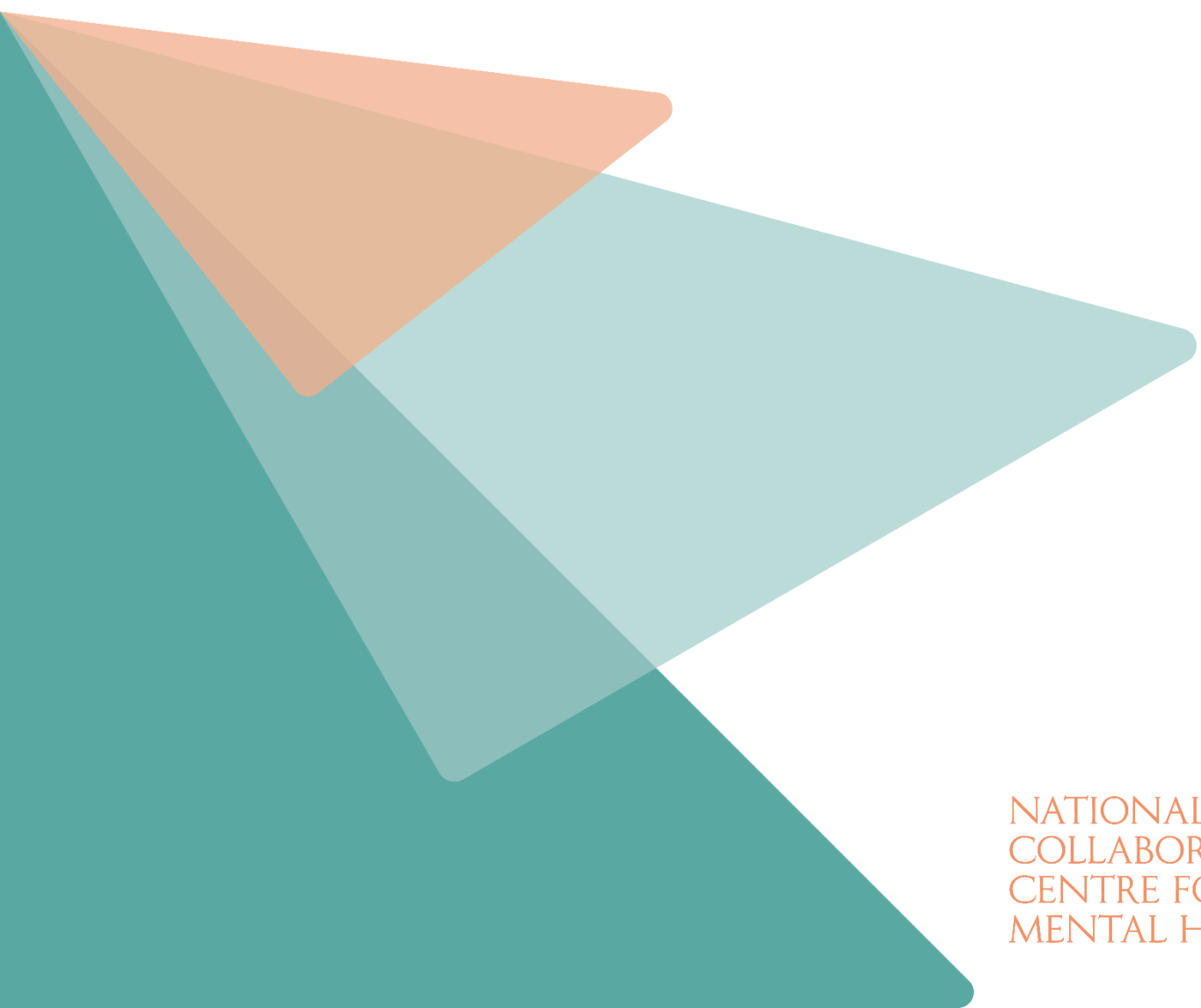


# Mental Health Careers and Psychology Graduate Career Pathways

Appendices



NATIONAL  
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CENTRE FOR  
MENTAL HEALTH

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# Appendix 1: BSc student survey questions and respondent information

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## General information about the participants

Survey respondents were all currently enrolled in undergraduate psychology degrees at universities in England and from various years of study:

Anglia Ruskin University

Arden University

Keele University

King's College London

Lancaster University

Liverpool Hope University

Manchester Metropolitan University

Northumbria University

Nottingham Trent University

Staffordshire University

University of Bradford

University of Bristol

University of Cambridge

University of Chester

University of East Anglia

University of Kent

University of Leeds

University of Newcastle

University of Oxford

University of Surrey

University of the Arts London

University of Warwick

University of Winchester

## Respondent demographics

Demographic	
Gender	
Female	89.0%
Male	9.7%
Prefer to self-describe	1.3%
Ethnicity of psychology students (%)	
White	71.7%
Black	3.6%
Asian	12.8%
Mixed race/ethnicity	11.3%
Other	0.6%
Household income	
Household income equal to or greater than £55,000	32%
Household income less than £55,000	37%
Not eligible for maintenance loan	31%
Total respondents	476

## Survey questions

1. **What is your gender?**
  - Male
  - Female
  - Prefer to self-describe
2. **What race/ethnicity best describes you?**
3. **Are you a domestic or international student?**
  - Domestic (UK citizen)
  - International (EU citizen)
  - International (Non-EU)
4. **What university do you attend?**

**5. What is your current year of study?**

- Foundation year
- First year
- Second year
- Year abroad
- Year in industry
- Final year

**6. What type of maintenance entitlement do you receive from Student Finance England?**

- Maintenance loan only (household income equal to or greater than £55,000)
- Maintenance loan and maintenance grant (household income less than £55,000)
- I am not entitled to/I do not receive maintenance from Student Finance England

**7. Do you have any siblings that are currently studying at university level too?**

- None
- 1
- 2
- 3+

**8. Are you considering a career in mental health and/or psychological care after graduating?**

- Yes
- No

*If the respondent answers yes to question 8, they proceed to answer questions 9-14*

**9. What is the primary reason you are considering a career in mental health and/or psychological care?**

- Personal interest/passion
- Financial prospects
- Previous experience (personal or familial) of mental health issues
- Ability to work in the healthcare industry
- Opportunity to work in mental health research
- Opportunity to undertake further education/training and other career development

**10. Are you interested in working with a particular age group?**

- No specific preference
- Children and/or young people (under 18s)
- Older adults (65+)
- Adults
- Other (please specify)

**11. Is there a specific aspect of mental health/psychological care you are interested in working in?**

- No specific preference
- Mental health nursing
- Clinical psychology
- Alternate therapies (e.g., art therapy, drama therapy)
- Occupational therapy
- Psychological or mental health research

**12. Is there a specific area of mental health and/or psychological care you are interested in working in? (e.g., eating disorders, addiction, forensic services, neuro-rehabilitation etc.)**

**13. Does anyone in your family work in mental health and/or psychological care?**

- Yes
- No

**14. How do you access information about careers in mental health and/or psychological care?**

- Careers and employment advice service at university
- Careers fair
- Independent research
- Speaking with people I know who work in mental health and/or psychological research
- I do not access information about careers in mental health and/or psychological care

*If the respondent answers no to question 8, they proceed to answer questions 15-17*

**15. What is the primary reason you are not considering a career in mental health and/or psychological research?**

- No interest
- Financial prospects
- Costs of further education/training
- Do not want to undertake further education/training
- Too much competition for roles
- I do not know enough about careers in mental health and/or psychological care
- I have another specific career path in mind
- Other (please specify)

**16. What industry are you considering a career in after you graduate?**

- Marketing/advertising
- Banking/finance
- Retail
- Health/medicine
- Education
- Other psychological field (educational psychology, sports psychology, forensic psychology, occupational psychology etc.)
- Other (please specify)

**17. Does anyone in your family work in mental health and/or psychological care?**

- Yes
- No



## Appendix 2: MSc conversion student survey questions

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### General information about the participants

Participants in the survey were all currently enrolled in MSc psychology conversion degrees (accredited by the British Psychological Society [BPS]) in the UK. Data from this survey was not used in the report due to a low number of responses.

