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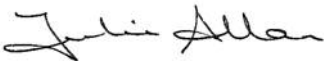
The British Psychological Society
Division of Health Psychology

Introduction

Welcome to the British Psychological Society Division of Health Psychology Scotland (DHP-S) career case study series.

Health Psychology is a rapidly growing, but still relatively young discipline. Career paths are diverse and there is strong competition for funded stage 2 training places and NHS health psychologist posts. Consequently, many early career students and trainees find the transition from training to work challenging.

In response to requests from early career members for more information about possible career paths, DHP-S funded two student researchers in 2018 to produce a series of career case studies. Individuals who had completed health psychology training in Scotland were surveyed and interviewed about their training, current jobs, career aspirations, challenges and successes. The results of this project are compiled in the present case study series which we hope you will find useful.



Julia Allan
Chair DHP-S

On behalf of the 2018-20 DHP-S careers working group: Hannah Dale, Catherine Murray and Sinead Currie. With thanks to the DHP-S student research bursary holders Rebecca Ryce and Caroline Lubbe who conducted the interviews and compiled the case studies.



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Executive Summary

Project background and aim

The careers case studies project aimed to investigate the career paths and destinations of individuals who undertook their British Psychological Society (BPS) –accredited stage 1 (MSc in Health Psychology) and/or stage 2 Health Psychology training (or other route to health psychology qualification) in Scotland.

A survey was designed and launched to capture a broad snapshot of MSc health psychology graduates (n=59; 6 male, 53 female). See final page for details. All but two had completed an MSc in Health Psychology (5 in England, 52 in Scotland). Around a third (n=22) had undertaken stage 2 training in Health Psychology, therefore becoming qualified Health Psychologists. From these responses, 15 individuals were approached to take part in career interviews. These 15 were selected because they represented a diverse range of career paths. It is hoped that the resulting case studies will be useful in supporting prospective students and early career Health Psychologists in exploring potential career routes.

Health Psychology training

Of the 15 interviewed, all undertook an MSc in Health Psychology (12 in Scotland, 3 in England) and 7 undertook stage two training (all via the independent route, including 5 through the NHS Education for Scotland (NES) – funded route).

Current job roles

Interviewees held roles across NHS, academic and private sector organisations. Those working in the NHS were predominantly Health Psychologists, but also included an Assistant Psychologist and a Trainee Clinical Psychologist. Roles in academia included a Research Assistant, PhD student, Lecturer and Teaching Fellow. Roles in the private sector included a teacher of health sciences abroad, a manager in a housing association and leisure facility, and an occupational health director in a large conglomerate.

Previous work experience

The majority of interviewees' previous employment and voluntary roles were in a health and social care environment, including psychology. Roles included Research Assistants, Assistant Psychologists, Health Trainers and a variety of educational placements and voluntary roles within different health boards across the NHS. Interviewees emphasised that experience in a healthcare or psychological field enhanced clinical, patient and research skills which generated invaluable skills and increased future employability.

Career related challenges

All interviewees had experience of career related challenges. Recurring challenges were related to difficulty between finishing education and finding a desirable paid position; many interviewees faced a lot of rejection in this time. However, it was emphasised that this difficulty in finding a position was beneficial in the end as it allowed additional time to gain experience in a health-related field, which set individuals apart from other applicants in the future. Other challenges interviewees faced were related to funding for research and academic posts, lack of jobs specifically advertised for 'Health Psychologists' and a lack of knowledge amongst employers of health psychologists' qualifications and competencies.

Advice for students and trainees

Interviewees expressed similar words of advice for students and trainees;

- Pursue any available experience, paid or unpaid, in a sector that is related to healthcare or psychology, the skills obtained will become invaluable for future positions.
- Don't let the workload dominate free time, it is essential to enjoy activities and hobbies that generate positive wellbeing.
- Make time to get involved with the Health Psychology world, take the time to network with others and get involved in events and societies.
- Most importantly persevere and stay positive.

Careers Case Study 1

Health Psychology in Scotland Careers Series

Name: Ms Emma Monaghan

Health Psychology training Completed

I completed a MSc in Health Psychology (Stage 1) at the University of Aberdeen in 2018.

Current Role

My current role is a Health Science Teacher in the United Arab Emirates working with school girls aged 15-18.

What a typical day as a Health Science Teacher consists of

No day is the same, but a typical day will include teaching and supporting pupils, this can include increasing their health literacy, improving their self-efficacy and introducing pupils to the health sector. The classes I deliver during the week aim to introduce pupils to the role of healthcare, I teach them about different English models and concepts that are related to health and discuss the variety of professions in which they could move forward in to pursue a career with, such as, nurses, doctors, etc. One of the main areas I teach enables pupils to learn and apply health information and services, this can include teaching them different ways to protect and promote personal, family and community health. I am aware this role is not directly related to Psychology, however, the material I refer to and use on a daily basis is heavily related to what I learned during my MSc, for example teaching students how to effectively make health behaviour changes.

How Health Psychology training prepared Emma for her current role

My MSc gave me a lot of transferable skills and invaluable knowledge that I try and incorporate on a daily basis. Within my MSc I obtained a certificate in Health Coaching and I find myself using the material a lot more than I would have initially predicted, for example I use motivational interviewing, active listening and SMART goals daily. I have also found it immensely useful for teaching my pupils about life choices associated with poor health behaviours and how they can be managed.



What interested Emma in Health Psychology?

I was first introduced to Health Psychology during a career talk in my final year of my undergraduate at the University of Edinburgh. I had never been exposed to Health Psychology as a discipline and it immediately sparked an interest. At the time I was dealing with a lot of personal and family issues relating to medication adherence and health behaviour changes and the talk resonated with me. I then decided to research what Health Psychology was, what it meant, what careers could arise from studying it, and this research alone got me very interested in being involved in improving the healthcare system which lead me to apply for my MSc.

Emma's future aspirations

I would eventually like to complete my Stage 2 training to become a Health Psychologist, however at the moment I am really enjoying gaining world experience. I am interested in exploring different health environments across the world and ideally hope to gain a deep insight to what works well and any challenges different cultures face in healthcare.



