

Arts therapists

Join the team and make a difference

Arts therapies can make an important difference for people with physical, mental, social and emotional difficulties. Through art, drama or music, therapists offer clients new ways of expressing themselves, enabling them to explore different ways of behaving and to gain a sense of achievement.

What will you do?

Art therapists work with people who find it difficult to put their thoughts and feelings into words. Art has long been known to have therapeutic properties, and the process of creating visual images and objects becomes a valuable form of communication and self-expression. You'll often be working with people who have mental health problems or conditions such as autism. People who have suffered head injuries or strokes also benefit from art therapy. You'll

often lead small groups of up to six clients or work directly with a client. You will collaborate closely with colleagues in assessing clients' needs and progress.

As a **drama therapist**, you will be working with individuals and groups using drama, stories and related theatre arts as a form of psychotherapy. The drama provides a safe environment to allow an in-depth exploration of problem areas through imagination and action. Under your guidance, people can find fresh insights into themselves and new ways of relating to others. Your client groups will be varied, from young children to people with mental health problems or conditions like eating disorders.

As a **music therapist**, you will be providing the opportunity for clients to participate in improvised music-making with you. This

Where will you work?

You are likely to be working in some or all of the following settings:

- in mental health and learning disability services
- in child and family centres, and schools
- in prisons and probation services
- in hospitals, hospices and people's own homes.

Some days you will be working in dedicated therapy rooms; other days you will be improvising. You will often be working in partnership with other members of the healthcare and social care team.

What skills and qualities will you need?

Arts therapists need to have natural communication abilities and be able to relate to people of all ages and backgrounds.

Among the key skills required are:

- in-depth knowledge of the therapeutic potential of making art, music or drama
- a thorough understanding of the creative process in your art form
- practical experience of health and social care or teaching
- the ability to work on your own as well as in consultation with others
- a responsible, professional approach: winning the confidence of clients and respecting confidentiality.

interaction enables fresh insight into the way the client relates to others, and highlights both their difficulties and limitations as well as their strengths. Work can be undertaken both on a one-to-one basis or within a group setting. Music therapy is practised with a wide range of client groups and in a variety of settings both with children and adults. Clients may be referred to you by psychologists, GPs or social workers and you may sometimes collaborate on special projects with other therapists.

What entry routes are available?

To practise as an arts therapist within the NHS, you must hold a postgraduate qualification (MA or MSc) in art, drama or music therapy that is recognised by the Health Professions Council (HPC).

For entry on to a recognised course, you should already have a diploma or degree in (or closely related to) your chosen art form, plus evidence of your commitment to healthcare. Some universities may consider candidates without a diploma/degree.

The MA or MSc programme usually takes up to two years, full-time, or up to four years part-time. The courses combine extensive direct clinical contact with study of the relationship between therapist and client.

Once you have your degree, you will need to register with the HPC to practise as an arts therapist.

For more information on the range of opportunities available in the allied health professions, please visit www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/qualifications. This gives more specific details about what qualifications are necessary for each role. You can search for current vacancies and download job descriptions at www.jobs.nhs.uk

How can you develop your career?

As your clinical experience grows, you can move into more senior posts. The profession continues to develop and you can play an important part in this process through research and teaching. Some arts therapists go on to do further in-depth training in psychotherapy. You can work within the NHS as an employee or on a self-employed basis providing a service to NHS and social care organisations as well as individual clients.

As well as moving to more senior and specialised roles within the NHS, you will also have the chance to take on additional responsibilities and progress within the organisation as part of the Career Framework. For more information about this initiative, please see the *Careers in the allied health professions* booklet.

Pay

The national pay system in the NHS is called Agenda for Change (AfC). This applies to all staff in the allied health professions except the most senior managers. These are examples of roles and the AfC bands at which they may be paid: arts therapist – entry level (Band 6); arts therapist (Band 7); arts therapist principal (Band 8a). To find out more about pay bands, and to see the most up-to-date salary information, visit

www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/payandbenefits

To find out more about careers in the allied health professions, please visit www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/working

For more information on the professional bodies relevant to the allied health professions, visit www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/contacts