### Survey questions

- 1. What is your gender?**
  - Male
  - Female
  - Prefer to self-describe
- 2. What race/ethnicity best describes you?**
- 3. Are you a domestic or international student?**
  - Domestic (UK citizen)
  - International (EU citizen)
  - International (Non-EU)
- 4. What year did you graduate from your first degree?**
- 5. What subject is your first degree in?**
- 6. What university do you currently attend?**
- 7. What is the primary source of funding for your postgraduate degree?**
  - Personal funding or family financial support
  - Postgraduate loan
  - Scholarship
  - NHS funded
- 8. Are you considering a career in mental health and/or psychological care after you graduate?**
  - Yes
  - No

*If the respondent answers yes to question 8, they proceed to answer questions 9-14*

**9. What is the primary reason you are considering a career in mental health and/or psychological care?**

- Personal interest/passion
- Financial prospects
- Previous experience (personal or familial) of mental health issues
- Ability to work in the healthcare industry
- Opportunity to work in mental health research
- Opportunity to undertake further education/training and other career development

**10. Are you interested in working with a particular age group?**

- No specific preference
- Children and/or young people (under 18s)
- Older adults (65+)
- Adults
- Other (please specify)

**11. Is there a specific aspect of mental health/psychological care you are interested in working in?**

- No specific preference
- Mental health nursing
- Clinical psychology
- Alternate therapies (e.g., art therapy, drama therapy)
- Occupational therapy
- Psychological or mental health research

**12. Is there a specific area of mental health and/or psychological care you are interested in working in? (e.g., eating disorders, addiction, forensic services, neuro-rehabilitation etc.)**

**13. Does anyone in your family work in mental health and/or psychological care?**

- Yes
- No

*If the respondent answers no to question 8, they proceed to answer questions 15-17*

**14. What is the primary reason you are not considering a career in mental health and/or psychological research?**

- No interest
- Financial prospects
- Costs of further education/training
- Do not want to undertake further education/training
- Too much competition for roles
- I do not know enough about careers in mental health and/or psychological care
- I have another specific career path in mind
- Other (please specify)

**15. What industry are you considering a career in after you graduate?**

- Marketing/advertising
- Banking/finance
- Retail
- Health/medicine
- Education
- Other psychological field (educational psychology, sports psychology, forensic psychology, occupational psychology etc.)
- Other (please specify)

**16. Does anyone in your family work in mental health and/or psychological care?**

- Yes
- No

## Appendix 3: Entry-level mental health staff survey questions

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### General information about the participants

Participants in the survey were all working in NHS mental health services in a select number of positions up to and including Agenda for Change (AfC) band 4.

### Survey questions

**1. What is your gender?**

- Male
- Female
- Prefer to self-describe

**2. What race/ethnicity best describes you?**

**3. What is the highest level of academic qualification you hold?**

- No academic qualifications
- GCSE/BTEC/O-Levels
- A-Level/International Baccalaureate/National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) Level 3
- Undergraduate degree/NVQ Level 4-5
- Postgraduate degree/NVQ Level 6-7
- Doctorate/PhD/NVQ Level 8

**4. In what year did you achieve this qualification?**

**5. What is your current position?**

- Psychological wellbeing practitioner trainee
- Occupational therapy assistant
- Research assistant
- Assistant psychologist
- Speech and language therapy assistant
- Mental health support worker
- Healthcare assistant
- Support time and recovery worker
- Creative therapies support
- Peer support worker
- Other (Please specify)

**6. In what year did you start your current job?**

- In what subject is the highest level of academic qualification you hold?
- Health and social care
- Psychology or psychology related (e.g., a degree accredited by the BPS)
- Other (please specify)

**7. Do you possess an undergraduate degree (BSc/BA) or postgraduate degree (MSc/PGDip) in psychology?**

- Yes
- No

*If the respondent answers yes to question 8, they proceed to answer questions 9-12, if the respondent answers no, they stop the survey at this point.*

**8. In your opinion, how important was your psychology degree in securing your current position?**

- Critical to securing my current position
- Helpful, but not critical, to my current position
- Irrelevant to securing my current position

**9. Do you feel your current salary reflects your experience and qualifications?**

- I feel my salary adequately reflects my experience and qualifications
- I feel my salary is insufficient given my experience and qualifications
- I feel my salary exceeds what I expect given my experience and qualifications

**10. What are your future career aspirations?**

- Pursue advancement and progression in my current post
- Use the experience I am accumulating in this post to apply for further training in mental health and/or psychological care (i.e. psychological wellbeing practitioner training, clinical psychology doctorate, high intensity therapist training)
- Entering a career outside of mental health and/or psychological care
- Other (please specify)

**11. With this in mind, how long do you expect to remain in your current position?**

- Until I receive a promotion in my current role
- Up to 3 months
- Up to 6 months
- Up to 1 year
- Up to 2 years
- Longer than 2 years

## Appendix 4: BSc student focus group questions, summary of discussion topics and analysis

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### Focus group questions

#### 1. Aspirations

- What do you aspire to do in the future?
  - What has informed that aspiration/these aspirations?

#### 2a. Interested in mental health career/mental health career mentioned

- What specific roles in mental health would you be interested in working in?
  - NHS careers mentioned – explore (see below)
  - NHS careers not mentioned – move on and explore later (see below).
- What barriers and obstacles are you anticipating you might be faced with?
- What do think might help facilitate a career in mental health?

#### 2b. Not interested/not mentioned

- Could you tell us about why you wouldn't want to work in mental health? Why do you think other people might not want to work in mental health?
- NHS careers mentioned – explore (see below).
- NHS careers not mentioned – move on and explore later (see below).

#### 3. NHS career-specific questions

- What are your perceptions of working in the NHS?
  - What mental health career options in the NHS are you aware of?
  - Does this seem like an accessible and viable career option?

### Analysis

#### General information about the participants

Participants ( $n=9$ ) were undergoing an undergraduate degree in psychology (or another psychology-related course accredited by the BPS). Participants represented universities in Nottingham, London and Warwick in England.

#### Themes and data overview

The tables below show the outcomes of a basic thematic analysis conducted using information from the focus group transcripts. Identified themes are provided along with quotes to demonstrate these.

THEMES	QUOTES
<b>Reasons for choosing psychology at degree level</b>	
<b>Personal reasons</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Passion and/or interest in the topic</li> <li>• Desire to help people</li> <li>• Personal experience</li> <li>• Personality traits and/or suitability</li> <li>• A rewarding career</li> </ul>	<p><i>'I wanted to delve more into the characters of the world and how we get to the places that we are through experience'</i></p> <p><i>'I wanted to help people'</i></p>
<b>External influences</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Influential academics and/or professionals</li> </ul>	<p><i>'I see a therapist and a psychiatrist...encouraged by my psychiatrist to go into the field'</i></p> <p><i>'...one of our lecturers plays an important role in that interest'</i></p>
<b>Career aspirations</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Psychology-specific career aspirations</li> <li>• Working in the NHS</li> </ul>	<p><i>'I really wanted to go into clinical psychology to become a clinical psychologist'</i></p> <p><i>'Working in a hospital or school as a counsellor would be ideal for me'</i></p> <p><i>'...it could be in a community setting...I wouldn't mind being part of a home treatment team...'</i></p> <p><i>'I wouldn't mind...being an assistant psychologist'</i></p>
<b>Factors informing career aspirations</b>	
<b>Personal experiences/reasons</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experience of mental health problems</li> <li>• Previous work/voluntary experience</li> <li>• Desire to help people</li> </ul>	<p><i>'...personal experience with my own family. My mum has experienced schizoaffective disorder throughout my life...I've experienced mental health issues'</i></p> <p><i>'...so, I myself have OCD and I have a history of self-harm'</i></p> <p><i>'you go into it because it will be rewarding...it'll make me happy doing it because you will be helping people'</i></p>
<b>Financial reasons</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Money/earning potential as a non-factor</li> </ul>	<p><i>'...money is not a motivating factor at all'</i></p> <p><i>'...you're not earning as much money as you would expect for someone with a PhD...I don't think people who work in this field are here for the money'</i></p>

## Roles, services and settings of interest

### NHS settings

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hospitals</li> <li>• Community</li> <li>• Educational settings</li> </ul> | <p><i>'I would love to work in a hospital setting...'</i></p> <p><i>'Working in a hospital or school as a counsellor would be ideal for me'</i></p> |
|--|---|

