

Psychologist - Health

A health psychologist uses psychological research methods and therapies to promote wellbeing and help people understand their illness. Their aim is to improve healthcare provision, general levels of health and promote a healthier lifestyle.

The Work

You could be:

- exploring the links between unhealthy lifestyle habits and poverty
- promoting and protecting health by encouraging exercise, healthy diet and health checks
- helping develop health awareness projects and analysing how effective they are
- advising health professionals about how to communicate with patients
- examining the effect of individual mental attitude on the ability to cope with chronic physical disease
- advising patients on how to deal with anxiety and stress caused by illness and treatment
- examining the links between mental stress and physical illness such as heart disease and cancer
- researching the processes which can explain, predict and change health and illness behaviours
- advising government bodies on developing health policy.

You might work with groups such as older adults, pregnant teenagers or patients with chronic illnesses.

Pay

The figures below are only a guide. Actual pay rates may vary, depending on:

- where you work
- the size of the organisation you work for
- whether you are self-employed.

The salaries for NHS Psychologists in Scotland are usually based on the NHS Agenda for Change pay rates. The current pay scales are from April 2025.

Qualified psychologists start on Band 7, £50,861 to £59,159 a year. With experience this rises to Band 8a, £74,003 to £79,164 a year, and Band 8b, £74,003 to £79,164 a year.

Consultant/lead psychologists are on Band 8c, £87,400 to £93,685 a year.

Conditions

- Health psychologists work in a range of settings including hospitals, community centres, local clinics and local authorities.
- Some carry out research in university or health service premises.
- You may work with people one to one, in groups or in families.
- You usually work office hours from Monday to Friday.

- There is opportunity for part time work.
- You have occasional work in the evening or at weekends.

Getting In

- You would work towards registration with the British Psychological Society (BPS).
- To be eligible for the Graduate Basis for Chartered Membership (GBC), you need either a BPS recognised degree (first or second class Honours) in psychology, **or** a degree in another subject plus a BPS recognised conversion course.
- To do an Honours degree in psychology you usually need 4-5 Highers.
- Paid or unpaid work experience is advantageous.
- After your degree you would find relevant paid or voluntary work experience (at least 12 months) ideally as a psychology assistant or research assistant, before choosing your speciality.
- In order to qualify as a health psychologist, you must complete a BPS accredited MSc in Health Psychology. In Scotland, this is available at the universities of Aberdeen, Glasgow Caledonian, St Andrews and Stirling.
- This is followed by the BPS Qualification in Health Psychology Stage 2, involving 2 years of supervised practice or a BPS accredited Doctorate in Health Psychology.
- Glasgow Caledonian University and the University of Stirling offer the accredited doctorate course in health psychology in Scotland. This can be done over three years full time.
- All practising psychologists must register with the [Health and Care Professions Council \(HCPC\)](#).
- You will require a satisfactory criminal record check from Disclosure Scotland to show that you are suitable for this type of work. Contact [Disclosure Scotland](#) for details on the type you would need.

Health psychologists work in hospitals, academic research institutes, health authorities and university departments. There has been an increase in jobs in lecturing and in research into social and behavioural factors in health.

What Does It Take

You need:

- an interest in researching new areas and methods
- good statistical skills
- the ability to communicate with all kinds of people
- self-confidence
- good observation skills
- problem solving skills
- good organisation.

Training

- In Scotland, an NHS funded Stage 2 training scheme offers a number of trainee health psychologists each year. See the [NHS Education for Scotland](#) website for details.
- Once you have achieved Chartered Membership of the BPS you will continue to learn and train during your career through a programme of Continuous Professional Development (CPD).

- You will need to keep up to date with research on a wide range of conditions and developments in the treatment of these conditions.

Getting On

Apart from the usual routes of promotion to senior level there are opportunities to move into training or self-employed consultancy work.

More Information

There is a wide range of jobs, although the vacancies do not always use the job title 'health psychologist'. Health psychologists work as applied psychologists, teachers, consultants and researchers for the NHS, the universities, schools, industry and health promotion organisations.

Contacts

British Psychological Society

Tel: 0116 254 9568

Email: info@bps.org.uk

Website: www.bps.org.uk

Website (2): careers.bps.org.uk

X: [@BPSOfficial](https://twitter.com/BPSOfficial)

Facebook: www.facebook.com/OfficialBPS

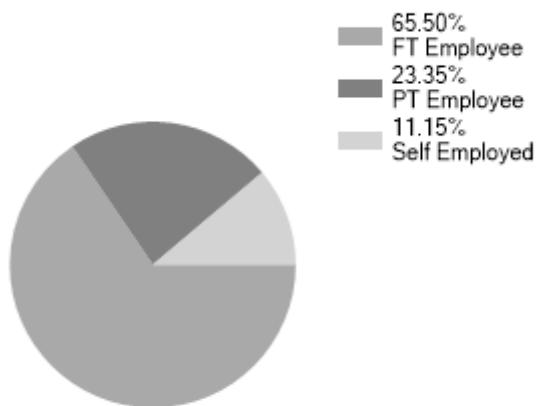
NHS Scotland Careers

Website: www.careers.nhs.scot

Website (2): jobs.scot.nhs.uk

Statistics

Employment Status UK %

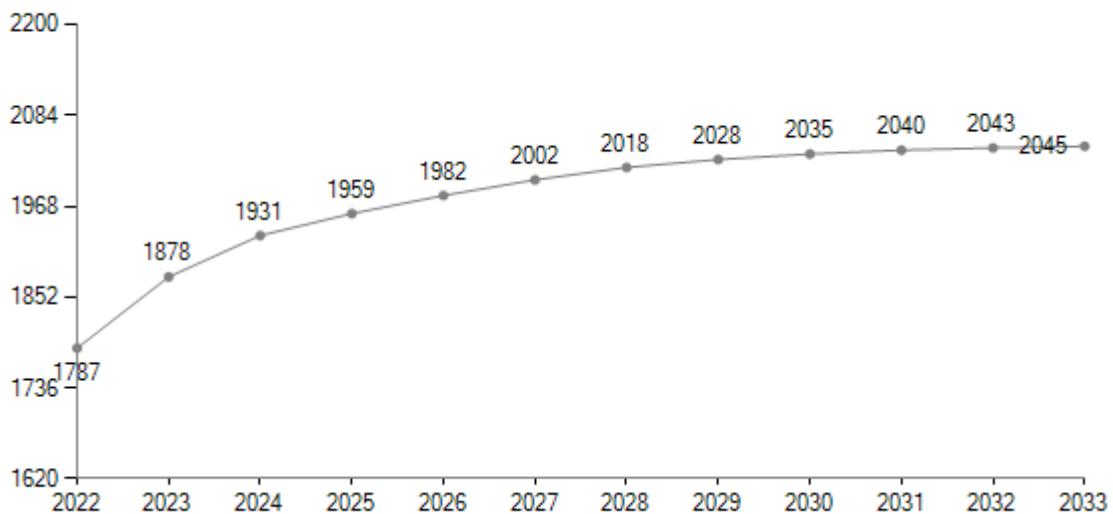


Past Unemployment - Scotland

No Claimant statistics available for Scotland.

LMI data powered by [LMI for All](#)

Predicted Employment in Scotland



LMI data powered by [Lightcast](#)