Are you interested in a career in clinical psychology or looking for work experience?

Here in the Clinical Health Psychology Department we receive large numbers of requests from A-level and undergraduate students for work experience and placement opportunities. Unfortunately, if and when positions arise we are only able to offer voluntary work to those who have completed a first degree in psychology and can offer on-going regular hours.

If you have completed an undergraduate degree in psychology and could offer set working hours please contact us to enquire whether any current vacancies are available within the department. All Southport and Ormskirk Hospital NHS Trust volunteers will undergo Disclosure and Barring (previously CRB) and occupational health checks in line with the Trust’s volunteer recruitment policy.

Tips for those aspiring to become a clinical psychologist

The journey to becoming a clinical psychologist can sometimes feel a little daunting. Bearing this in mind, we thought it may be helpful to offer some ‘top tips’.

Perhaps, a word of caution is needed, that ultimately everyone’s journey will be different. There is no set recipe and therefore these tips should be taken with a pinch of salt. In my experience those that are successful are the people who find their own way of developing the skills they need.

- **Enjoy the journey**- At this point in your career you have the opportunity to explore clinical psychology freely. Go where your passions and interests lie. Ask yourself why this career interests you? What is it that drives your passion and determination? It is important to stay in touch with this, the path to training can be hard at times, but keeping in touch with these passions can help to keep you motivated.

- **Gain experience with people**- All of the work of a clinical psychologist occurs within relationships with people. Therefore, the most crucial skills and experiences to gain are those centred on developing relationships with people. You can gain these skills in a range of areas, from personal relationships, volunteering, or work. It is important to think about what helps you to develop relationships and helpful ways you have responded when things haven’t gone so well.

- **Relate experiences to psychological theories**- The essence of being a clinical psychologist is using your psychological knowledge and understanding to help people. Thinking about what you know about psychology and applying this to your experiences will help you to practice this key skill.

- **Reflect on your experiences**- Each experience you have, be it in your personal or professional life, can tell you something about yourself and the way you see the world. Reflecting on your experiences will help you to learn about yourself. You may identify that you make certain assumptions about the world, maybe you have gaps in your knowledge that you hadn’t realised you had, or you may notice what skills and strengths you could bring to the profession.
Have realistic expectations - You are not expected to know everything. Being a clinical psychologist is a constant learning curve and so you’ll never know everything. It is more important to be aware of the skills you possess, what knowledge you do have, and how you would like to develop your knowledge. This is why reflection is a crucial aspect of being a clinical psychologist; it allows us to develop our skills and knowledge in a way that is helpful to us and others.

The road to a career in clinical psychology

Qualifications

The first step to becoming a practising Clinical Psychologist is completing an undergraduate degree which gives you Graduate Basis with Chartered Membership (GBC). You can check if your psychology degree gives you GBC by contacting your university or visiting http://www.bps.org.uk/bpslegacy/ac and searching for your institution and qualification.

It is also necessary to complete a three-year postgraduate Doctorate in Clinical Psychology. Entry requirements vary from institution to institution so it may be a good idea to do a bit of research about the preferences of your chosen courses before making your application. Applications are made through the Clearing House for Postgraduate Courses in Clinical Psychology. Visit http://www.leeds.ac.uk/chpccp/ for information on individual course centres and how to apply.

Work experience

Once you have completed you first degree, the route into a career in clinical psychology will usually involve gaining relevant clinical, research and academic experience through working in settings relevant to clinical psychology. Often, this can be through working as an assistant psychologist or research assistant, though many doctorate course centres also value paid and unpaid experience relevant to clinical psychology gained in other settings.

The British Psychological Society’s website contains other useful information and advice on jobs you may consider if interested in a career in this field.

http://www.bps.org.uk/careers-education-training/how-become-psychologist/types-psychologists/becoming-clinical-psychologists

Voluntary Experience

It is also possible to gain relevant experience in voluntary settings through befriending or enabling schemes which aim to help people access services in their local community. National Organisations such as The Samaritans and MIND may also offer relevant volunteering opportunities. See below for useful website links.

- The Samaritans - http://www.samaritans.org/volunteer-us
- MIND - The Mental Health Charity - www.mind.org.uk/
Browse through a variety of volunteering opportunities and find out more about how to register as a befriender in your local community. Below are details for Sefton and Lancashire County Council’s volunteering pages.


More useful websites

- http://www.bps.org.uk/ - The representative body of psychology and psychologists in the UK.
- www.clinpsy.org.uk – A site aimed at anyone with an interest in pursuing a career in clinical psychology. Offers information and advice for graduates, trainees and qualified clinical psychologists.