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Careers Case Study 2

Health Psychology in Scotland Careers Series

Name: Ms Jennifer Dunsmore

Health Psychology training completed

I completed my MSc in Health Psychology (Stage 1) at the University of Aberdeen in 2017.

Jennifer's current role

My current role is a Research Assistant at the University of Aberdeen. I currently work with the Academic Urology Unit. I have been in this role since January and I have helped design and get the project off the ground. My role changes as the project progresses. Currently, I am in constant contact with R&D offices around the country to get locations set up so I can then complete qualitative interviews with health care professionals.

How Health Psychology training prepared Jennifer for her current role

I would say my health psychology training prepared me in many ways. The theories taught in the course have been of use to me in the role I am in now. The methods training and courses on stress and disability, as well as experiences in the research project module, have provided a skill set I have used over and over again in my job. Also, learning how to be able to read papers as a health psychologist is a skill in itself. There was a lot of independent learning and this was reinforced by lectures. This ability to work independently was one of the most valuable skills I obtained on the course.

Any career related challenges?

After leaving my MSc I didn't have a job at the time. I was unsure if I was going to move home or wanted to stay in Aberdeen. I was uncertain to what route I wanted to take in my career. I applied for 6 different funding opportunities for a PhD and each one was rejected, 4 of them got to the final stages and received positive feedback however in the end were not funded. I did not expect how much rejection there would be, I was very shocked at how much work was involved in creating and submitting applications. However, regardless of the challenges I have faced I am sure I will get where I need to be. In this field you have to have a lot of perseverance but it will pay off.



Jennifer's advice for future students and trainees

I would set up a routine. When I was doing my MSc I would go to the library every day and especially towards thesis or exam time I would go every day and then at night too. I found that really helpful setting up a routine. My past experience with other students who didn't have that routine I could see that it was more challenging for them. Also, don't be scared of getting part time work if you can throughout your MSc, it will give you transferable skills which can be utilised in future work, especially being able to time manage.

I recently wrote an article regarding PhD rejection and disappointment, that was a new experience for me. I actually came across the advertisement on twitter and I didn't technically fit the description as I didn't have a PhD, but I applied anyway and they were delighted to have me as a co-author. I completed this work alongside another author from another university and it was really good experience. All these little opportunities that you see popping up, regardless of where they are being advertised, are a great way to get involved and get yourself out there, this one in particular opened a lot of doors for me. Another piece of advice would be to go conferences and talks and meet people, even if the field is not exactly what you want to do it is a great opportunity to make connections.



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Careers Case Study 3

Health Psychology in Scotland Careers Series

Name: Dr Sinéad Currie

Health Psychology training completed

I completed my undergraduate in Psychology in Stirling in 2010 and actually did my 3rd year in California at UCSB which was very interesting. Following this, I enrolled in the MSc in Health Psychology (Stage 1) and completed this in 2011. I then moved to Northern Ireland in order to complete my PhD in the nursing department at Ulster University. While I was doing my PhD I went through the BPS independent route for my Stage 2 in 2012 and completed this in 2015.

Sinéad's current role

I am a Lecturer in Health Psychology and I am based in the Health Psychology team at the University of Stirling.

Sinéad's previous career experience

During my undergraduate I travelled to Ireland for a summer and worked with an Educational Psychologist, this consisted of me shadowing them to gain more experience in general with Educational Psychology but gave me a greater insight of what an applied Psychologist would do on a daily basis. During my masters I had a placement in a local maternity hospital. This was where my interest in maternal health stemmed from, it was interesting applying what I had learned during my masters in a placement setting. I went straight to a PhD after my masters and I was focused on my research which was delivering a physical activity intervention to pregnant women in a maternity hospital. I then started a lecturing post in Manchester for just under a year, as I was covering a temporary position. In that time I was lecturing and finishing my Stage 2. Since then I got my job here, at the University of Stirling, as a Lecturer in Health Psychology.



What a typical day as a Lecturer in Health Psychology consists of

There isn't really a typical day, but a typical week is split up by 40% research, 40% teaching and around 20% admin, I get a good mixture of all 3 in a week. Teaching would normally involve a few lectures a week with undergraduate or MSc students. I coordinate and teach the clinical and health psychology module for third year psychology undergraduates and lead an elective for final year students, which is based on health behaviour and the environment. I also coordinate and teach on an MSc Health Psychology module. In addition to that I supervise undergraduate and MSc research projects for my students.

The research element of my week varies but, as an example, the majority of the summer consisted of writing grant applications. This involves applying to funding bodies to attain funding to pursue my research. I also write journal articles, but a lot of my time consists of reviewing and commenting on PhD or masters students work to get it to a publishable standard. I find myself doing a lot of tasks throughout the week, at the moment I am working on a systematic review with a colleague in Australia extracting data from papers. Additionally, I sometimes produce work for the DHP Scotland and I am treasurer of UKSBM, this normally involves being constantly involved in email threads to be aware of what is going on.



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Careers Case Study 3 (continued)

Health Psychology in Scotland Careers Series

Any career related challenges?

The first challenge I hit was financial - finding funding for my stage 1/MSc straight after my undergraduate graduation. I managed to gain support from the careers service at the University who guided me in the direction of applying for funding to cover my fees, which I was successful in getting.

The next challenge I faced was wanting to go straight from my masters to the NES training (Stage 2). The year in which I graduated there weren't any openings or posts for a Stage 2 position which was disappointing at the time as that was what I wanted to do. However, I came across a PhD in maternal health and thought to myself if I was every going to pursue a PhD that would be the topic area I would choose. At the time I didn't have much experience of interviews, but I thought regardless it would be a great opportunity to gain that experience and luckily I was offered the position.

Two key challenges I faced came from the transition of going from one stage to the next. I didn't plan to be a lecturer it was only at the end of my PhD I thought to myself that it would be good. I originally wanted to work as a Health Psychologist in a maternity hospital, but the role didn't exist. I didn't get what I originally wanted to do but it still worked out incredibly well and I am enjoying where I am. It can be stressful but in the long run it can and will work out.

