Drama therapy- JOB PROFILE

The information on this Job Profile has been sourced by:
https://www.prospects.ac.uk/jobprofiles/dramatherapist
http://badth.org.uk/dtherapy

What is Drama Therapy?

Drama therapy is a creative arts therapy that uses the performance arts to promote psychological, emotional and social change. Drama therapists offer a safe environment for an individual or group to explore, address and deal with personal and social difficulties, e.g. grief, anxiety and personal growth.

Drama therapists use a variety of interventions with clients, including stories, puppetry, improvisation, drama and movement to allow clients to explore their past experiences and express themselves in a way that might be easier than directly talking about it. Movement and objects can be also moved expressively without words.

Clients may be of any age and may include people with psychological and/or mental health issues, physical or mental disabilities or behavioral difficulties. Other clients may be people on probation or in secure settings, or people overcoming an addiction.

Drama therapists work with a range of other professionals such as psychologists, social workers, nurses, teachers and other therapist staff.

Job Responsibilities?

Drama therapists contribute to therapeutic programs in clinical, educational and community settings.

- encouraging and supporting clients in creative drama and theatre work, involving the expressive use of movement and objects, using techniques such as improvisation, storytelling, play, role-play, myth, ritual, script work, and devising and presenting performances;
- encouraging self-awareness, exploration and reflection on feelings and relationships;
- providing opportunities for clients to learn new skills;
- initiating spontaneous exploration of personal issues;
- enabling clients to experiment with new ways of thinking and behaving;
- using appropriate equipment, materials and therapeutic 'props', such as puppets and other objects;
- organizing a performance resulting from working with a group (although this is not essential);
- undertaking assessment visits or appointments;
- taking referrals from other professional staff;
- writing reports for your employer on activities undertaken and clients seen;
- managing marketing and finances, when working on a self-employed basis;
- attending regular supervision sessions.
Salaries vary widely according to employer, mode of employment and professional qualifications and experience.

- Starting salaries for those working in the National Health Service (NHS) range from £25,783 to £34,530 (band 6) on the Agenda for Change (AfC) Pay Rates.
- A more experienced drama therapist may earn between £30,764 and £40,558 (band 7), while an arts therapist principal may earn between £39,239 and £47,088 (band 8a).
- Fees in private practice vary and are usually between £35 and £60 for a one-hour session. Group sessions are also possible, and the fee per person is lower since the costs are shared. Advice on fees can be found at the British Association of Drama therapists (BADth).

Working hours

- Working hours are typically 9am to 5pm, possibly with some extra hours, and evening work may be necessary in some jobs. The work is mainly carried out with small groups or on a one-to-one basis.
- Part-time or freelance work is common, and many drama therapists start by working for a number of employers on a part-time or freelance basis, gradually building up to a full working week. Career breaks are possible. There are opportunities for training, supervision and consultancy work for experienced practitioners.

What to expect

- Opportunities for work vary according to region and are often focused in the areas where professional training centers are based.
- While finding employment may prove to be a challenge, drama therapy is a developing area with increased recognition of its benefits, particularly within the NHS, forensic settings and education.
- Women currently outnumber men in this field but the balance is beginning to change.

Qualifications

To become registered and able to practice, drama therapists must successfully complete a postgraduate qualification approved by the Health & Care Professions Council (HCPC).

Postgraduate courses in drama therapy leading to eligibility for registration with the HCPC.

University providers that offer Drama Therapy courses:

- Anglia Ruskin University;
- Roehampton University;
- Royal Central School of Speech & Drama, University of London (in association with the Sesame Institute);
- University of Derby;
Entry requirements usually include a degree in psychology, drama, performing arts or a related subject such as social work, nursing or occupational therapy.

Other requirements include evidence of sustained interest and engagement in drama (e.g. through practical involvement in movement, theatre, performance) and significant relevant clinical work experience, paid or voluntary, with children or adults in a caring role, for example:

- teaching;
- social work;
- mental health and community drama.