### Role types

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assistant psychologist</li> <li>• Psychotherapist</li> <li>• Lack of interest in research</li> <li>• Business psychologist</li> </ul> | <p><i>'I'm not the type to go into research'</i></p> <p><i>'I'm sat doing SPSS stuff and I think this is really boring and I just want to be in an assessment'</i></p> <p><i>'...really wanting to go into psychotherapy'</i></p> |
|--|---|

## Barriers and obstacles to a mental health care career

### Finance/funding

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Earnings and salary</li> <li>• Unpaid work experience</li> </ul> | <p><i>'...so, the financial aspect, where for the first couple of years I know I won't be .....like .... happy with the finance that's coming in, it'll be under my anticipated wants for finance so I'm going to have to be aware of that, and just know that in the long-term aspect it'll lead to something better'</i></p> <p><i>'I definitely would not be able to afford to be an honorary psychologist... assistant psychologist'</i></p> |
|---|--|

### Opportunities and roles available

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visibility of knowledge and roles and opportunities</li> <li>• Accessibility of roles and opportunities</li> <li>• Competition</li> </ul> | <p><i>'It's really hard to actively seek jobs when you don't even know what the opportunities are and or like what can you look for'</i></p> <p><i>'I think it's also like the visibility of the opportunity. Like it's not very out there. So, you'd have to like, find out for yourself, whereas like in other professions it's like oh there's an internship for this and this and this...and that's really not like that when it comes to psychology'</i></p> <p><i>'considering that hospitals will not take someone who has just graduated, they want someone with experience...and then getting that experience...'</i></p> <p><i>'...it's like um demand and supply. It's like there's a huge supply of graduates but the demand for those roles that requires graduates is very less'</i></p> <p><i>'...because it's a very competitive field and if year after year, some people take...over five years to get into a PhD programme and then get funding'</i></p> |
|--|---|

### Contacts, advice and networking

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficulty accessing advice</li> </ul> | <p><i>'And knowing somebody in the field already like how do you make contacts, where do you even start to make contacts. Especially if you are early on in your schooling'</i></p> <p><i>'I tried messaging people on LinkedIn; I was thinking oh that'd be good idea but like they all just ignore me so...'</i></p> <p><i>'...nobody really talked to me about the different parts I could go into after university. Like they didn't even tell me oh you could apply for the MSc programme where I do three years of BSc and then do my fourth year as an MSc. I didn't get told that'</i></p> |
|---|--|



### Gaining experience

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• University courses offering experience</li> <li>• The need for life and work experience</li> </ul> | <p><i>'It'd be better if they offered the experience themselves' [the university] as part of the course'</i></p> <p><i>'...it would be good if each, like each university allowed the graduate to go, like collaborated with NHS since probably year one, and let the graduate like gain experience in different psychology fields. I think that would make each and every graduate more insightful about what they want to do... like medical students for example.... they are getting the support from the NHS and the government to study from year one, and are guaranteed a placement, ... I think psychology students should have that'</i></p> <p><i>'...medical students they also get practical work within the like classes, lecture rooms. Whereas psychology students we're dealing with people as well, so we need like practical experience with communicating, the proper way of communicating with uh, patients, because there is a certain way. So, having, by having those little aspects can help in future opportunities'</i></p> |
|---|--|

### Facilitators towards a mental health career

#### Postgraduate opportunities

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Graduate schemes/programmes</li> </ul> | <p><i>'an actual graduate programme would be nice...not like a psychologist but maybe at least a psychological wellbeing practitioner'</i></p> |
|---|--|

#### Increasing visibility/knowledge of roles and opportunities

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responsibility of the university</li> <li>• Responsibility of the NHS</li> <li>• Responsibility of schools</li> </ul> | <p><i>'...we should also be told from our first year of university that we should seek these experiences...I have many course mates who didn't do any volunteering...now they're finished and just don't know where to go...they're being asked for experience, but they don't have it'</i></p> <p><i>'...university should be more hands on with helping us think ahead'</i></p> |
|--|---|

#### Contacts/advice

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• University alumni</li> <li>• University faculty members</li> <li>• Professionals in the field</li> </ul> | <p><i>'...get alumni to come back and talk about their experience...how they got where they are...really useful'</i></p> <p><i>'...talking to people closer you your age range is useful'</i></p> |
|---|---|

#### Attending events and talks

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Careers events</li> <li>• Mental health/psychology conferences workshops and talks</li> </ul> | <p><i>'...careers fair specific to psychology'</i></p> <p><i>'I think if you are interested in a specific um subject area within psychology um to find these talks...and they're free you can go for free and sit or listen or participate'</i></p> |
|--|---|

## Reasons for not wanting to work in mental health careers

**International students' work visa requirements** *'...we need a work Visa to work here...income has to be around 25,000 pounds'*

*'...it's hard to get that income as a graduate'*

### Financial reasons

- Working for a low wage or for free

*'...it's just expensive and time consuming...'*

*'You can just get a job and that's it you don't have to work for free'*

### Emotional demands

- Burnout/emotional exhaustion

*'...fear of like burning out because... in the long-term, I mean for instance a forensic psychologist that I have talked to...they are now in academia because they just they said they didn't, they had already been working as a forensic psych long enough. Um, which might also be the case with clinical psychology because if you, I mean you're dealing with a lot of heavy stuff'*

*'...it's a lot of emotional labour I imagine'*

### Perceptions and understanding of the field

- Misunderstanding of the psychology profession
- Requirements of the field
- Psychology seen as an easy subject
- Opportunities arising from a psychology degree

*'...the expectations don't meet the reality'*

*'...people see psychology as a doss soft subject'*

*'they don't think psychology is a science'*

*'...people think there's not a lot of opportunities with a psychology degree'*

## Perceptions of working in the NHS

### Salary/pay/funding

- Insufficient salary
- NHS is under resourced/underfinanced

*'...overworked and underpaid'*

*'...its...the government...the NHS...it's severely underfunded...there is nothing the NHS can do about it'*

*'NHS in crisis headlines'*

*'...the service users they just feel like they don't get enough attention...they just want to get rid of them...'*

### Nature and demands of the job

- Labour intensive/demanding
- Poor working conditions

*'...lots of pressure and responsibility'*

*'...it's alright if you don't have a social life'*

*'I've got the impression that the working environment in an NHS hospital is not really healthy for the employees'*

### Professionals working in the NHS are overstretched

*'...you talk to the professionals and they say they don't have the resources...they can't do any more than they are already doing'*

## Awareness of careers options in mental health in the NHS

### Psychology specific roles

- Clinical psychologist
- Therapy support worker
- Consultancy
- Psychological wellbeing practitioner
- Home treatment team roles
- Children and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) therapist
- Cognitive behavioural therapist
- Dialectical behaviour therapist
- Psychodynamic therapist

### Nursing and other healthcare roles

- Community psychiatric nurse (CPN)
- Mental health nurse
- Occupational health worker
- Administrator

### Graduate roles/training schemes

- Applied psychology clinical MSci
  - NHS graduate scheme
- '...because it's an MSci, they actually train you up as a psychological wellbeing practitioner (PWP) and at the end of it you're qualified as one'*
- '...from what I have seen of it, it's only for those interested in management of some kind, which is quite vague...I don't really know what it's about'*

## Mental health careers as accessible and viable options

### Not easily accessible

- Time commitment
  - Competition
  - Experience required
  - Lack of knowledge/awareness
  - Accessibility of specific roles
- '...it's a long path to get to with all the experience and stuff to get to that...whether it's worth it in the end...with all the pressure on the NHS...'*
- 'it just takes so long...you might end up like, old'*
- '...all the clinical psychologists I know have kids, they're not like in their early life'*
- 'I thought from my experience that being an AP was quite accessible and easy but apparently not'*
- 'I feel that support workers post things everywhere...that's probably the easiest to get into'*

### Awareness of NHS and mental health roles

- Lack of exposure to NHS options
  - Linking learning to career
- 'There's not much representation of the NHS at all'*
- 'In uni especially...it hasn't been advertised that well to students at all...whether it be in first year or third year, they didn't really point it out'*
- 'I only know about the different NHS roles because of my role in the NHS...people just don't know that you can realistically work for the NHS anyway'*