Advice for future students or trainees

I would definitely say keep an open mind and take as many opportunities as you can, regardless if those opportunities are not what you think you may be interested in, it will at least help you see if you are interested in a particular area or whether it may be a route which you want to pursue.

Sinéad's future aspirations

Ultimately, I would like to continue to conduct research and ensure that it is applied. I would love to have an applied Health Psychologist role in an NHS setting alongside an academic research role. I would still like to be able to continue research because as a group we still don't know the full potential of Health Psychology, specifically in the area of maternal health that I work in. I want to be able to generate that knowledge but also apply it. My main aspiration is finding out the best ways of improving health behaviours, helping people to engage in these behaviours and ultimately improve their lives.



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Careers Case Study 4

Health Psychology in Scotland Careers Series

Name: Dr Hannah Dale

Health Psychology training completed

I completed my MSc in Health Psychology (Stage 1) at the University of Nottingham in 2006, I then started my Stage 2 Health Psychology training in Scotland as part of the first cohort of trainees on the NHS Education for Scotland (NES) Scheme, which was 2 years, and I completed this in 2010. I also completed a PhD in 2015 at the University of St Andrews, exploring psychosocial issues and health behaviours in men with cancer. I undertook my PhD part time alongside my NHS positions.

Hannah's current role

I am a practising Health Psychologist, I currently have two positions; the first being within NHS Education for Scotland. This involves supporting Trainee Health Psychologists through supervision, training and programme development. I am the coordinating supervisor for all the trainees on the NES scheme.

My second position is based at NHS Tayside. I am employed by psychology and based for all of my time between two GP practices. I am developing, delivering and evaluating behavioural health interventions as part of primary care and working with staff to support biopsychosocial working and joint care plans. I see patients for a wide range of reasons such as lifestyle changes, adjustment to long term conditions, managing somatic symptoms and general wellbeing and stress.

Hannah's previous work experience

After I completed my MSc I really struggled to find work relevant to health psychology, I knew I wanted to work in the NHS and ideally wanted to pursue a career as Health Psychologist. I therefore only applied for NHS jobs. It took me 3 months to find a position, I had applied for 40 jobs around the UK. I eventually got offered a post to be a Health Trainer which gave me great experience with patients in a relevant area to Health Psychology. I worked as a Health Trainer for 9 months before I got a post in the same health board as a Stop Smoking Specialist.



Continued...

The Health Trainer post was helpful because it gave me NHS experience, and as a Health Trainer I undertook work around smoking cessation and that helped me achieve a more senior post as a Stop Smoking Specialist. After my MSc, I also did some sessional work during the weekend in sexual health which was really interesting. I feel that this was one of the factors that helped me get my training post, since one training project initially focused on the sexual health needs of looked after young children.

After qualifying as a Health Psychologist, in addition to ongoing behaviour change interventions for looked after young people, I got involved in the oncology and blood borne virus services, along with delivering an acceptance and commitment therapy- (ACT) based group for people with long term conditions. I have also been involved in the evaluation of a driving intervention, the development of volitional help sheets for smoking and sexual health, and an intervention for developing messages for touch screens placed in a hospital. Although, sometimes there was some uncertainty around my job security due to not always being on permanent contract, this has brought benefits due to being able to get involved in a range of interesting projects and expanding my experiences.



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Careers Case Study 4 (continued)

Health Psychology in Scotland Careers Series

What interested Hannah in Health Psychology

I first got interested in Health Psychology when I took a specialist module in the last year of my undergraduate that was based on Health Psychology. It was focused on screening behaviour which sparked a great interest.

Between my undergraduate and master's degree I worked in various roles, one was as a Community Support Worker in Mental Health. One of the things that got me thinking of Health Psychology again was how much I enjoyed the element of the job that encouraged the patients to be more active and make healthier choices, then witnessing the benefits to their mental wellbeing because of the health changes they made.

Any career related challenges

There have been two main challenges. The first was securing my first NHS post following my MSc. This was hard to do, however once I had a small amount of NHS experience, the opportunities opened up.

The second has been around the recognition of my skills and competencies as a health psychologist. There have been times where I have not had the opportunities to work in some areas that I have previously had experience in, since there was a misperception that as a Health Psychologist I would not have the skills or competencies. The times where this has happened were difficult as I knew I had the skills to fulfil certain roles, given I had previously undertaken them. Taking a post in another health board helped significantly, since it enabled me to build my confidence back up due to a supportive team and environment.

Hannah's advice for students and trainees

In terms of jobs and barriers, my experience is that as a health psychologist, you are often benchmarked against the competencies of clinical psychologists, which rarely happens vice versa. This is particularly if jobs are advertised as 'clinical psychologist' not 'applied psychologist'. This means that you really have to excel as a health psychologist in order to get psychologist posts in the NHS, since not only do you have to demonstrate that you're a very good health psychologist, you have to demonstrate many competencies of a clinical psychologist. Jobs can therefore be much harder to secure as a health psychologist, particularly since there are very few jobs advertised as 'health psychologist', or that are explicitly open to health psychologists.

I think in sum, it takes determination, persistence, flexibility and creativity. This includes keeping applying for jobs, being passionate and following your dream, having the flexibility to go for non-health psychology jobs and lower paid jobs as an investment to take a step up at a later date and think broadly about the application of health psychology. I have had a very varied and fulfilling NHS career as a Health Psychologist so far and I look forward to further opportunities in the years to come.



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Careers Case Study 5

Health Psychology in Scotland Careers Series

Name: Ms Hope Clayton

Health Psychology training completed

I completed my Undergraduate Psychology degree at Cardiff University in 2012. I then completed my MSc in Health Psychology (Stage 1) in 2013 at Kings Collage in London. I went on to complete the NES training (Stage 2) which was based in Aberdeen (NHS Grampian) for two and a half years. The NES training was great. I really loved my placement and the people I worked with, I got a lot of support from NES.