While each course has its own focus, areas covered include:

- practical and experimental work;
- psychological theories;
- group and individual drama therapy;
- knowledge of related arts therapies;
- personal therapy/development;
- clinical practice.

Most courses provide opportunities for clinical placements in a range of settings. All students are expected to undergo and fund personal therapy during training.

It is important to check with individual course providers about specific entry requirements, placement provision and support, as well as the focus of the course and the approach taken to drama therapy.

See the HCPC website for an up-to-date list of accredited courses and contact individual institutions to apply.

Students are expected to fund themselves, although some may be funded by their employers, especially those employed within the NHS and social services. Contact individual institutions to see if any funding is available.

Drama therapists tend to be at least in their mid-twenties before carrying out freelance private practice due to the amount of experience required, though may start working for an employer at an earlier age. It is a common career-change profession, particularly attracting teachers and actors.
**Skills**

You will need to have:

- an expressive, creative and spontaneous work style;
- the ability to adapt to different clients or group members, locations and situations;
- a good level of emotional strength and the ability to deal with challenging situations;
- a thorough knowledge of drama and theatre and good performance skills;
- a commitment to clients' wellbeing and to continually improving professional practice;
- excellent communication skills for dealing with a wide range of people, including clients, careers, multidisciplinary team colleagues, and other health and education workers and agencies;
- time management and organization skills, particularly if working for more than one employer;
- administrative skills to maintain accurate records;
- research skills in order to evaluate current research and apply it to practice;

**Employers**

Typical employers include:

- the National Health Service, which includes psychiatric hospitals, mental health services, day centers, hospitals and disability units;
- services for offenders, including prisons and probation services;
- support services for individuals with substance misuse issues, such as drug/alcohol dependency units;
- educational establishments, including schools and training centers;
- social services provision, including services for people with learning disabilities, behavior support services and pupil referral units;
- the voluntary and community sector, including community centers, charities, voluntary agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and overseas aid organizations;
- Private sector.

Many drama therapists work freelance or are self-employed. Their clients may come from a range of backgrounds, seeking different types of therapeutic support for specific or general issues.

The British Association of Drama therapists (BADth) maintain a directory of freelance drama therapists on its website.

**Professional development**

Once you are a fully qualified drama therapist and you are registered with the HCPC, you can apply for full membership with the BADth. Student membership is available while you are completing your training.
In addition to the membership, supervision throughout your career is recommended. Supervision provides ongoing support and the opportunity to reflect on the challenges and rewards of your work. A supervisor may be another practicing drama therapist or a psychiatrist, psychologist, psychotherapist or other arts therapist with relevant psychotherapeutic skills and experience of drama therapy.

The opportunity for additional training and continuing professional development (CPD) may depend on individual employers. If you are working on a freelance basis or are employed by a small organization, you may have to fund your own additional training. Large organizations such as the NHS are generally able to offer a wider range of funded training options, relevant to individual posts. Evidence of CPD is needed to renew registration with the HCPC.

Training organizations provide conferences, short courses, workshops and summer schools to enable CPD for qualified drama therapists. Contact the BADth for further details.

**Career prospects**

There is no formal promotion pattern within drama therapy and prospects depend upon the employing institution. After initial professional experience, openings may arise to undertake consultancy work. It is also possible, after successfully completing an approved course in drama therapy supervision, to practice as a supervisor to other drama therapists.

Drama therapists work in many different contexts and sectors, from the NHS to:

- charities;
- education;
- the prison service (where the work is known as forensic drama therapy and is highly specialized);
- private consultancy;
- Youth work.

Reading list:
- The Handbook of Drama therapy Paperback – by Sue Jennings
- Drama as Therapy Volume 1: Theory, Practice and Research Paperback – by Phil Jones
- Drama therapy: Clinical Studies Paperback – 1 Sep 1995
- by Steve Mitchell