### Difficulties associated with pursuing a career in psychology

- Finance/money/funding *'...subjects like business don't always require you to do volunteer work throughout the year. Or, I mean most of my friends studying business just get like summer internships and those who've graduated have got really good jobs. But, I think for psychology you need to work throughout while you're studying...And by that time when you start doing your work you're not going to finish on time to be able to apply for your Masters or get a job'*

### Recommendations

- Career's talks *'...a proper grad scheme not necessarily to be a psychologist but...an AP. A grad scheme for that'*
- Access to different psychology professionals *'...it would be great if there was a website specifically for students where everybody from all schools can go...job postings'*
- Access to advice from the NHS *'...centralising the website...'*
- Knowledge about different courses and training available *'... understanding of the NHS not [currently] offered on psychology courses'*
- A specific psychology grad-scheme *'...they are not showing the NHS'*
- Creation of a website *'...how it works'*
- Course content/curriculum to include information about NHS roles *'...the NHS gives bursaries for nurses...maybe...something like that for psychology students might be helpful'*
- Financial support for further study

## Appendix 5: MSc conversion student interview questions, summary of discussion topics and analysis

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### Interview questions

#### A. General info

1. What is the name of the course you are studying?
2. Where are you studying the course (which university)?
3. When did you begin studying this course (month/year)?
4. How long is the course (doing full time/part time)?
5. What degree did you attain at undergraduate level?
6. In which year did you attain your undergraduate degree?
7. Have you held any employment between finishing your undergraduate degree and starting your conversion course? If so, what job(s) did you have?

#### B. Aspirations

8. What do you aspire to do in the future?
9. What has informed that aspiration/these aspirations?

*If interested in mental health career/mental health career mentioned at 9, ask:*

- What specific roles in mental health would you be interested in working in?
- What barriers and obstacles are you anticipating you might be faced with?
- What do think might help facilitate a career in mental health?

*If not interested/not mentioned at 9, ask:*

- Why wouldn't you want to work in mental health?

#### C. NHS career-specific questions

10. What are your perceptions of working in the NHS?
11. What mental health career options in the NHS are you aware of?
12. Does this seem like an accessible and viable career option in your opinion?

### Analysis

#### General information about the participants

Participants ( $n=2$ ) were undergoing a Master's level (MSc) conversion degree in psychology or a psychology-related topic, accredited by the BPS.

#### Themes and data overview

The tables below show the outcomes of a basic thematic analysis conducted using information from the interviews. Identified themes are provided along with a simple overview of the data obtained (including quotes) and key points from the data that illustrate the themes.

Theme	Aspirations for the future
Data overview	<p>Participants went into the course wanting to do clinical psychology but will consider other options (counselling, cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), PhD/research).</p> <p><i>'well the aim was to become a clinical psychologist...possibly go into counselling or something with mental health professional'</i></p> <p><i>'Um actually I wanted to go into counselling and CBT...and that's kind of why I have taken this course'</i></p> <p><i>'it's a broad answer because the goal was changed'</i></p> <p><i>'but since starting the course I've actually discovered different fields of psychology...and more opportunities essentially um so I'm now considering going to take clinical psychology...and potentially going on to do a PhD" "so it's uh always changing'</i></p>
1	Clinical psychology is a common aspiration
2	Counselling psychology is a common aspiration
3	Aspirations changed over time

Theme	What has informed these aspirations for a mental health career
Data overview	<p>Mostly students were interested in psychology careers due to a combination of personal experiences and an interest in the topic in general.</p> <p><i>'... so, I've had a lot of personal trauma in my life and I've had bereavement counselling, I've had CBT counselling, I've had trauma counselling'</i></p> <p><i>'I've had quite a lot of counselling and um I just kind of found an interest with it really...'</i></p> <p><i>'...so, family history...my brother as an issue with mental health so that kind of um inspired me...'</i></p> <p><i>'I think just naturally I've been very interested in understanding behaviour...and why people do things that they do and just...I think interpersonal relationships as well'</i></p> <p><i>'so, I think I've always kind of carried psychology through and like it's how it's made sense to come back into it further...you know...that's kind of informed it'</i></p>
1	Personal experiences (e.g., had counselling)
2	Family history of mental ill health as inspiration
3	Interest in understanding behaviour
4	Interest in psychology as a subject area (e.g., college/university modules in psychology were interesting)

Theme	Specific mental health career roles of interest
Data overview	<p>The main interest is in clinical psychology or work in therapy for some specific conditions; open to other roles in mental health (e.g., social work). Some the reasons for not wanting specific kinds of roles were discussed.</p> <p><i>'um so looking at mental illness such as depression, anxiety...um...just cognitive behavioural therapy, just the services that people could access that will help with their day-to-day functioning'</i></p> <p><i>'as I'm studying I've been opened to different avenues, different fields so I'm not limited myself too much while I'm trying not to..." even social work, social work is also a consideration coz there all somehow connected anyway'</i></p> <p><i>'even social work, social work is also a consideration coz they're all somehow connected anyway'</i></p> <p><i>'she kind of told me that the skills they use in social work is similar to the skills that I was hoping to use in the psychology field'</i></p> <p><i>'academia is a field I could potentially be interested in'</i></p>
1	Eating disorders
3	Open to considering other roles other than clinical ones
4	Social worker
5	Research//academia

Theme	Barriers/obstacles in accessing mental health roles
Data overview	<p>Students discussed the academic competitiveness of the clinical psychology doctorate; the grades required to access this training. The competitive nature of training courses was raised along with the limited number of course spaces available. The experience needed to be considered for training is difficult to obtain. Specifically, MSc conversion students are competing against people who have undergraduate degrees in psychology and more experience. There was mention of the perceived difficulty that psychologists actually have in influencing change in the system and the emotional demands of the job.</p> <p><i>'...you have to have at least a 2:1 in your undergrad degree...um I don't have a 2:1, I have a 2:2 because of personal circumstances...'</i></p> <p><i>'... [a clinical doctorate is] the only one funded by the NHS so it's very competitive'</i></p> <p><i>'...when you deal with the more severe illnesses that can be quite mentally taxing'</i></p> <p><i>'But they very thing that you have to have clinical experience um so, yeah that's a challenge that I'm already facing...'</i></p> <p><i>'Yeah well, I think yeah, they reiterate the spaces are very short and I'm going against people that do have a degree in psychology like an undergrad degree in psychology...they do have the experience, they do have the grades...'</i></p> <p><i>'.... they take those [people who did an undergraduate psychology course], as opposed to life experience so that's already a barrier in itself, it's very much run by the system'</i></p> <p><i>'...but a load of them found that they were pretty much bound by the regulations so it's almost like there's a systematic way of doing things when you want to have change, or you can see that it's effective'</i></p>

1	Grade requirements for clinical doctorate
2	Competition
3	Emotional demands
4	Work experience requirements for training
5	Psychologists have little influence in making changes

Theme	Facilitators for a career in mental health
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Data overview	<p>Facilitators included those to do with work and experience; this includes voluntary work and personal experiences with mental health difficulties. The students discussed having an open mind as a facilitator as well as reading up on the different roles and truly understanding the nature of these.</p> <p><i>'...the experience [personal experience] will increase empathy, increases respect and gives a different perspective...um that are beneficial to work with people who are in challenging situations'</i></p> <p><i>'I may not be a clinical psychologist by qualification, but I might get the opportunity where I get to do the same things that they do...just in another capacity'</i></p>
1	Personal experience of mental health difficulty
2	Work experience in fields outside of psychology
3	Volunteering
4	Being well-informed about what the roles involve
5	Having an open mind about the role you might end up in

Theme	Why people might not want to work in mental health
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Data overview	<p>The perception that the NHS is underfunded was considered a factor in people not wanting to choose mental health careers. This was coupled with a perception of a lack of funding for training courses in mental health, also. One of the students raised that personal experiences of mental health could also be a factor in people not choosing careers in this field. Others may just not have interests in this area.</p> <p><i>'I think having spoken to a few people...um I think a lot of people confirm that it would be too close to home'</i></p> <p><i>'... [NHS funding] diminishing'</i></p> <p><i>'I think there's obviously quite a lot of pressure on the system and that could impact potentially how...if people were to go and work within the mental health in the NHS that might put people off because they might be concerned that the funding's not there and maybe the supports not there'</i></p>
1	Personal experience can be a deterrent
2	Lack of funding (for training and the NHS in general)
3	Not interested in mental health as a career