Hope's current role

My current role is a Health Psychologist in a Renal Team based in a hospital just north of London. The majority of my time is spent working therapeutically with patients on a one to one basis. I mainly work with outpatients but also see inpatients on the ward. I am also actively involved with research, training staff, service development and I line manage a Peer Support Facilitator, whose job it is to recruit and train patients to support new patients. Every day is different. I see a lot of patients and liaise with other staff members such as doctors, nurses, dietitians, social workers and psychotherapists to determine the best way to support patients. It is completely varied and there are a lot of opportunities for professional development.

Hope's previous career experience

Before I went to university, I worked as a care assistant for a year in a home for the elderly. Working there was great grounding for experience with working with people. I continued to do that part time throughout university and was also a Support Assistant for people with learning disabilities. I did various voluntary work such as working in a rehab unit in a psychiatric in-patient hospital, cooking in homeless shelters and I also volunteered in a mental health crisis centre. During my MSc I had a placement working on a Mindfulness project via Skype for people with MS. I would arrange their MRI scans and met them to train them on certain tasks. I did a lot of varied work over the years.

What interested Hope in Health Psychology

I have always been fascinated with healthcare. As I mentioned previously I worked as a care assistant and this exposed me to a lot of different health conditions. I also had a friend who was completing a MSc in Health Psychology at the time and it sounded really interesting. I thought it would be great to put health and psychology together. I was really intrigued to understand how the mind and body interact.

Any career related challenges

I found the biggest challenge to overcome was the anxiety of what I was going to do for a career, as there are not a huge number of roles for Health Psychologists within applied settings. There has always been that anxiety about 'is this going to work out', but luckily it always has. The work can also be challenging. It can be very heavy work at times especially when dealing with people at some of the most vulnerable times of their lives. This can be hard to cope with and let go at the end of the day; however, there is an immense amount of support from different professionals to aid this.



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Careers Case Study 6

Health Psychology in Scotland Careers Series

Name: Ms Caitlin Taylor

Health Psychology training completed

I completed my MSc in Health Psychology (Stage 1) in 2016 at the University of Aberdeen.

Caitlin's current role

I currently work full-time for the NHS as a Assistant Psychologist.

A typical day as a Assistant Psychologist

Every day is different. I run clinics in the morning with individual patients and I work very closely with my supervisor to complete initial assessments and for those patients returning for 1-2-1 support. During the afternoon I lead a group education session for patients, this environment is normally very talkative and engaging. My time also consists of service evaluation and administration duties throughout the week, I complete notes and also format and plan my timetable for the upcoming weeks.

Caitlin's previous work experience

Before I got my role as an Assistant Psychologist I worked very closely with the Aesthetics and Bariatric service over a year. I really enjoyed this and felt it was great experience. It allowed me to have regular contact with patients and apply the knowledge I had obtained over the course of my Stage 1 into practice in a health environment.

What interested Caitlin in Health Psychology?

I was first introduced to Health Psychology during my undergraduate degree at the University of Aberdeen and it sparked my interest immediately. I understood health was something that affects everyone and their quality of life, I really wanted to understand more and be involved in making a difference to mitigate health problems our society faces.

How health psychology training prepared Caitlin for her current role

I would say my MSc in Health Psychology and my additional volunteering experience prepared me for my current role. As an Assistant Psychologist, I complete a lot of literature searches. Although these literature searches are slightly different than the ones I completed in my MSc, I find the experience I had previously really does help. I also find myself utilising competencies associated with behaviour change on a daily basis with my patients, such as, motivational interviewing and some aspects of CBT. I also think my previous voluntary experience within the NHS has given me a great advantage to understanding commercial models and expectations within a NHS environment.

Career challenges Caitlin overcame

The main career related challenge I experienced was the lack of paid job opportunities and the transition stage of going from a MSc to a real job. I found that paid posts were being quickly filled by individuals who had completed their Stage 1 in previous years. I feel that this could have been due to those individuals having more time to complete additional training and obtain more health-related experience. However, having the break in-between my MSc and the role I am in now, gave me the time to volunteer and complete additional training such as my Acceptance and Commitment Therapy training. I would say, this definitely built up my experience and prepared me for a paid job opportunity.

Career advice for students

I would certainly highlight putting yourself forward and applying for volunteering roles to gain experience in a health environment, and stay motivated because you will get where you want to be!



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Careers Case Study 7

Health Psychology in Scotland Careers Series

Name: Ms Corina Weir

Health Psychology training completed

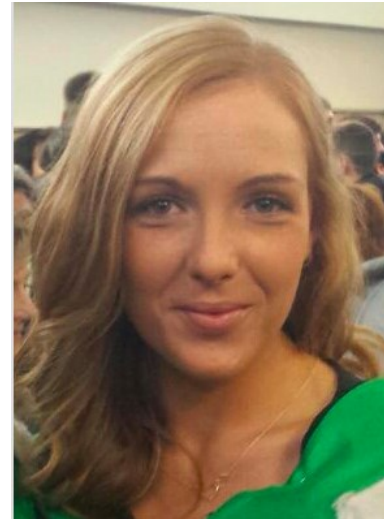
I completed my undergraduate degree in Psychology and graduated in 2010. Following this I completed the Stage 1 in Health Psychology at the University of Stirling in 2015. I was then very fortunate to gain a position on the NES programme for my Stage 2 and started this the following January after I graduated from my Masters. I finished my NES training in January 2018 and now work for the University of Aberdeen in the Health Psychology Group as a Teaching Fellow.

Corina's previous work experience

I started as an Assistant Psychologist within a Primary Care Mental Health team in the NHS, however I quickly realised Psychology was an unlimited field with many potential avenues. To explore other areas of Psychology, I worked full time as a Research Assistant within an Educational Psychology team. However, I wanted to gain more knowledge and understanding of the interplay between psychology, wellbeing and health.

I started the Stage 1 MSc at Stirling University and applied for a bursary to support my studies. I undertook two jobs while I was completing my MSc, working as an Assistant Health Psychologist for the NHS and continuing my role as a Research Assistant for an Educational Psychology Department. I was very lucky to have this experience of working in the NHS while completing my stage 1 as the research project I conducted was based in the NHS, so I felt I had an advantage in understanding how the core concepts of Health Psychology are applied to practice.

