

Trainee Health Psychology Stage 2 Programme NHS Education for Scotland

What is health psychology?

The field of Health Psychology is about applying innovative thinking and evidence-based approaches to tackle some of the biggest public health issues. This requires an understanding of the broad influences of health including socio-economic, environmental, psychological and biological factors. This understanding is fundamental for enabling behaviour change and allows Health Psychologists to support patients, groups and populations across the life course to target behaviour change across three tiers of prevention:

- **Primary prevention** – preventing illness and poor health from occurring
- **Secondary prevention** – intervening early where health risks are identified
- **Tertiary prevention** – intervening once a condition has been diagnosed to support self-management and adjustment to illnesses



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<https://www.nes.scot.nhs.uk/our-work/applied-psychology-professional-training-programmes/>


NHS Education for Scotland (NES) recognises the importance of adding Health Psychology to the NHS skill mix in Scotland by supporting training posts. Since 2007 NES has jointly funded (with NHS Health Boards) 2 year training posts and recruited 65 trainee health psychologists (THP) in NHS Health Boards in Scotland.

What is the NES Stage 2 training route?

NES, in partnership with Health Boards in Scotland, funds Trainee Health Psychologists to apply specific skills and expertise that directly contribute to the Scottish Government's health improvement strategy in which NHS Scotland plays a crucial role. Placements, over two years, are grounded in the application of scientific and theoretical health psychology knowledge and skills to address complex and behaviourally-driven challenges across a range of different health areas.

For further information about health psychology, please a leaflet developed by the [Division of Health Psychology-Scotland](#)

NES Trainees develop five core competencies through working full-time in a health board in two distinct work areas. The THP role within a service will differ depending on the needs of the service but will center around these five core competences (see page 3).



Information about Health Psychology training routes, and career pathways for health psychologists is available on the links below:

[Division of Health Psychology | BPS](#)

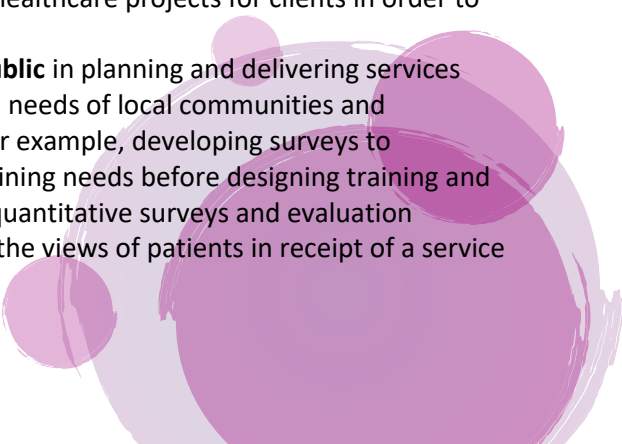
[Qualification in Health Psychology \(Stage 2\) | BPS](#)

The BPS Division of Health Psychology-Scotland website also has information specific to Scotland including a range of 1-page case studies that provides further information about work that Health Psychologists and Trainees have previously undertaken (click the case studies tab in the link below):

[DHP Scotland | BPS What do Trainee Health Psychologists have to do for their training?](#)

What do health psychologists provide?

Health Psychologists are trained to doctoral level in understanding, developing, delivering and evaluating behaviour change and long-term condition interventions, and can be directly positioned to help meet demands relating to the three tiers of prevention. Working in complex systems, they offer skills and knowledge to address challenging issues driven by biopsychosocial factors through research, interventions, training and consultancy. Key areas of the role might include:

- **Providing specialist health psychology services** including assessment, formulation, intervention delivery and monitoring of outcomes for a variety of health conditions. For example, Type 2 Diabetes, chronic pain, individuals with overweight and obesity, individuals using substances
 - **Providing training to build capacity of services** to use psychological skills and approaches. For example, applying psychological skills to self-management of conditions and health behaviour change
 - **Conducting research, complex service evaluation and audits** relevant to service needs. For example, to increase effective management of health, health conditions and health behaviour
 - **Providing consultancy skills.** For example, designing, delivering and/or evaluating bespoke healthcare projects for clients in order to improve service outcomes
 - **Engaging people and the public** in planning and delivering services and training which meet the needs of local communities and healthcare professionals. For example, developing surveys to understand specific staff training needs before designing training and developing qualitative and quantitative surveys and evaluation mechanisms to understand the views of patients in receipt of a service
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What are the five Stage 2 competences?

1. **Professional skills:** Developing professional autonomy and accountability and skills (gained through undertaking work in the 4 other competency areas)
2. **Psychological interventions:** Design, deliver and evaluate psychological interventions (100 hours direct patient contact minimum) for individuals and one other approach (e.g. group/population-based)
3. **Research:** Designing, implementing and evaluating original research in areas relevant to managing health and health behaviour as well as undertaking a systematic review
4. **Consultancy:** Planning, implementing, evaluating, a healthcare project for a client (someone outside of their main team or department)
5. **Teaching and training:** Providing theory-driven, evidence-based training for health professionals and one other group e.g. students or 3rd sector staff

What work are trainee health psychologists involved with?

The table below illustrates how work undertaken can facilitate development of the five competences using specific examples:

	Psychological interventions	Research	Consultancy	Teaching and training
	<i>Generic professional competence</i>			
Primary prevention	Reducing the risk of hepatitis C through an intervention to reduce injecting risk taking behaviour in people who inject drugs (NHS Tayside)	Evaluating programmes for falls prevention in older people (NHS Tayside)	Understanding health anxiety in a sexual health setting and opportunities for intervention (NHS Grampian)	Psychosocial barriers training to health and social care staff working with older people (NHS Lanarkshire)
Secondary prevention	Smoking cessation in a mental health in-patient population (NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde)	Exploring the factors influencing engagement in weight-loss interventions for young adults (18-39) with overweight or obesity (NHS Tayside)	Increasing staff promotion of physical activity in an in-patient mental health setting using a co-design approach (NHS Highland)	Developing behaviour change skills training for podiatrists (NHS Grampian)
Tertiary prevention	Development, delivery and evaluation of a psychological intervention to manage COPD symptoms and reduce hospital admissions (NHS Grampian)	Assessing the psychosocial and behaviour change needs of men with cancer (NHS Fife)	Developing a tier 1 long covid intervention accessible across a health board (NHS Orkney)	Developing a train-the-trainer communication skills package for radiotherapists (NHS Lothian)