

MSC IN HEALTH PSYCHOLOGY AND

BPS QUALIFICATION IN HEALTH PSYCHOLOGY (STAGE 2) OR

TAUGHT DOCTORATE OR PHD IN HEALTH PSYCHOLOGY

WORK EXPERIENCE

Work experience is a great way to learn about a career in health psychology and decide on whether it's what you want. You'll also need it to get a place on most accredited postgraduate courses, and to find work in the field for the Qualification in Health Psychology (Stage 2).

If you are looking for work experience you could consider the following areas:

HEALTH RESEARCH UNITS

PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENTS

LOCAL CLINICAL AND HEALTH CENTRES

COMMUNITY AND PUBLIC HEALTH SETTINGS

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A DAY IN THE LIFE

PROFESSOR ANGEL MARIE CHATER **HEALTH PSYCHOLOGIST**

Being employed at a university, and the diversity of our skills as Health Psychologists in the areas of research, teaching, consultancy and psychological intervention makes my work incredibly varied. There is no typical day. My area of expertise focuses on behaviour change intervention design, delivery, evaluation and adoption systems (IDDEAS). All my work revolves around this in one way or another.

THE BEST PART OF MY JOB

It has to be the people. I have the pleasure of working with amazing colleagues, many of whom I would class as friends. My students are full of energy and enthusiasm, driving our science and practice forward. And the clients who we work with, which for me includes many vulnerable groups; young people who have been bereaved, individuals who attend foodbanks, and those living with obesity and diabetes. Seeing the impact our interventions have on their lives is priceless.

THE MOST CHALLENGING PART OF MY JOB

Keeping on top of emails. They are often an underlying cause of heightened levels of anxiety.

WHY I LOVE MY JOB

I love being a Health Psychologist with all of my heart. No one day is the same

and I never get bored. We make a difference to people's lives, the students we teach, the clients we see, the populations we research and intervene with and the professionals we support.

ADVICE TO OTHERS

The best piece of advice I can give to others is to know your self-worth. And with this, be brave. Know your unique selling point (USP). I hear from many Health Psychologists that as a discipline we are too cautious and humble. Yet we are incredibly well-skilled and have the theoretical and empirical evidence and knowledge to support the impact we can make to education, research, policy and practice. So speak up, tell the world what you can do, and sell yourself!