I then submitted an application for the Stage 2 training and got the position for this, working in Public Health and the Department of Paediatric Psychology focusing on chronic health conditions and self-management. I was certain I wanted to work for the NHS in a practitioner role, but I really enjoyed the teaching element and knew I would enjoy working in academia conducting research and teaching students, which lead me to my role in Aberdeen as a Teaching Fellow.



Corina's role as a Teaching Fellow

My day-to-day duties as a Teaching Fellow can differ every day but on an average week I am responsible for jointly co-ordinating two courses, for Health Psychology, Public Health and Global Health MSc students. Some of the students do not have a Psychology background and I have the opportunity to design, develop and implement course materials based on experience I have had in clinical settings. There is a lot of work associated with this co-ordination role, such as tutorials, assessments and assignments which I have to stay up to date with in order to support students. I have a large proportion of my time dedicated to teaching during a week, but I am still actively involved with research and am currently working towards an additional teaching qualification.



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Careers Case Study 7 (continued)

Health Psychology in Scotland Careers Series

Career related challenges

As Health Psychology is a relatively small, emerging discipline, other professionals can find it difficult to navigate and understand the similarities and differences with other Psychology disciplines. Part of our role is to convey the message that Health Psychology is a diverse field with enormous potential in academia, research and practice, and advocate for our discipline. At times this has felt daunting, particularly at the start of my training, and has led to a number of discussions with a range of colleagues. But as I have progressed and gained increasing confidence, I am now able to manage these conversations and welcome opportunities to share the wealth of potential applications our discipline has to offer.

Corina's advice for students and trainees

Keep going and persevere! Make sure you look after yourself and take care of your own health. Do what you enjoy and don't let the workload affect your confidence.



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Careers Case Study 8

Health Psychology in Scotland Careers Series

Name: Dr Calum McHale

Health Psychology training completed

I completed both my MSc in Health Psychology (Stage 1) and my PhD at the University of St Andrews.

Calum's current role

My current role is a Research Fellow in the same department I completed my MSc.

What does a typical day as a Research Fellow consist of

I am currently involved in a project piloting a novel psychological intervention designed to help breast cancer patients manage fear of cancer recurrence. The project will run over the next couple of years. What you do on a typical day depends on what stage you are at in your research. I only started the role around 4 months ago and I am currently going through the process of gaining the necessary approvals to conduct the research. Once the project is approved I will be working with healthcare teams and patients in cancer units.

I am also involved with other aspects of academia, such as writing publications and co-supervising students who are on the current Stage 1 course.

Calum's previous work experience

My first interaction with Psychology was in high school which was why I then decided to complete my undergraduate in Psychology at the University of Dundee. During my undergraduate I was working as a volunteer for NHS Child and Adult Mental Health departments, and I was able to get involved with a lot of projects and shadow psychologists in that working environment. I then went straight from my undergraduate to my MSc in Health Psychology. After that I worked as a Research Assistant for about a year, which generated funding to complete my PhD, and then I became a Research Fellow.



Career related challenges

This is a hard question. I have been very fortunate that I have moved with relative ease from one position to the next, however I know from previous observations of co-workers and students whom I have supervised that there are challenges. It can be difficult getting funding to pursue research or move forward to Stage 2 and having necessary experience to get the paid position you would like. However, I do know from experience and observation again, that if you set your mind to something it can be achieved!

Calum's future aspirations

My background has been in research and academia, I have had a lot of different thoughts on what I want to do going forward but I think research is for me and is what I enjoy and am passionate about. I do think about maybe pursuing Stage 2 but I am currently really happy working on my research.

Calum's advice for students and trainees

I would say to future students or trainees to get experience in a health setting, it's invaluable regardless of when it is. I feel having this experience of being involved in a health role has given me a great advantage in interviews and previous positions I have been in. It will make you stand out. It can be challenging finding these opportunities, but they are out there!



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Careers Case Study 9

Health Psychology in Scotland Careers Series

Name: Ms Bronagh Raftery

Health Psychology training completed

I started my Health Psychology training at the University of St Andrews (2011 – 2012). While I was doing that I had a bursary which was effectively a 1 year Assistant Psychology post in NHS Fife, so I did that one day a week alongside my MSc. After that I was very lucky to get onto the NES stage 2 training (2012 – 2015) where I was working in the Department of Public Health in NHS Ayrshire and Arran.

Bronagh's current role

I'm a Project Manager/Post-Doctoral Research Fellow at the University of Dundee. We are developing and evaluating the feasibility of a manualised intervention for supporting premature infants to feed. Essentially it is a behaviour change intervention for parents and staff in neonatal units. It involves systematic review, qualitative research, and gathering and analysing clinical data during the trial. As the project has just started, my days involve the general management of the project; liaising with the Principal Investigator, dealing with queries regarding R&D and ethics applications, supporting our research nurses with interviews and/or focus groups, and liaising with our parents panel. As the project progresses I will be developing the manualised intervention; which will involve applying evidence based behaviour change techniques and health psychology theories which will support its use in practice.

Bronagh's previous career experience

My stage 2 training was looking at developing behaviour change interventions for community midwives around referring pregnant women to a healthy weight programme. I then moved to a post as a Trainee Health Psychologist with NHS Lanarkshire until I completed my Viva, after which my post was promoted to a qualified Health Psychology post. I was there for three and a half years (2015 – 2018), before moving to my current post.



What interested Bronagh in Health Psychology?

Everything! When I was first introduced to Health Psychology, it seemed revolutionary – a whole field of psychology that looks at the link between our health and wellbeing! It made intuitive sense to me that how we think and feel about our health affects how we act about our health. What's kept me interested is systemic behaviour change; how we can support change in the wider health and social services to improve the health and well being of the population.

Any career related challenges?

As it is still a relatively new profession, Health Psychology specific roles are, unfortunately, few and far between. How I've overcome it – I've started to look at the skills and competencies I have and where else they can be applied. So, I've stopped looking at the job label and instead I look at the job description. There's so many areas that our skills are highly sought after – employers don't always realise that a Health Psychologist is exactly what they are looking for!

