



FIND *your* FUTURE

Job title: Client Support Manager (Nutrition)

Current employer: The Weight Matters Practice

Sector: Health and Nutrition

Tell us about your current role and organisation.

I am a Client Support Manager at The Weight Matters Practice, a private clinic that offers help and support to clients with weight related issues, aiming to ensure they have a healthy relationship with their weight and food. I have been working with the practice for two years, having started an internship here whilst I was studying my MSc in Clinical Nutrition and Eating Disorders at UCL. I manage support for our clients and am the first point of contact for many patients, conducting assessments over the phone and recommending the most suitable course of treatment according to their needs.

What sort of person would this role suit? (i.e. personal skills, qualities and values)

This role would suit someone who has a drive and passion to help people as it is an essential part of the role. Strong communication skills are also important as a lot of time is spent interacting with patients. Demonstrating empathy is particularly important when patients are discussing their situation, as they may be suffering from eating disorders and/or depression. Working in such a busy environment also requires excellent organisational skills and being able to manage multiple projects at the same time. It is also beneficial to keep up to date with the latest developments in the field, so having a genuine interest in healthcare is particularly useful to keep abreast with the latest developments in the field.

What does a normal working day look like for you?

My day consist of working on a range of different things within the practice. One of my main duties is conducting assessments with patients over the phone. This will involve speaking with patients to understand their needs and recommending the best course of treatment that we can offer them. I will be required to carry out some administrative tasks following on from these calls to ensure that everything discussed has been recorded correctly and treatment for the patient can proceed as discussed. Some of my other duties include working with associates and helping them overcome any difficulties they are experiencing, managing interns that we may have working with us and shadowing clinical nutritionists in their one-to-ones. With the practice being relatively small, I get experience of working in many different aspects throughout the clinic, which help with my own further development.

How did you get to where you are now? (i.e. what are the entry-level roles graduates would apply for to get where you are?)

I studied undergraduate Psychology at the University of York, before going on to study a Clinical Nutrition and Eating Disorders MSc at UCL. Whilst at UCL I did some work shadowing in addition to my studies to gain some relevant experience in the field. The opportunity at the Weight Matters Clinic allowed me to see the work that they carry out and how patients are referred to treatments. I continued to work at the clinic

once I graduated and have taken on more and more responsibility as my role has progressed within the organisation.

How would you go about getting experience (*placements, work experience, internship*) in the industry you work in?

The way I got experience in my field of interest was through contacting practices and departments who work in the areas that I was interested in. Through contacting these organisations I found an opportunity to volunteer and carry out some work shadowing to gain relevant experience within the practice. This type of experience can take place within private practices, hospitals / NHS or even with charities. Getting this initial experience can be very valuable when applying for entry level roles. You may find that initial entry level roles you apply for involve administrative tasks, however you may find that you're able to build from these experiences, taking on additional responsibilities through your work, which enables you to develop your skills.

What are the biggest challenges you face in your work?

One of the biggest challenges I face in my role is having tough conversation with patients and conducting assessments when they may be feeling emotionally vulnerable. When patients explain their situation I must be empathetic and understanding, whilst having the necessary information to be able to make an accurate assessment. It may be that patients require support beyond the treatments we offer within the clinic. This can involve referring them to alternative treatments, something that can be particularly challenging if there are long waiting lists for the treatment I'm recommending. Having this level of patient interaction means it is often a steep learning curve as the majority of the role is patient facing, with my decisions having a direct impact on patients. Through gaining these experiences early in my career, I found that I was able to develop my skills quickly and efficiently.

Another aspect of the role that can be particularly challenging is managing the expectations of patients when they feel they need a particular course of treatment. This can often happen if patients have heard of a particular treatment or heard about it from a friend. However, there are times when what they think they need is not always the best course of treatment for their situation. Having to speak to them and explain why that may not be the best course of action can sometimes be challenging.

What's the progression like/where do you see yourself going from here?

I'm currently working towards a coaching qualification and hoping that the completion of this will enable me to pursue more specialised roles within the industry. Gaining further experience through my current roles, undertaking training opportunities and shadowing colleagues all enable me to develop skills that will be valuable to my future. Gaining experience is something that is essential for my coaching qualification and this experience will be valuable both in a corporate setting or when working in a one-to-one practice. Working in the industry allows me to make valuable connections and grow my professional networks. I am considering undertaking a PhD research project in the future and completion of an accredited international coaching qualification will enable me to apply for further roles within the industry.

What top tips would you pass on to students interested in this type of work? (*i.e. any particular skills, knowledge, experiences, volunteering, extracurricular activities*)

Don't be afraid to work for free / volunteer – volunteering is a great way to gain experience in your field of interest and understand the skills necessary for a role working with patients suffering from eating disorders. Work shadowing and volunteering provide valuable experience and enable you to start making connections and build your networks within a chosen field.

Get varied experience – demonstrating a varied background from a range of different experiences can make you very competitive in the jobs market. You may get the opportunity to gain experience through your

studies, volunteering opportunities or work shadowing. Getting exposure to a variety of these experiences can be very valuable in demonstrating your understanding of the range of roles within the sector.

Gain expertise – pursuing further study or attending specific training courses can often provide you with additional skills and knowledge within particular areas, which can be valuable in a future role. Having these expertise will make you a valuable asset for future employers and enable you to further develop your role and future career prospects.