



## Clinical psychology work experience

Relevant experience is crucial for gaining a place on the Clinical Psychology Doctorate. Start as soon as possible and use the ideas below to get started.

**Reflect** on your experience to help you identify what you learned, the skills you developed (or still need to develop!) and how you incorporated theory into practice. **Reflective practice is a key part of a clinical psychologist's work, and vital for your application for the course.**

The Clearing House for Postgraduate Courses in Clinical Psychology ([www.leeds.ac.uk/chpccp](http://www.leeds.ac.uk/chpccp)) give you advice on what counts as experience:

*“Relevant experience includes part-time or full-time, voluntary or paid work, involving caring or service roles with clients, whether in the public, private or charitable sectors. Although it is common for applicants to have worked in mental health in the NHS, work in other areas is also relevant. As examples, many successful applicants have worked in Social Services, in services for people with disabilities, or in the charitable sector. However, some course centres may value clinical experience which has been supervised by a qualified clinical psychologist over other types of experience. If possible, you should seek regular supervision or contact from a qualified clinical psychologist. If your job does not involve such contact you may benefit by making contact with local clinical psychologists.”*

Some courses insist on at least 12 months of clinical or clinically relevant research experience, as an assistant psychologist or research assistant, supervised by someone with knowledge of psychological theories and models. *Check with your preferred course-provider for their particular requirements.* Each course has a slightly different structure and ethos, so it's important to think about your interests and try to find a course that reflects these. You'll find more information in The Alternative Handbook (available via the BPS shop <http://shop.bps.org.uk/>) and Clearing House site (see above).

### Sample job titles

Below is a list of sample job titles to give you an idea of the types of opportunity you could be looking for:

- Nursing assistant/auxiliary nurse
- Care assistant
- Assistant in special school
- Helpline volunteer eg Nightline, Childline
- Assistant psychologist
- Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) wellbeing practitioner (England)
- Graduate Mental Health Worker
- Research assistant
- Support worker





## Finding opportunities – starting points

### NHS

Staff bank, who recruit all supplementary staff to all areas of NHS Lothian, (including the Royal Edinburgh Hospital) and the rest of NHS Scotland, including auxiliary and non-registered care assistants. All jobs are advertised on the SHOW website [www.jobs.scot.nhs.uk](http://www.jobs.scot.nhs.uk)

### Charity sector

You can find paid work in the charity sector, including care worker and support worker, as well as volunteering opportunities. For example, the Scottish Association for Mental Health ([www.samh.org.uk](http://www.samh.org.uk)) advertises vacancies such as ‘Support worker’, which can be available as a part-time position. As roles like this are also available as part of bank staff you can fit work around your academic commitments. Charities rely heavily on volunteers (see Volunteering section below for more information and ideas)

Where to look for vacancies:

- MyCareerHub <https://mycareerhub.ed.ac.uk> - support worker roles, holiday playschemes for children with special needs – and more
- Specialist vacancy websites for the charity sector include:
  - [www.goodmoves.org.uk](http://www.goodmoves.org.uk)
  - [www.charityjob.co.uk](http://www.charityjob.co.uk)
  - [www.jobsincharities.co.uk](http://www.jobsincharities.co.uk)
- The resources under *Charity & Development Work* at [www.ed.ac.uk/careers/occupations](http://www.ed.ac.uk/careers/occupations).

### Volunteering

- Volunteering with mental health charities, and others, is good for getting started with building up experience, and easy to fit round your studies. There’s a wide range of opportunities - work with children, the elderly, people with learning disabilities, stroke victims and more!
- Volunteering is also a useful route into paid work. You gain valuable experience and often hear about any paid vacancies before they are more widely advertised.
- Befriending and enabling schemes are specific types of volunteering offering experience with a relevant client group.
- The Royal Edinburgh Hospital have volunteers involved in a range of activities. There is a high demand from students for opportunities to volunteer at this hospital and this can create delays at certain times of the year. Apply in advance if possible, particularly over the summer months if you want to volunteer during the academic year. Contact the Voluntary Services Manager to find out about opportunities available (tel: 0131 537 6686).
- Student Association Volunteering (<https://www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/activities/volunteering/>) regularly advertises volunteering opportunities to work with people with mental health issues. Search their database or contact them directly.