Advice for future students and trainees

Take every opportunity you can to develop as diverse a skillset as possible. Also look outside your core competencies to see what other skills you can develop and explore what interests you. Never feel disillusioned by the lack of advertised jobs for Health Psychologists – there is so much we can bring!



The British Psychological Society
Division of Health Psychology

Careers Case Study 10

Health Psychology in Scotland Careers Series

Name: Ms Bethany Bareham

Health Psychology training completed

MSc Health Psychology at the University of St Andrews, 2014 – 2015.

Bethany's current role

Currently I'm doing a PhD - so that's kind of like an apprenticeship of research. I'm doing it in applied health research. I've been doing qualitative research, so I've done two large qualitative systematic reviews which involved a qualitative evidence synthesis, and also conducted a qualitative study with two population groups on factors that shape older peoples' drinking and how they're influenced; so that was interviewing older adults and primary care providers. It's a very active environment where I'm working, so I'm involved in conference organising and other projects too. I'm doing a bit of teaching on qualitative methods this year, I did a bit of health psychology teaching last year. I teach the medicine students sometimes and I teach research skills. Conferences as well, we go to all sorts of places. In November, I'm going to Boston to present on my work. When I finish I'm going to be collaborating with an organisation called Drink Wise Age Well, which provides prevention and treatment services for older drinkers in Scotland. I'll be producing insight reports - analysing their prevention strategy to identify the active ingredients of their interventions and elaborating on how these might be developed for wider implementation across the UK and more widely. Then I'm funded to come back to Newcastle after that to progress and develop my ideas for post-doc research.

What interested you in Health Psychology?

I did work experience in a hospital thinking I wanted to do Medicine when I was in 6th form, and there was a Health Psychologist there and I was really interested in their role. My undergraduate tutor was a health psychologist – she was really helpful at creating an awareness that my interests fitted better with health psychology rather than clinical psychology.



Bethany's previous career experience

I'm a perpetual student, so having completed the course at St Andrews I went straight on to start a PhD with Newcastle University Institute for Health and Society.

Any career related challenges

In my PhD, I've ended up looking at pre-conscious motivations for drinking, so I had to do a lot of exploration into social theory. So basically I've had to learn a whole new discipline, whilst still drawing on my health psychology understanding a lot too. Funding is also quite tricky, but I've been very lucky in that my supervisor has ensured I'm supported to continue working within the institute once I finish my doctorate. It was also challenging coming into a PhD environment and competing with people who are just as smart as you, so you have to find a new way to stand out, and also adjust to working independently.

Advice for future students and trainees

There's different types of impact. My attraction to health psychology was motivated by wanting to help individuals on a face-to-face basis but I've gone down the prevention path, which has the potential to have an impact on a large number of people. Stick to your values and you'll incorporate those into your career path whatever you end up doing.



**The British
Psychological Society**
Division of Health Psychology

Careers Case Study 11

Health Psychology in Scotland Careers Series

Name: Ms Alison Morrow

Health Psychology training completed

MSc Health Psychology at the University of Stirling, 2014 – 2015.

Alison's current role

I am the Healthy Communities Manager for Places Leisure in Wokingham. I work closely with the Local Authority and Public Health team to plan, review and implement the company's health and wellbeing strategy. This involves working with key partners to develop and offer innovative and community-orientated sessions to drive participation and ensure maximum use of facilities, specifically with under-represented groups. One of the main projects I have been working on is implementing the NHS Health Check programme across the 5 sites. This involves working closely with Public Health and local Clinical Commissioning Groups to ensure those most at risk of developing cardiovascular disease are offered a check. The other project I manage is the GP Referral Programme. This scheme is designed for GPs and other health professionals to refer their patients who are sedentary and have one or more medical conditions that would benefit from increased levels of physical activity. The scheme offers patients a 24-week programme with regular reviews and support. Part of my role is to redesign the programme to ensure patients get the most out of it. This consists of linking Health Psychology theory with practice to guide interventions including behaviour change techniques such as; goal setting, motivational interviewing and social support.

Alison's previous career experience

When I finished the Masters, I got a job with the Stroke Association where I was the Stroke Recovery Co-ordinator for Reading and Wokingham. I did that for 18 months. After that I went to Slough to manage a Social Prescribing Project for just under a year and half.



What interested you in Health Psychology?

In undergrad we did a clinical and health psychology module and I remember thinking, 'oh that's interesting'. I knew that it's quite important to specialise in something and I was interested to continue to learn and develop my research skills. I think Health Psychology appealed to me because of it's understanding that we needed to move away from the medical model.

Any career related challenges

I felt a bit worried when I was coming to the end of my Masters because I wasn't quite sure what it was I wanted to do, and Health Psychology has fewer direct routes than other disciplines in Psychology. There's quite a lot of options but it's trying to figure out which of those is best to go down. So what I've tried to do is basically just get lots of different experience and try lots of different things to try and figure out what I'd like to do.

Advice for future students and trainees

Make the most of the research project that you have to get an idea of what it is you're interested in. Volunteer, or try and just get involved in different projects or different organisations that might have some relevance to what you're doing. And don't be scared to put yourself out there.



The British Psychological Society
Division of Health Psychology

Careers Case Study 12

Health Psychology in Scotland Careers Series

Name: Mr Niall C. Anderson

Health Psychology training completed

I did my Masters in Health Psychology at the University of St Andrews (2014 – 2015). I was then fortunate in applying for the Stage 2 training scheme through NHS Education for Scotland and worked in NHS Borders (2016 – 2018).

Niall's current role

My position was advertised as a 'Highly Specialised Clinical Psychologist' but I applied because it involved interventions with long-term conditions. We focus on cardiac, respiratory, and diabetic conditions predominantly through one-to-one interventions with patients. That involves doing tailored assessments, and designing and conducting interventions using the right modality. I run 6 clinics a week with roughly 15 patients and a variety of therapeutic techniques. There's also a degree of research and training of staff. Three days are spent on clinics, and two on writing clinical letters, updating databases and such like. I've recently accepted a position at UCL as a Senior Research Associate which I'll start shortly.

