

# A day in the life of a... clinical psychologist

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**Science in Health and Life**

*Professional Scientists and Health Professionals*



# Overview

- What is a clinical psychologist for?
  - different areas of work
- What do I spend my time doing?
  - clinical work
  - administration
  - clinical research
  - teaching
- What do you need to do to get to be a clinical psychologist?

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# What is a clinical psychologist for?

- Work in a range of different clinical settings
  - Adult mental health units
  - Community Mental Health Teams
  - Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
  - Older adult services
  - Learning disability services
  - Specialist clinics
  - General hospitals
  - Primary care clinics
  - ‘Polyclinics’

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# What is a clinical psychologist for?

- Work with a range of problems
  - mental health (e.g., anxiety)
  - learning disabilities
  - childhood behavioural problems
  - physical health (e.g., AIDS/HIV)
- Assessment and treatment roles
- Also employed as clinical managers at times
  - organisational psychology skills

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# A day in the life...

- I work as a consultant clinical psychologist in the Central and North West London eating disorders service
  - running a multidisciplinary outpatient treatment team of eight clinicians
  - treating anorexic and bulimic patients
- Not every day is the same, but the overall pattern is one of a mixture of:
  - clinical work
  - administration
  - clinical research
  - teaching

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# A day in the life...

- So let's pick a day at random...
  - last Wednesday
- 7.30 (this bit is not compulsory)
- Got into work to do a couple of things
  - activity sheets
  - preparation for a conference presentation
  - preparing a measure for a research project
  - catching up on the emails
    - get about 30-40 per day

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# A day in the life...

- 9.00 (now it gets compulsory-ish)
- **Assessment meeting**
  - present three assessments
  - discuss another eight presented by colleagues
  - decide on treatment plans for all of them
- 10.00
- **Write up letters and reports (to patients and referrers) following the meeting**
  - other paperwork

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# A day in the life...

- 11.00
- Outpatient team meeting
  - update everyone on what they need to know
  - asked Psychology Assistant to check the measure
  - finish by 11.45, to grab a sandwich
- 12.00
- Appointment with an anorexic patient for treatment
  - doing very well
  - about half-way to recovery

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# A day in the life...

- 13.00
- Supervision of a colleague's clinical work
  - discuss progress and plans with eight cases
- 14.00
- Follow-up appointment with an ex-anorexic patient
  - observed by a Psychology Assistant
  - patient is maintaining her progress
  - discussed recent ovarian scan
  - to discharge next month

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# A day in the life...

- 15.00
- Follow-up appointment with an obese patient
  - no more bulimia
  - awaiting surgery for weight problems
  - discharged her
- 15.30
- Supervision of a colleague's clinical work
  - discuss progress and plans with five cases

# A day in the life...

- 16.00
- Therapy session with an anorexic patient
  - gaining weight, and nearly in the normal range
  - needs to do work on her lousy body image
  - prepared for a survey
- 17.00
- Train home
  - panic about preparing the slides for today
  - do statistical analyses on a trainee's research
  - plan where to walk the dog...

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# Assuming that I have not put you off yet...

- What do you need to do to get to be a clinical psychologist?
- Undergraduate psychology degree (3 years)
  - need very good A-levels
- One or two years of relevant clinical/ research experience
- Three year doctoral training course
  - clinical work, teaching, and research
  - funded, so places are very tight

# Key reading

- Cheshire , K., & Pilgrim, D. (2004). A short introduction to clinical psychology. London: Sage. (£17.09)
- Hall, J., & Llewellyn, S. (2006). What is clinical psychology? Oxford: Oxford University Press. (£23.69)
- Knight, A. (2002). How to become a clinical psychologist: Getting a foot in the door. London: Brunner Mazel. (£9.49)