Theme	Perceptions of working in the NHS
Data overview	<p>There was a mixture of both positive and negative perceptions provided by the participants. None of the participants had had direct experience working in the NHS, however, their perceptions were informed by other people, the news and social media. Negative perceptions included that work in the NHS is stressful and that the staff are underpaid and overworked. Many of the negatives stemmed from depictions in the media. Positives included that a job in the NHS can be incredibly rewarding and that there is diversity in the kinds of staff you work with.</p> <p><i>'I hear a lot of things in the media about budget cuts and the problems managing the service'</i></p> <p><i>'I think they are very stressed...and they are quite over-worked um they think, they think the pay doesn't roughly represent the amount of work they put in unfortunately'</i></p> <p><i>'I feel like they are generally quite a multidisciplinary team so the good thing about it is there's quite diversity in terms of the kind of roles'</i></p>
1	Stressful
2	Staff are overworked
3	Insufficient pay/salary
4	Rewarding
5	Diversity of staff

Theme	NHS mental health career options
Data overview	<p>The students appear to have a good knowledge of some of the different mental health career options within the NHS.</p> <p><i>'So I know they actually have some roles like a mental health professional, that's actually the name...or like a health, mental health nurse...or mental health um assistant... um so actually if you just google mental health professional in the NHS you can qualify to do like some diplomas...some courses...that can actually give you a very specific role like you are a mental health nurse and you specifically work in mental health...in a variety of capacities.'</i></p> <p><i>'I obviously know um like clinical psychologists because everyone you know does that I've looked at um PWP so like uh mental health'</i></p>
1	Mental health nurse
2	High-intensity therapist (HIT)/CBT therapist
3	PWP
4	Volunteer coordinator related to mental health
5	Clinical psychologist

Theme	Accessible and viable career option
Data overview	<p>The students perceived professional mental health careers to be accessible but acknowledged the few places available for training courses and experience needed to move forward. They raised again here the competitive nature of training courses and in attaining relevant experience.</p> <p><i>'...it's the expectation I think until I get into the field and have the experience...I won't be able to assess how um accessible or fulfilling it is in terms of what it is I'm trying to achieve'</i></p> <p><i>'Psychology fair at University made it sound quite accessible'</i></p> <p><i>'...it's very, very difficult to get onto them [training courses], they seem quite limited in terms of capacity'</i></p> <p><i>'I feel like there are a lot of people who want those positions but can't get into them'</i></p>
1	Accessible to a degree
2	Limited spaces on training courses
3	Difficulty getting experience

## Appendix 6: NHS team leads interview questions, discussion topics and analysis

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### Interview questions

**1. Please briefly outline your current job role and responsibilities, including information about your team and the staff members you work with.**

**2. We are interested in recruitment of people up to AfC band 4. What are the most important things you look for when recruiting people to join your team?**

*Prompt questions:* Ask the following questions if responses to question 2 do not deal with these issues, or use as prompts to further the conversation about these topics

- What sort of experience are you looking for?

**3. Can you tell us about any of the difficulties you have experienced in recruiting people for NHS positions up to band 4?**

*Prompt questions:* Ask the following questions if responses to question 3 do not deal with these issues, or use as prompts to further the conversation about these topics

- What (if any) difficulties have you experienced/observed regarding staff turnover in these positions?

**4. What are your opinions regarding rates of vacant band 2, 3 and 4 positions in your service?**

*Prompt questions:* Ask the following questions if responses to question 4 do not deal with these issues, or use as prompts to further the conversation about these topics

- Do you perceive there to be a problem with vacancies?
  - If YES: What do you think could be done to improve this?
  - If NO: Why do you think there is not a problem with vacancies in your service?

**5. When you interview people with BPS accredited undergraduate degrees in psychology (or psychology-related subjects), what are the most important things you look for?**

*Prompt questions:* Ask the following questions if responses to question 5 do not deal with these issues, or use as prompts to further the conversation about these topics

- What are your expectations around previous experience (paid and/or voluntary)?

**6. What things, in your opinion, are essential to the successful recruitment and retention of staff with undergraduate psychology degrees?**

**7. What are some of the positive things that psychology graduates can or could bring to a service such as the one you work in?**

**8. What more could be done, in your opinion, to support psychology graduates to enter careers in mental health?**

## Analysis

### General information about the participants

Participants ( $n=2$ ) were clinically trained professionals working in NHS services in England:

- Lead clinical psychologist working across rehabilitation wards;
- Consultant psychotherapist & social worker working in primary care psychological services.

Both had recruitment responsibilities as part of their job role and had been or were currently involved in recruiting to positions up to AfC band 4.

### Themes and data overview

The tables below show the outcomes of a basic thematic analysis conducted using information from the interviews. Identified themes are provided along with a simple overview of the data obtained (including quotes) and key points from the data that illustrate the themes.

Theme	Important qualities for recruitment up to AfC Band 4
Data overview	The most important qualities centre around relevant work experience as well as suitability in terms of personality traits, temperament and emotional qualities such as empathy, emotional intelligence and honesty. Voluntary experience was favoured by one of the participants.  <i>'Crucial previous experience of working in mental health...look for reflective skills of supervision... emotional intelligence/empathy for clinical [roles]'</i>  <i>'To be open minded, curious about people and relationships, trustworthy, honest, reliability is really important in mental health work...eagerness to learn'</i>
1	Experience of working in mental health
2	Personality traits, emotional intelligence and temperament
3	Eagerness to learn, grow, develop

Theme	Difficulties in recruiting to NHS Band 4 positions
Data overview	Only one of the participants was able to comment on this. Difficulties most prominent were around the abundance of applications and difficulty shortlisting due to high volume. In some cases, recruitment teams will stipulate more stringent yet arbitrary criteria to make shortlisting manageable. Focus was particularly on assistant psychologist roles. There was a recognition of the process being opportunistic for people with time to job-search, indicating a potential equality issue.  <i>'Posting advert [for assistant psychologist roles] and closing the advert on the afternoon it was posted as it has 50-60 applicants that are strong. If advert is up for days or weeks you can get hundreds'</i>
1	The number of applicants is high (especially for certain roles such as assistant psychologist)
2	Recruitment staff will introduce arbitrary criteria to make shortlisting manageable
3	Job adverts may be removed after a short time, offering only a small window for applications
4	Ability to apply can be opportunistic for people with time available

Theme	Staff turnover/retention of AfC up to band 4 staff
Data overview	<p>Both professionals mentioned that people tend to stay in these positions for only 12-18 months, often leaving in search of better or more varied experience or better opportunities and further training. Neither were surprised by people leaving after this amount of time. Progression opportunities are often limited, also contributing to people moving on.</p> <p><i>'...greatest difficulty is people in lower paid positions, bright and able and join service get good supervision, experience, training etc. They might often stay for 12-18 months then move on'</i></p> <p><i>'...often they'll also have intention of staying in role for 1 year and move on to try get another type of experience to support DClinPsy courses'</i></p>
1	People only tend to remain in post for between 12-18 months on average
2	The reasons people leave are to gain experience and/or opportunities to enable them to grow and develop or to embark upon further training
3	There is an expectation that people will not remain in positions up to band 4 for long
4	Opportunities for progression with trusts (particularly small trusts) are limited

Theme	Vacancies in band 2, 3 and 4 positions
Data overview	<p>Assistant psychologist posts are easy to fill given the volume of applicants. Psychology graduates doing healthcare assistant (HCA) posts are more likely to move on and there is a higher frequency of turnover here. Employers struggle with the time and resource taken to recruit to vacant positions despite not wanting to prevent people from moving on. Some consideration of financial incentives for moving on quickly from these roles, leading to vacancies,</p> <p><i>'Assistant psychologist posts are never a problem to fill...'</i></p> <p><i>'Not sure vacancy rate is a problem – if looking for band 3-4 job I'd be struggling to survive. Most people will want to move on as quick as possible'</i></p>
1	Assistant psychologist posts are easier to fill
2	Healthcare assistant roles have a higher turnover of psychology graduates
3	Vacancy rates are considered less of a problem compared to other factors associated with working in roles up to band 4