Niall's previous career experience

While studying, I worked three summers in NHS Borders as a Porter and Domestic Assistant, and then three summers at Edinburgh Napier University as a Vacation Letting Assistant and then a Senior Vacation Letting Assistant. I was then a Trainee Health Psychologist for 2 years, and was fortunate to have a great degree of autonomy to seek out different projects. I got to work on a variety of levels across health conditions – this included 6 months of one-to-one interventions but I also got to conduct research, and design and conduct service level interventions.

What interested you in Health Psychology?

When I was doing my undergrad I was interested in how people work as well as physical health. What was very interesting about health psychology was the connection between physical and mental health, and being able to work on both simultaneously.



One thing I've found particularly interesting is that health psychology isn't just focused on one-to-one work or research but there's a lot of breadth to the career options available.

Any career related challenges

Money. I was fortunate that I was able to take my Masters at St Andrews because I had a scholarship from the Scottish Funding Council, but I did also have to work full-time in the summer while writing my thesis. I've also been fortunate that my roles have been funded but in terms of professional development there have been limitations on the courses I could take. For example, I've recently had to take annual leave and self-fund to attend the DHP conference. An additional challenge is the time gap between submitting your stage two portfolio and becoming accredited when it comes to applying for roles. It can also be difficult when specialising and finding a role that fits your interests as well as your needs.

Advice for future students and trainees

Your degree is important but what you do outside of that is just as important. Employers are looking for well-rounded people. Never be afraid to get in touch with people and ask for advice or to shadow. Overall, Health Psychology is a really friendly, supportive profession.



The British Psychological Society
Division of Health Psychology

Careers Case Study 13

Health Psychology in Scotland Careers Series

Name: Ms Nayia Solea

Health Psychology training completed

MSc Health Psychology at the University of St Andrews, 2012 – 2013.

Nayia's current role

I'm the Occupational Health and Wellbeing Director at Sieman's Mobility. I'm designing the health and wellbeing strategy for the business which includes analysing the available data such as sickness absence, occupational health data, and employee assistance services. I'm developing a wellbeing programme to address the needs of the population, whether that's a preventative or an intervention programme. A typical day will start with dealing with emails. Some of the situations I address are about business policies, and normally during the day I'll have a one-to-one chat with an individual to address a query to develop a personalised programme around a physical or mental illness.

Nayia's previous career experience

I was working for a claim reclamation company for a year after completing my MSc (2014 – 2015) where I effectively was administering some of the psychological services coming from insurance claims seeking appropriate treatment. I was doing that for 3 months then was promoted to manage that team where I then was liaising with psychologists and counsellors to find appropriate treatment for patients. From 2015 till today I've been working for Sieman's Mobility which is a rail company and I'm heading up the Health and Wellbeing programme for the employees.

What interested you in Health Psychology?

For me it's all about helping people a bit more practically. In comparison to other psychology disciplines where you have to wait until someone is sick before you can do something, health psychology is a lot more proactive because you can do preventative programmes.

Any career related challenges

I think the main problem when I started looking for a job after my masters was that health psychology is very a new field so a lot of opportunities were very limited within the NHS. And obviously the NHS isn't great at understanding what Health Psychologists do. Unlike some other disciplines we don't have a paid training scheme other than the scheme in Scotland which has very limited places. So when I finished I tried to find work based on my Bachelors rather than my Masters, and luckily the first job I got gave me the opportunity to draw on my health psychology masters a little bit more towards the end of my role. But it was really hard.

Advice for future students and trainees

Try to do some placements during your masters, as it will potentially give you the opportunity to find a job close to your field.



**The British
Psychological Society**
Division of Health Psychology

Careers Case Study 14

Health Psychology in Scotland Careers Series

Name: Ms Holly Martin-Smith

Health Psychology training completed

I did my Masters in Health Psychology at UCL (2013 – 2014). I then got onto the stage 2 course through the independent route (2015 – 2017). I did the stage 2 training in Aberdeen – my colleagues were developing an intervention for type 2 diabetes and their research grant included funding for my training.

Holly's current role

I'm a Health Psychologist in a Clinical Health Psychology team. We help people to cope with physical health conditions. Our team has subspecialties– e.g. renal, oncology, chronic fatigue, gastro-intestinal and I sit under general medicine. My role is working one-to-one and in groups with patients therapeutically, developing services, and doing some audit and research. I've been here for just over a year. On a typical day in the morning I check my emails, do some admin and then spend time preparing for my clinics. I usually have a clinic in the morning and the afternoon, which consists of three patients back to back. I try to do 50 minutes of session and 10 minutes write-up. Thursday mornings I have allotted admin time where I do most of my session planning and letter writing. Other tasks in the day might be following up speaking to other health professionals, attending team meetings or supervision sessions.

Holly's previous career experience

When I was 16 I got a job in a GP practice as a receptionist, which I carried on until my stage 2 training. During the masters, I managed to become the surgery's Smoking Cessation Therapist for 6 months. This was a fantastic opportunity to gain valuable experiencing of working 1:1 with patients. I then got onto the stage 2 course where I was employed by NHS Grampian. I completed my training over 2 years and stayed on in a more public health role for a further 6 months. Unfortunately my funding ended and I was unemployed for about 3 months before getting my current job.



What interested you in Health Psychology?

In school I was interested in humans, particularly how the human body worked both biologically and psychologically. I took Psychology at A level and really enjoyed it- seemingly it was a good choice as I managed to attain my highest grade in the subject. This pushed me to choose a degree in Psychology and Biology to combine my interests. During my degree I ended up choosing to do more Psychology modules than Biology. In third year we had our first module in Health Psychology and I thought, yes this was where I want to pursue a career.

Any career related challenges

Health Psychology has come up against difficulty in working clinically with people in services because typically only Clinical and Counselling psychologists have worked in those areas. There are disputes over whether our training matches up with the training they have done. So there's potential challenges in progression for me as the number of higher-banded positions available to non-Clinical psychologists is capped. Health Psychology is not as well known so I spend a lot of time explaining what it is and defending my training. I've resolved it by chatting to people and championing Health Psychology.