- The Edinburgh Volunteer Centre ([www.volunteeredinburgh.org.uk](http://www.volunteeredinburgh.org.uk)) can put you in touch with opportunities in the local area. For volunteering further afield search for local volunteering centres to help you get started.
- **Edspace** ([www.edspace.org.uk](http://www.edspace.org.uk)) is an information service which covers Edinburgh mental health. Use their services directory to help identify local organisations you could contact.
- Mental health placements abroad during vacations, with organisations such as [SLV Global](#) - gain relevant psychology-related experience in Sri Lanka, Bali and beyond. You may be able to get financial support from the [Principal's Go Abroad fund](#). [Read blog posts](#) from students who've been there.

## Working as a care assistant

You'll find opportunities to work as a care assistant in the public, private and voluntary sector.

Read the [information on the Careers Service website](#) about where to find care sector jobs.

Some typical organisations are listed below to get you started– find more via [YELL](#) (search for Care Services) and the link above.

- [The Action Group](#) recruits students for paid and voluntary positions in care and support roles for people with disabilities. Sessional and casual work make it easier to fit work round your studies.
- [Ypeople](#) support vulnerable groups and individuals within 17 services across Scotland and advertise vacancies on their website
- [Cross Reach](#) – a Scottish social care agency providing care and support for people in need. Part of the Church of Scotland, their services are for people of all faith, or none.
- [Penumbra](#) - works to promote mental health and wellbeing for all, prevent mental ill health for people who are 'at risk', and to support people with mental health problems. Paid and volunteering opportunities

## Private practice

There may be the opportunity to do this as part of your dissertation and you can also make speculative approaches to find opportunities. Identify private practitioners via the BPS website [www.bps.org.uk](http://www.bps.org.uk) and [www.yell.com](http://www.yell.com). Also try LinkedIn as a source of contacts. You can find advice on using LinkedIn effectively via the Careers Service website [www.ed.ac.uk/careers/social-media](http://www.ed.ac.uk/careers/social-media)

## Research experience

Research experience is also key and should be in addition to the projects which are compulsory parts of your degree.

The **Volunteer Research Assistant (VRA) Programme** in the Psychology department offers 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year students (occasionally 2<sup>nd</sup> year students with outstanding academic performance) the opportunity to assist research staff with new or ongoing projects. More information at [www.psy.ed.ac.uk/research](http://www.psy.ed.ac.uk/research)





Research experience can be developed in a clinical or academic setting. Volunteer research assistant positions do come up within the NHS.

Follow up the resources in *Finding out more* for places to look for research opportunities.

Completing a Masters course in Clinical Psychology is becoming more of a trend with students opting to pay for an MSc which develops research skills and may help towards securing a Psychology Assistant post before applying for the clinical doctorate.

## Find out more

Make the most of the contacts that you have while you are at university. Talk to academics, practising psychologists (lecturing or giving careers talks), tutors and mental health professionals for insight as well as advice and information. Use social media to make contacts and gather information. Use the advice on our website to get you started. [www.ed.ac.uk/careers/social-media](http://www.ed.ac.uk/careers/social-media)

- **ESPAG (East Scotland Assistant Psychology Group)** - a network of people interested in a career in Clinical Psychology (psychology students welcome, you don't have to be an assistant psychologist.) Monthly meetings in Morningside on all things related to clinical psychology, and great for networking/information sharing etc– contact via email [espag@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:espag@hotmail.co.uk) to join their mailing list and find out about events.
- **The Division of Clinical Psychology.** The organisation within BPS devoted to furthering the development of clinical psychology both as a body of knowledge and skills and as a profession [www.bps.org.uk/dcp](http://www.bps.org.uk/dcp)
- **Mental health jobs** A recruitment website dedicated to mental health [www.mentalhealthjobs.co.uk](http://www.mentalhealthjobs.co.uk)
- **Psychminded** News, courses and job vacancies for all who work in psychology, psychiatry and mental health [www.psychminded.co.uk](http://www.psychminded.co.uk)
- **PsychNet-UK** Mental health and psychology directory; information and action point on psychological sciences [www.psychnet-uk.com](http://www.psychnet-uk.com)
- **ClinPsy** - run by qualified Chartered Clinical Psychologists. Careers advice and information about entry to the profession plus a discussion forum [www.clinpsy.org.uk](http://www.clinpsy.org.uk)

Aug 2017