Theme	Important qualities when interviewing people with BPS-accredited psychology degrees
Data overview	<p>The qualities identified for psychology graduates tended to be more around personal skills and traits rather than a focus on academic acquirements. Knowledge around different models and psychological approaches is desirable but the degree and its content was not deemed as the most important factor. Content of psychology courses was not regarded as particularly appropriate to render someone competent for working in healthcare settings upon graduation.</p> <p><i>'Open-mindedness in relation to different ways of thinking psychologically. Keenness to learn, personal attributes – degree of warmth, openness, honesty. Probably more important is a degree of self-reflection'</i></p> <p><i>'Psychology degree ideally want 2:1 or better but other than that...we might be interested in thoughts about school and whether institution has leaning towards particular model'</i></p> <p><i>'When I did clin psych training – how little I did in undergrad would have represented itself and was relevant in clin psych role...Sometimes happens in healthcare setting too. Some things which are helpful...understanding of developmental psych. On undergrad courses...psychopathology, abnormal psych. Often my experience and candidates I've come across, courses are a bit more about passing academic exams rather than helping to prepare for a healthcare setting'</i></p>
1	Personal skills, interpersonal abilities and qualities such as open-mindedness, warmth, honesty and self-reflection were regarded as most important
2	Knowledge of specific psychological models might be preferred depending on the service applied for
3	The content a psychology degree and completion of the course does not necessarily render a person competent and capable of working in healthcare settings

Theme	Previous voluntary and/or paid experience
Data overview	<p>One of the participants expressed favouring people who have worked in voluntary or honorary positions they felt it showed commitment and can offer a different kind of experience. There was a consensus that the psychology degree does not sufficiently provide experience required for progression in more professional mental health roles because psychology as a degree is detached from a lot of applied roles. One of the participants expressed a potential moral concern around voluntary staff working for free. Paid and voluntary roles often are expected to perform different duties.</p> <p><i>'Like having people with some voluntary experience, partly because that often leads them into good contact with disenfranchised people in communities who might not approach structured services'</i></p> <p><i>'There's a fine line between giving people experience, helping voluntarily contribute to service and taking advantage by getting them to do paid role for free'</i></p> <p><i>'When I supervised people in paid role I make sure they have different set of duties compared to those doing honorary posts. They'd have a lot more knowledge and skills compared to honorary posts due to the duties and work they're doing'</i></p>
1	A psychology degree does not afford one with the practical and applied experience relevant for profession in a mental health field or further training opportunities
2	Both paid and voluntary experience are relevant and valued
3	The expectations in terms of ability and type of experience gained, differ for those who have paid compared to voluntary experience
4	There is a moral concern associated with voluntary roles, as people are expected to work without payment

Theme	Factors essential to the successful recruitment and retention of staff with psychology degrees
Data overview	<p>The focus on the necessity of providing development opportunities to people was evident. Provision of appropriate and quality supervision was also raised. One of the participants expressed a degree of disappointment in the aspirations of psychology graduates to progress quickly. Consolidated experience and appreciation of skills was considered of high importance. Progression within a trust or service may be limited due to a lack of scope for re-banding and promotion.</p> <p><i>'There is structure to develop, multi-disciplinary team (MDT) meeting, group supervision, feeling included and valued in MDT, can attend academic/clinical forums that develop continued professional development in-house, so they feel they are learning on the job, good quality supervision'</i></p>
1	The variety of experiences, tasks, in-house training and opportunities to build skills and develop that are provided to people when in post
2	Good quality supervision
3	Ensuring that people feel appreciated and valued as members of the team
4	Progression can be limited within trusts, meaning people have to move services in order to attain higher positions
5	Psychology graduates may be overly ambitious in their expectations of progression within a limited timeframe

Theme	Positive things that psychology graduates can bring to a service
Data overview	<p>Most of the positive things were to do with personality traits and attitudes, coupled with resilience and commitment. The ability to work in a non-reactive manner and use self-reflection appropriate was also considered as a positive.</p> <p><i>'Enthusiasm brings a lot with it as well – someone enthusiastic and passionate are giving a lot of thought to the work they're doing. Going into things more prepared and mindful way'</i></p> <p><i>'On practical workforce level – sickness rates have been low due to commitment, resilience'</i></p>
1	Enthusiastic and passionate attitudes
2	A lot of thought is given to the work being done
3	Reflective practices
4	Resilience and commitment

Theme	Supporting and helping psychology graduates to enter mental health careers
Data overview	<p>Themes here included the comparatively undesirable image of working in mental health roles such as nursing or social work compared to clinical psychology and the opinion that psychology degrees do not provide the adequate experience and applied practice necessary to equip graduates for work in real healthcare settings. Suggestions made including supporting university-level psychology students to access applied experience, careers advice and information about pathways. Other suggestions were around innovation and development of roles that would be of interest to psychology graduates aspiring to work in clinical roles but would also offer much-needed support to clinical teams.</p> <p><i>'...at times mental health nursing and social work have a bit of an image problem. Don't know that they're always seen as good work'</i></p> <p><i>'Psych grads might not realise that these roles such as occupational therapists (OT) are very relational'</i></p> <p><i>'...more applied modules or opportunity within the undergraduate setting to think about all of this means in practice and current connect of the NHS currently'</i></p> <p><i>'Not seeing case study seeing actual person with real experiences. Need to think about the person rather than think of theory and make assumptions. More applied information/ways of facilitating people engaging in thinking about what this would look like in a healthcare setting in the real world'</i></p>
1	Improving the image of roles outside of clinical psychology (such as nursing and social work)
2	More applied information and/or ways of facilitating engagement/experience in real-world health settings
3	Career workshops/days giving more information about pathways between finishing university courses and work in local services
4	Innovate and develop roles that support clinical teams and offer a position for people who need clinical experience (between an assistant psychologist and a clinical support role)



## Appendix 7: Clinical psychologist trainees interview questions, discussion topics and analysis

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### Interview questions

- 1. Please talk about your career aspirations.**
- 2. Please discuss some the reasons why you entered a mental health career path.**
- 3. Please talk about your experiences in accessing your current training and development course.**

*Prompt questions:* Ask the following questions if responses to question 3 do not deal with these issues, or use as prompts to further the conversation about these topics

- What was difficult (if anything) about accessing your current training course? What obstacles did you come up against?
  - What do you think facilitated your ability to access your current training course? What things might have made this more accessible for you? How did you overcome any barriers/obstacles?
- 4. Please talk about your experiences of working and/or volunteering before you embarked upon your chosen training course.**
  - 5. What advice would you give to anyone who is considering embarking on undergraduate training in psychology or a psychology-related degree?**
  - 6. What advice would you give to anyone thinking of embarking on further or post-graduate training in mental health in the ways that you have?**
  - 7. What do you think university courses or organisations such as the NHS or the BPS could do to make mental health careers more accessible?**
  - 8. What other mental health careers are you aware of?**
  - 9. Please talk about the reasons why you have chosen your career path over another mental health career (such as mental health nursing, for example).**
  - 10. Please talk about your experiences so far of working in the NHS.**
  - 11. Do these experiences align with your expectations?**

# Analysis

## General information about the participants

Participants ( $n=2$ ) were enrolled on the clinical psychology doctorate (DClinPsy/ClinPsyD) course at different universities in England. All had either a BSc in psychology or a BPS-accredited MSc conversion degree. Participants were in either their first or second year of the 3-year course.

## Themes and data overview

The tables below show the outcomes of a basic thematic analysis conducted using information from the interviews. Identified themes are provided along with a simple overview of the data obtained (including quotes) and key points from the data that illustrate the themes.