Advice for future students and trainees

Becoming qualified is a struggle but worth it so persevere! Think about your interests and get relevant experience. There's a huge presence on social media so use this to your advantage.



The British Psychological Society
Division of Health Psychology

Careers Case Study 15

Health Psychology in Scotland Careers Series

Name: Ms Lauren Burke

Health Psychology training completed
MSc Health Psychology at the University of St Andrews, 2014 – 2015.

Lauren's current role

I'm a Trainee Clinical Psychologist at the University of Surrey, which I started in September. Currently we're doing a 6 week block of teaching and then we'll be going on to placement. Teaching covers therapeutic techniques as well as specific disorders and their treatment protocols. In a few weeks it'll move to two days of teaching in Uni and then three days of clinical placements each week.

Lauren's previous career experience

After my masters, I had a research assistant post at the University of Liverpool in conjunction with Alder Hey Children's Hospital which was a two year post. We were looking at transitional care for children and young adults with epilepsy or juvenile arthritis – I carried out a literature review of current interventions. At the same time, I was an Honorary Assistant Psychologist two days a week at the Health Psychology service in the hospital. I was working with the Neuropsychology team and the Neuromuscular team. After that I was in Boston for 6 months where I volunteered at a trauma centre for refugees and asylum seekers as a Patient Navigator. For any new clients we had come through the centre I would do the initial trauma assessment and make sure they were aware of what we could provide. I then got a 6 month post as a Research Assistant at Edge Hill University looking at Richmond Fellowship Homes. These are care homes for people having a mental health crisis but who don't need to go into hospital. I did a literature review and assessment of their service.

What interested you in Health Psychology?

I knew I wanted to further my knowledge of psychology after undergraduate – I felt my undergraduate was so broad and we studied so many topics that I didn't feel like I had a strong grasp on any of them individually. I was really interested in the interface between physical and mental health and co-morbidities that lay there and that brought me to health psychology.

Any career related challenges

An overall challenge was getting the right experience to get onto the clinical training. I also applied for the stage 2 health psychology training in Scotland when I was applying for clinical, and I think the challenge of succeeding in getting a place at one of those is really hard. The competition is immense and there are many people vying for a few paid places. The lack of paid routes in health psychology in England was really off-putting. Ticking off the required experience is difficult, and many positions needed are unpaid.

Advice for future students and trainees

Take every opportunity to shadow people to get an idea of what's available and what jobs actually look like. Make use of your lecturers too and ask if you can help with their research to get some hands on experience.



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Summary information from careers survey (n=59)

		N (%)	%
Sex	Male	6	10.17
	Female	53	89.83
Institution where Stage 1 Qualification (MSc) Undertake			
	Kings College London, England	1	1.7
	Northumbria University, England	1	1.7
	Queen Margaret University, Scotland	7	11.9
	University College London, England	1	1.7
	University of Aberdeen, Scotland	8	13.5
	University of Bath, England	1	1.7
	University of Nottingham, England	1	1.7
	University of St Andrews, Scotland	15	25.4
	University of Stirling, Scotland	22	37.3
	Independent Route BPS Exams	1	1.7
	No MSc	1	1.7
Year Stage 1 Completed			
	Prior 2000	1	1.7
	2000 - 2005	6	10.2
	2006 - 2010	9	15.2
	2011 - 2015	24	40.7
	2016 to present	19	32.2
Route to Achieving Stage 2 Qualification			
	BPS Grandparenting Scheme	1	1.7
	BPS Independent Route	7	11.9
	Doctorate	5	8.5
	NES Route (Inc BPS Independent route)	11	18.6
	PhD	1	1.7
	No Stage 2	7	11.9
	No Response	27	45.7
Year Stage 2 Completed			
	2000 - 2005	2	3.4
	2006 - 2010	3	5.1
	2011 - 2015	7	11.9
	2016 to present	11	18.6
	No Response	36	61.0
Considered Current Job as Related to Health Psychology			
	Yes	55	93.2
	No	4	6.8

Current Job Title	Assistant Psychologist	4	6.8
	Behaviour Change Practitioner	1	1.7
	Community Health & Wellbeing Worker	1	1.7
	Creditor Liaison Officer	1	1.7
	Fitness Instructor	1	1.7
	Health Promotion Specialist	2	3.4
	Health Psychologist	7	11.9
	Health Science Teacher	1	1.7
	Health Communities Manager	1	1.7
	Lecturer / Senior Lecturer	5	8.5
	Occupational Health & Wellbeing Manager	1	1.7
	PhD Student	8	13.5
	Primary Healthcare Researcher	1	1.7
	Project Assistant (Epidemiology)	1	1.7
	Research & Evaluation Manager	1	1.7
	Research Assistant	1	1.7
	Research Co-Ordinator	1	1.7
	Research Fellow	8	13.5
	Research Methodologist	1	1.7
	Research Specialist	2	3.4
	Researcher / Academic	2	3.4
	Support Worker	1	1.7
	Teaching Fellow	1	1.7
	Trainee Clinical Psychologist	2	3.4
	Trainee Health Psychologist	1	1.7
	Volunteer	2	3.4
	Unemployed	1	1.7
Additional CPD / Training Undertaken to Support Job	ASSIT	2	
	Acceptance Commitment Therapy (ACT)	5	
	Behaviour Change Interventions	1	
	Behaviour Change (inc. Techniques, Conversations, Coding)	3	
	Behaviour Change Technique Coding	1	
	BSc (Hons)	1	
	Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)	7	
	Health Coach Qualification	1	
	Implementation Science Methods	1	
	Living Life to the Full	1	
	Long Term Condition Management	1	
	MI (including MI coach group training)	14	
	NES MAP Training	2	
	One-to-One NHS Training	1	
	PhD	13	
	Clinical Research Trials Legal Framework	1	
	Scottish Mental Health First Aid	1	
	Supervision / Learning / Teaching Skills / Train the Trainer	5	
	Qualitative Research Training	2	
	Volunteer Information Training	1	
	No additional CPD undertaken	20	

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