

# Art Therapist

## CAREER FOCUS



### ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

You'll need a university degree to qualify as an art therapist, preferably in Art or Creative Therapy. You'll then need to complete a post-graduate qualification. To get a place on your degree, you'll need to pass a Level 3 course such as A Levels or a Level 3 Vocational course (including an arts-based subject). To support your application, you should undertake volunteering or work experience in a community arts project or projects involving young people, people with disabilities or people with mental health issues.

### AVERAGE SALARY

As a newly qualified art therapist in the NHS, your starting salary is likely to be £28,000. NHS senior and principal art therapists earn salaries of up to £49,000. Outside of the NHS, salary levels can vary depending on your employer.

### SKILLS & QUALITIES

You will need the following skills and qualities to be a good Art Therapist:

- Excellent communication skills
- Patience
- Sensitivity & understanding

**Art Therapists use art to help patients cope with emotional and mental health problems and allow them to express emotions and feelings.**

An art therapist may work within a hospital, a prison, a school or a day centre. Hours are typically between 9am and 5pm, with weekend and evening work sometimes required to fit around the needs of patients. In a typical day an Art Therapist will:

- Work with patients who may be affected by issues such as depression, phobias, anxiety and behavioural disorders, or who have been affected by illness or injury.
- Often work in particular with children or adults who cannot communicate by verbal or written means.
- Help channel patients' energies and emotions into painting, sculpture and other forms of art (including theatre and dance) to help manage their symptoms.
- Keep good records of the patient's sessions and their progress.
- Liaise with other professionals, including those working in psychology, healthcare, education, social services, or the prison and probation services.
- Work under strict guidelines regarding disclosures, safeguarding and appropriateness.
- Stay up to date with new research and developments in the profession.



## PATHWAY TO SUCCESS

**At least 5 GCSEs at grade 4/5 and above**

**A Levels including Art or Level 3 Art & Design (2 yrs)**

**University Degree in Art or Creative Therapy (3 yrs)**

**Postgraduate Qualification in Art Therapy (2 yrs)**

**Qualified Art Therapist!**

## CAREER PROGRESSION

With experience and commitment you could progress into a management role, either by leading a team of therapists or managing a therapy unit. You could also focus on the needs of art therapy in a particular specialised field. Many therapists progress by developing expertise in areas such as:

- the autistic spectrum
- children with learning difficulties
- forensic medicine
- palliative care
- stroke patients
- head injuries

There are also opportunities for research and to work in higher education with trainees.

## ADVANTAGES

- Rewarding to empower people to overcome problems, issues or come to terms with past events.
- Enabling people to move forward positively.
- Allows use of own artistic and creative talents.
- Meeting a variety of people with a range of different backgrounds and stories.

## DISADVANTAGES

- Can be emotionally draining.
- May find some of the artworks created to be disturbing.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

You can find more information about becoming an Art Therapist here:

- <https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/job-profiles/art-therapist>
- Occupational Therapy:  
<https://icould.com/stories/sarah-h/>
- Community Arts:  
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zd2rxyc>