Theme	Career aspirations
Data overview	Participants differed in their aspirations, with some feeling clear about their aspirations post-training and others keeping more of an open mind. Aspirations were all focused on a career in some field of psychology. <i>'aspirations at the moment are to get through the end of training and qualify!'</i> <i>'I've not got a specific direction I want to go in after training'</i> <i>'Clinical psychologist...looking at working with families and children in mental health'</i> <i>'...staying open minded...'</i>
1	Staying open-minded about what to do following qualification
2	Specific field in mind (e.g., family and child psychology)
3	A desire to successfully complete training and qualify

Theme	Reasons for entering a psychology/mental health training course
Data overview	An interest in psychology as a subject area was a frequently-reported reason for training, coupled with personal or family experience of mental health problems. There was mention of a doctorate being the next logical step for career progression within the psychological professionals' field. Other reasons included academic aptitude and that the subject was enjoyed at college and university undergraduate levels. <i>'I liked psychology at college and got good grades'</i> <i>'there weren't many other options [at A level]'</i> <i>'I enjoyed working with families and got a lot of satisfaction out of it'</i> <i>'family mental illness...understand that'</i> <i>'...no progression without professional qualification'</i>
1	Academic aptitude
2	An interest in human thought and behaviour
3	An enjoyable experience during degree-level study
4	Personal and/or family experience of mental illness
5	Qualification required for career progression

Theme	Experiences accessing current training course
Data overview	<p>The difficulty getting a place on the course was discussed consistently, with all participants discussing applying multiple times before successfully enrolling. Difficult experiences included the role of finances, the arduous application process and restrictions such as the need for childcare. Facilitators included family support, support from clinical colleagues, interview practice, a university course with a placement year during undergraduate study and a good amount of clinical experience.</p> <p><i>'The application process itself in the very beginning...really stressful...you spend so much time trying to find out how to tick boxes...guessing what a psychologist is'</i></p> <p><i>'practice interviewing'</i></p> <p><i>'I had clinical experience and I could reflect on it [during the interview]'</i></p> <p><i>'third application I was more comfortable in who I was...'</i></p> <p><i>'no feedback if you don't secure an interview...don't know on what grounds you're not suitable'</i></p> <p><i>'...I went to [university name removed to remain anonymous] university and as part of that you do a placement year in third year'</i></p> <p><i>'Competitive process trying to get right experience before applying. Every course asks for something different'</i></p>
1	Difficulty: lack of feedback following unsuccessful applications
2	Difficulty: academic requirements (e.g., first-class degree)
3	Difficulty: financial constraints preventing a Masters or part-time work
4	Difficulty: childcare requirements (accessing a course with childcare available)
5	Difficulty: competition
6	Difficulty: long application process
7	Facilitator: feeling confident in oneself
8	Facilitator: well supported by clinical psychologist colleagues
9	Facilitator: family support
10	Facilitator: a significant amount of clinical experience
11	Facilitator: placement year during undergraduate course

Theme	Work and volunteering experiences before training
Data overview	<p>All the students had substantial paid and voluntary work experience prior to embarking on the doctorate course; this equated to at least 2 years full-time experience or equivalent. All the participants had substantial clinical experience, and all worked in the NHS at some stage before enrolling on the doctorate course.</p> <p><i>‘...worked for 3 years in secondary care adult mental health service...employed by 3rd sector but working in NHS’</i></p> <p><i>‘...worked as a research assistant...people with diagnoses of depression’</i></p> <p><i>‘After university I was an honorary assistant in neuropsychology’</i></p> <p><i>‘I worked as a support worker all the way throughout university’</i></p> <p><i>‘...ChildLine volunteer counsellor for 2 years’</i></p> <p><i>‘...support worker role in CAMHS inpatient hospital for 9 months’</i></p>
1	Assistant psychologist (paid or voluntary)
2	Research assistant
3	Support worker
4	NHS settings: inpatient CAMHS; adult mental health services; neurorehabilitation/neuropsychology; adult community mental health team; bank clinical support work in various wards
5	Third and private sector settings; community outreach; ChildLine; housing support; dementia care home; supported living

Theme	Advice to aspiring trainees
Data overview	<p>All trainees spoke of gaining experience as key and advice was mostly around getting relevant clinical experience as soon as possible. Advice was around volunteering if possible and considering undergraduate degrees that involve a placement year. One participant suggested considering alternative careers as well as routes into mental health roles given the competitive nature of psychology training.</p> <p><i>‘...would recommend volunteering during the holidays’</i></p> <p><i>‘...courses that offer a placement year...if doing a degree now I would consider that when picking a course’</i></p> <p><i>‘Be open-minded...pick something you find interesting’</i></p> <p><i>‘Be open-minded about different routes...might be better suited to nursing, OT, support worker’</i></p> <p><i>‘Just coz you have a psych degree doesn’t mean you have to be a psychologist’</i></p> <p><i>‘Get out there and get experience working with people...doing anything...it helps because you find out if you want to work in a clinical role...how the systems work’</i></p>
1	Volunteer where possible
2	Choose a course that includes a placement year
3	Have an open mind about access routes
4	Gain as much experience as soon as possible

Theme	Making mental health careers more accessible
Data overview	<p>Competition was raised again here, with participants speaking of the competitive nature of not only accessing the doctorate course, but of getting relevant experience (especially as an assistant psychologist). Participants made suggestions about honorary/voluntary roles and the perceptions around fairness of these, considering accessibility for people who are unable to work unpaid. Some advice around university course selection procedures and how requirements and expectations could be better articulated to potential applicants. Suggestions about the content of university undergraduate courses to include vocational aspects such as placements. Better careers advice for undergraduates was raised.</p> <p><i>'...honorary posts...I don't think they are necessarily helpful for accessibility...especially people from working class backgrounds...working for free but people should be paid... having honorary posts excludes people like me or those without family support.'</i></p> <p><i>'People coming from 3rd sector won't have access to supervision, especially from psychologist so makes application a lot trickier'</i></p> <p><i>'...need to be thinking about selection procedures...perception of getting into clinical doctorate that you have to have masters and experience in AP role. Sometimes AP posts are more competitive than getting on training'</i></p> <p><i>'...more vocational roles...uni course doing placement'</i></p> <p><i>'...problem is learning theory then have to go out and try to apply it through experience'</i></p> <p><i>'...in [university undergraduate courses] ...there's not a lot about clinical applications...there is a lot about history of psychology...without clinical training or focus...or skills training...'</i></p>
1	Review the honorary/voluntary roles advertised, regarding accessibility
2	Include vocational elements, clinical application and skills training in undergraduate courses
3	Review selection procedures and clarity of essential requirements for applicants
4	Provide more careers support and advice to undergraduate students

Theme	Awareness of other mental health careers (outside of clinical psychology)
Data overview	<p>Whilst they were aware of other mental health careers as discussed during other parts of the interview, the trainees did not seem particularly interested in other careers outside of clinical psychology or PWP. Few had considered other careers, such as mental health social work or counselling psychology. Whilst options such as mental health nursing and OT were raised in other parts of the interview, trainees did not discuss these as options they had considered themselves.</p> <p><i>'I know that there is a big need for people who have positive behaviour support plans in place...in intellectual disability'</i></p> <p><i>'...considered social work masters'</i></p> <p><i>'...considered counselling psychology if clinical psychology application didn't work...would have been difficult'</i></p>
1	Awareness of other mental health careers was not broad among trainees
2	Trainees did not seem to give much consideration to careers outside of clinical psychology themselves
3	Awareness of other mental health roles included nursing, OT, social work, support work, PWP/HIT and counselling psychology

Theme	Reasons for choosing clinical psychology over another path
Data overview	<p>Trainees expressed reasons such as the breadth of options in psychology, opportunities for development and managerial and research elements as reasons why they chose a career in clinical psychology over other mental health careers. One participant discussed the reasons why they did not consider nursing and why access was challenging. Participants generally expressed passion for clinical psychology and being able to influence mental health care from this position, with a perception that other mental health roles may not offer this opportunity.</p> <p><i>'Looked into PWP or HIT after graduating, however having worked in secondary care and getting experience and becoming more aware of PWP IAPT...set up is not for me'</i></p> <p><i>'In clinical psychology you learn about everything...not pigeon holed...so many doors open to me at the moment...'</i></p> <p><i>'...more influence in the NHS and how systems work...the plan is to introduce much more psychological thinking into the way we manage people's mental health'</i></p> <p><i>'I like that you have training in research...help to apply things in the role'</i></p> <p><i>'...can do therapeutic work...but can also do consultation and management'</i></p> <p><i>'...many options...such as children and young people, learning disabilities, adult...;</i></p> <p><i>'Mental health nursing, briefly thought about it...nursing didn't really appeal'</i></p> <p><i>'[Mental health nursing] there are opportunities through trusts...experience as HCA there are some opportunities to do qualification and progress but had to be employed by the trust so did not qualify for that type of training'</i></p>
1	Career development opportunities
2	Being able to influence the direction of mental health care
3	Breadth of options for specialism
4	Lack of appeal of other roles (e.g., nurse, PWP)
5	Managerial and research opportunities within clinical psychology roles

