



Professional Profiles

Psychological Professions Network

North East and Yorkshire

Professional Profile

Rachel Healey
Principal Forensic
Psychologist
NHS Humber Teaching
Foundation Trust
Based at HMP Hull

[What types of jobs and roles did you do to gain relevant experience to get on the training course, and what course?]

To become a Forensic Psychologist, I first completed an undergraduate degree in Psychology. Knowing that I was interested in forensics, I sought any employment I could to work in a prison. I began as an administrative assistant in one of the prisons and while in this role, I was able to meet with the psychology team to learn more about the career and the day to day work.

Loving everything I experienced, I then applied for a psychological assistant post within the prison and then moved into a trainee position where I completed my Masters in Applied Forensic Psychology. Following this I then completed the British Psychological Society diploma to qualify as a Chartered Forensic Psychologist.

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What does a typical day look like for you? (What assessments or formulation models might you use? What are the positives and challenges in a days work for you?]

A typical day involves me meeting with various patients across the prison. This involves completing assessments, formulations and delivering interventions based on individual needs. This often includes compassion focussed formulations and therapies, or CBT when working with psychosis for example, DBT when supporting with emotional dysregulation, or EMDR when addressing trauma. I also provide reflective practice and joint formulations within the multidisciplinary team, including nurses, social workers and prison officers. I also have opportunity to provide training and consultancy to different departments, to encourage a more psychologically informed way of working to better understand the people we work with.

There are various challenges to working in a prison, such as responding to security matters and restrictions, reviewing risks and offence paralleling behaviours, and focussing on wellbeing and resilience. While each day brings different challenges, I find the work fascinating. Helping to bring a positive change in someone's behaviour and experience, and reducing risk of future offending is extremely rewarding.

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[What advice would you offer someone wanting to pursue a career in your field?]

If you're interested and want to pursue a career in this field... go for it! I would try to gain experience of supporting people with various difficulties and challenges. If there is opportunity to work/volunteer within a secure setting this will give you an advantage of experiencing what it is like to work in more restricted ways with challenging populations.

Forensic psychology is a fascinating area. Understanding why people commit the crimes they do and being able to support them in reducing their risks is very rewarding work. Every day is different and with it comes different challenges, and it encourages continued learning as the field develops. There are also many different opportunities within forensic settings and different areas to work in to develop your knowledge and experience, whether mental health, learning disability, violent or sexual offending, personality disorders, various therapies, substances, consultancy and training... it really is an interesting field to work in and I would highly recommend it to anyone.