**Counselling Psychology**

Job Summary

As a Counselling Psychologist you would apply psychological theory to therapeutic practice in order to help people cope with a variety of problems including stress, trauma, abuse, relationship issues or mental health problems.

You would carry out a range of key tasks such as:

* Assessments
* Report writing and record keeping
* Counselling and creating relationships with clients of any age
* Psychotherapy
* Training and supervision of other psychologists
* Consultation
* Research into this particular area

You would work directly with individuals, couples, families or groups. You would work primarily with the NHS in health and social care, general or psychiatric hospitals. Some Counselling Psychologists work in the Prison service or educational and academic settings. Furthermore, some practice privately as organisational consultants.

Qualifications – How do I become a Counselling Psychologist?

1) You will need a 3-year degree in Psychology that meets the standards of accreditation by the British Psychological Society. Qualification with a 2i or more provides eligibility to apply for **GBC** (**G**raduate **B**asis for **C**hartered Membership of BPS).

2) Relevant work with people with emotional demands will be needed.

3) It is often a requirement to have completed a basic counselling skills course before being accepted onto any postgraduate courses. However, with work experiences, you may pick up these skills. For more information on where to find these courses go to http://www.bacp.co.uk/

4) You will need to undertake an accredited Postgraduate Qualification in Counselling Psychology. EITHER complete a 3-year accredited Doctorate OR the BPS Qualification in Counselling Psychology to gain eligibility to apply for registration with the **HPC** (**H**ealth **P**rofessions **C**ouncil) to be able to use the title ‘Counselling Psychologist’.

* Postgraduate training is usually self-financed, however you can be sponsored, please refer to http://www.bps.org.uk/careers-education-training/undergraduate-and-postgraduate-psychology/bursaries-research-support-post

What relevant work experience would I need?

It is often very competitive to obtain a place on a postgraduate course in Counselling Psychology. Whether or not you will be accepted onto one of these courses depends on what relevant work experience you have undertaken. Voluntary work usually needs to be obtained before paid work, and is just as valuable as it shows that you have developed basic skills for this area which can later be enhanced. This will definitely give you an edge over competitors!

Sometimes it’s challenging to find work experience in a social or health care setting. If this is the case, shadowing someone to find out more about their job would be useful or even arranging a meeting with them to discuss what their career entails. The BPS allows you to search for psychologists in your area - http://www.bps.org.uk/psychology-public/find-psychologist/find-psychologist

Below are a few opportunities that would be relevance to the Counselling field (including some in the local area):

* The University of Southampton runs a programme for a Voluntary Research Assistant (VRA). This is unpaid and usually runs over the summer or a few hours a week during term time. It is a great opportunity to increase your chances of achieving a place on a postgraduate course. In addition, the researchers could write a letter of reference for you.
* NoLimits welcomes volunteers to offer free and confidential information, support, advice and counselling to people around the Southampton area with a variety of problems. <http://www.nolimits-southampton.org.uk/yp/index.php?page=volunteers>.
* Voluntary work as an Assistant Youth Support Worker (Woolston). Apply through <http://www.susu.org/community-volunteering/opportunities-detail.html?opportunity=Assistant+Youth+Support+Worker+%28Woolston%29>
* Residential Volunteer at Beaulieu, New Forest – transport is provided from Southampton. Apply through <http://www.susu.org/community-volunteering/opportunities-detail.html?opportunity=Residential+Volunteer>
* Voluntary work for UK charities for people with brain injuries at Headway Southampton - <http://www.headway-soton.co.uk/volunteering/>. There are currently two opportunities available: one is supporting the individuals with activities and the other is working as a volunteer mentor.
* Working on a helpline for Southampton Women’s Aid - <http://www.womensaid.org.uk/azrefuges.asp?ref=8220>
* Volunteering for the helpline Nightline. http://nline.susu.org/?p=apply
* Volunteering as a Haslar Visitor - befriend immigration detainees with many of them not having any contact with the outside world. Apply through http://www.susu.org/community-volunteering/
* Community service volunteering - http://www.csv.org.uk/volunteering
* Assistant Psychologist role – easier to obtain after graduation and relevant voluntary work experience as been undertaken. These roles can be found in the Psychologist Appointments which is part of The Psychologist (the BPS monthly magazine) http://www.psychapp.co.uk/, in newspapers or in specialist publications.

**If you are working with children or sensitive information you will need a CRB check.**

To find out more about life as a Counselling Psychologist, take a look at the BPS video: <http://www.youtube.com/user/bpsmediacentre#p/u/6/g9hGN9VcWW8>