Theme	Experiences and perceptions of working in the NHS
Data overview	<p>All of the participants had experience working in the NHS and so spoke about these. All expressed experiencing pressure working in the NHS, including staff burnout, heavy workloads and some negative attitudes of staff. Positive aspects included where there was a supportive team and access to support during difficult times at work.</p> <p><i>'...mental health services are so underfunded and not treated equally...you get a lot of staff burnout and negative attitudes about working in the NHS...'</i></p> <p><i>'...high pressure, high caseload, difficult work'</i></p> <p><i>'...so much potential to look after people but quite limited in what you can do'</i></p> <p><i>'What makes difference is the team you're in and management you have which varies...some excellent, some not particularly on it... [my] team very well supported by psychology and from clinical psychologists who offered support through difficult times'</i></p> <p><i>'Have come to accept working in NHS is challenging and very pressured'</i></p>
1	Underfunded mental health services
2	High caseloads and pressure
3	Challenging/difficult work
4	A supportive team is beneficial

## Appendix 8: Person specification analysis methods

### Methods for a search of the NHS Jobs website

We searched the [NHS Jobs website](#) with the intent to collect data and information about the content of person specifications for a specific list of entry-level jobs in NHS mental health services in England.

#### Job titles of interest

We were interested in finding and analysing the content of person specifications for the following jobs, graded at band 4 or below:

- Assistant psychologist, psychology assistant, therapy assistant
- Mental health support worker, graduate mental health support worker
- Psychological wellbeing practitioner (PWP) trainee
- Occupational therapy support worker/assistant/technician
- Research assistant
- Healthcare assistant
- Nursing assistant
- Peer support worker
- Miscellaneous

#### Search

The NHS Jobs website was searched on one occasion during the first week of each month by a member of the NCCMH research team. Searches occurred between 1 June 2019 and 10 August 2019 (a total of three searches). Only the jobs listed above have been searched (including synonyms/alternate titles for each position). The search process is described below.

If the search generated positions above band 4, additional filters were selected to remove irrelevant search results, as follows:

The screenshot shows the NHS Jobs search interface with the following details:

- Keywords or Job Reference:** Assistant Psychologist x
- Location or Postcode:** e.g. Sunderland, BS8 1RL (crossed out with a red X)
- Distance:** This area + 10 miles
- Search Method:** Title (selected, circled in red)
- Minimum Salary:** Any
- Maximum Salary:** Upwards
- Additional Filters:**
  - AfC pay band:**
    - Band 2 (checked, circled in red)
    - Band 3 (checked, circled in red)
    - Band 4 (checked, circled in red)
    - Band 5 (unchecked)
    - Band 6 (unchecked)
    - Band 7 (unchecked)
    - Band 8a (unchecked)
    - Band 8b (unchecked)
    - Band 8c (unchecked)
    - Band 8d (unchecked)
    - Band 9 (unchecked)

**Figure 1: Screen capture of the NHS jobs search tool, including available filters. Source: <https://www.jobs.nhs.uk>**

### Inclusion criteria

- Mental health service or setting (including those listed as neuropsychology, neurorehabilitation, psychiatry, stroke, substance misuse services)
- AfC pay band 4 or below
- Job title meets predefined list (or an acceptable alternative as long as job meets other criteria above, decided at researcher’s discretion)

### Recording of findings

The NCCMH researcher recorded the following information in tabular format for subsequent analysis:

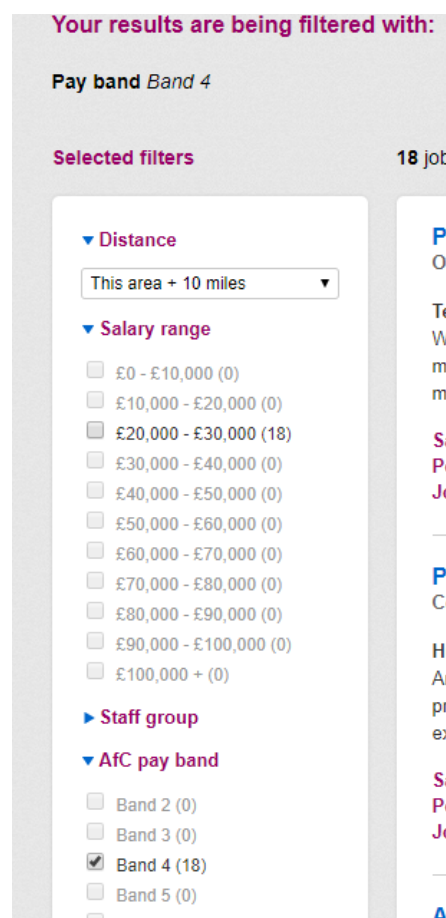


Figure 2: Screen capture from the NHS jobs search tool, including available filters. Source: <https://www.jobs.nhs.uk/>

Table 1: Example of how searches were recorded; dates and number of hits/results by job title will be recorded and used for analysis.

Date of search	Job title	Number of results/hits
e.g., 1 June 2019	Assistant psychologist	#
	Psychology assistant	#
	Therapy assistant	#
	Mental health support worker	#
	...etc.	
e.g., 1 Aug 2019	Assistant psychologist	#
	Psychology assistant	#
	Therapy assistant	#
	...etc.	



### Analysis of results

Data extracted from the person specifications were entered into an excel spreadsheet. The 'value/usefulness' of a psychology degree in applying for each job was coded with a numerical value. These values are defined as follows:

- 0 = Alternative vocational qualification required
- 1 = Undergraduate degree not essential
- 2 = Non-specific undergraduate degree essential
- 3 = Psychology degree essential

In order to conduct a general assessment of the value of a psychology degree in applying for entry-level mental health roles in the NHS, the mode of value for each job title was ascertained.

The experiential criteria for each position was also coded with a numerical value. These values are defined as follows:

- 0 = Previous experience working in a healthcare setting and/or with mental health patients is not essential
- 1 = Previous experience working in a healthcare setting and/or with mental health patients is essential

## Appendix 9: NHS entry-level vacancy heatmap from person specification analysis

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Figure 3 shows a 'heatmap' representing the number of vacancies (for which location data was available) identified during the person specification analysis.

**Table 2: The number of entry-level mental health job vacancies per region in England, for which location data was available (425 out of 449 vacancies identified included location data)**

Region	Total
Eastern	52
East Midlands	48
West Midlands	23
Greater London	26
North East	50
North West	29
South West	74
South East	89
Yorkshire & Humberside	34
All regions	425

## Appendix 10: Useful resources and links

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### Data and statistics resources

- [Higher Education Statistics Agency \(HESA\)](#)
- [NHS Independent Healthcare Provider Workforce Statistics](#)
- [NHS Workforce Statistics](#)
- [Office for National Statistics](#)

### Relevant reports

- [BPS Careers Destination \(Phase 3\) Survey](#)
- [Independent panel report to the review of post-18 education and funding](#)
- [NHS Long Term Plan Implementation Framework](#)
- [The NHS Long Term Plan](#)

### Websites

- Department for Education - <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education>
- Health Education England - <https://www.hee.nhs.uk/>
- Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education - <https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/>
- NHS Digital - <https://digital.nhs.uk/>
- NHS Employers - <https://www.nhsemployers.org/>
- NHS England - <https://www.england.nhs.uk/>
- NHS health careers - <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/>
- NHS Jobs - <https://www.jobs.nhs.uk/>
- Prospects - <https://www.prospects.ac.uk/job-profiles/mental-health-nurse>
- The British Psychological Society - <https://www.bps.org.uk/>
- The Royal College of Nursing - <https://www.rcn.org.uk>
- UCAS - <https://www.ucas.com/>
- What qualification levels mean - <https://www.gov.uk/what-different-qualification-levels-mean/list-of-qualification-levels>

### Miscellaneous

- [NHS Job Evaluation Handbook \(2013\)](#)

## Appendix 11: List of people involved in the development of the report

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### **NCCMH team**

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