

## Becoming a chiropractor

Chiropractic is a primary contact health profession that specialises in the diagnosis, treatment, prevention and management of many conditions that are due to problems with bones, joints, muscles and nerves, particularly those of the spine. Chiropractic treatment mainly involves safe, often gentle spinal manipulation to free joints in the spine or other areas of the body that are not moving properly. Apart from manipulation, chiropractors may use a wide variety of techniques including ice, heat, ultrasound, exercise and acupuncture as well as advice about posture and lifestyle.

*Today's chiropractors treat many thousands of patients each week for a wide variety of conditions. They support their treatment with advice about their patients' work, diet and exercise.*

### About Chiropractic



In the UK today, there are over 2,200 practicing chiropractors and the profession is growing year on year. Nearly all chiropractors work as private health care providers, although some do provide services through the NHS. Private practice enables chiropractors to choose to work where they want and allows the kind of flexibility of working hours that many professions cannot offer. Chiropractors can choose to work for a chiropractic or health clinic as an employee, be in partnership with other chiropractors or health professionals or run their own clinic.

Chiropractic is unique amongst health care professions in that there are internationally set standards of education, meaning that qualification from an internationally accredited education establishment truly furnishes you with a portable qualification to take across the world. *(Individual countries may have additional specific requirements you need to fulfil before you can practice.)*

### Regulation

In common with medical practitioners, dentists and many other health professions, all chiropractors must be registered by law, under the Chiropractors Act 1994 and the title 'Chiropractor' is protected under this legislation. It is illegal to practise as a chiropractor in the UK if you not registered with the UK Government appointed regulator, The General Chiropractic Council (GCC). In order to register with the GCC on graduation, you must be

qualified from a recognised place of chiropractic education (both courses listed below are accredited by the GCC); abide by the GCC's code of practice, hold professional indemnity insurance and pass the necessary competence and criminal records checks\*. Registration is renewed annually and chiropractors are also required to undertake a minimum of 30 hours of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) per annum in order to complete their annual re-registration.

### *Where to study*

In the UK, the two courses offering full-time chiropractic education to national and international standards are at:

[The Anglo European College of Chiropractic in Bournemouth](#)

[The Welsh Institute of Chiropractic at the University of Glamorgan](#)

Both institutions offer a full-time degree course (four years) in chiropractic and the degree course includes intensive training in a variety of subjects including life sciences, radiology, neurology, biomechanics, clinical medicine and differential diagnosis. Both courses have state funding and are accessed via the UCAS system. Entry requirements need to be verified with the individual institutions but, as an example, the 2006 requirements for the course at the Welsh Institute of Chiropractic is 300 points minimum, with at least 280 points from 6/12 unit GCE/VCE A-level (normally including Chemistry and Biology and excluding General Studies). Equivalent qualifications are also acceptable.

Chiropractic students are taught to diagnose pathology and look for contraindications to treatment. They also undergo practical training in adjustment and supervised clinical training, where they have hands-on practice in treating patients. Graduates who are members of the British Chiropractic Association undertake an additional year of supervised training as a requirement of membership, and there are many opportunities for chiropractors to study for additional postgraduate qualifications.



### *Contact details:*

Anglo European College of Chiropractic 13-15 Parkwood Road Bournemouth BH5 2DF Tel: 01202 436200 Fax: 01202 436312 <a href="mailto:aecc@aecc.ac.uk">aecc@aecc.ac.uk</a> <a href="http://www.aecc.ac.uk">www.aecc.ac.uk</a>	Welsh Institute of Chiropractic The University of Glamorgan Admail 3541 Pontypridd CF37 1GY Tel: 0800 716 925 Fax: 01443 822 055 <a href="mailto:enquiries@glam.ac.uk">enquiries@glam.ac.uk</a> <a href="http://www.glam.ac.uk">www.glam.ac.uk</a>
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## A BCA member talks about what it is like to be a chiropractor

**Chiropractor, Louise Hampton,** qualified from the Welsh Institute of Chiropractic at the University of Glamorgan four years ago. She works at two clinics; one in Newbury, Berkshire and one near Birmingham. She is also in the process of setting up her own clinic.



### Louise, what made you think about becoming a chiropractor?

When I was 15, I attended a careers convention and became interested in pursuing a career in either chiropractic or physiotherapy. I wanted to be able to do something ‘hands on’ that could really help people. Subsequently, I sat in with a chiropractor for part of their clinic session and was really impressed with how the chiropractor worked, the results they got and the positive reaction of the patients. I really admired how focused and detailed the chiropractor’s knowledge was and so I decided on chiropractic as a career.

### Tell us about your training.

I did a four-year degree at the Welsh Institute of Chiropractic at the University of Glamorgan, leading to a BSc (Hons) in Chiropractic. Core subjects included anatomy, physiology, biochemistry, neurology, pathology and diagnosis. I learned how to read and take x-rays as well as subjects like biomechanics and chiropractic technique that teach you how to examine patients and the essential skills necessary to treat them. There are specialist subjects such as paediatrics, geriatrics and pharmacology. There is a substantial amount of learning about anatomy and physiology in a chiropractic degree. It is part of who chiropractors are to be able to fully understand how and why patient symptoms are manifesting in a certain way. This knowledge also underpins chiropractic treatment and I use my extensive knowledge every day to diagnose, treat and assess the progress of my patients. Key to exercising this knowledge is a thorough understanding of the patient’s own medical history and the physical examination that I carry out.

### Was there much practical chiropractic training in the degree programme?

Yes, a lot. The Welsh Institute of Chiropractic has a large clinic as part of the academic buildings. Here, students work under the supervision of qualified chiropractor clinicians and they must complete a minimum of 400 hundred patient encounters during their degree programme, the majority of these will be during the final year of the degree course. The clinic serves the local community, so students get to treat and learn in a real-life clinic environment.

### Do you have to be registered to practice?

All practitioners have, by law, to be registered with the regulator, the General Chiropractic Council (GCC). The criteria involve having graduated from an approved chiropractic degree course, providing evidence of good standing and character, having professional indemnity insurance, (something I arrange through the British Chiropractic Association) and I also have to abide by the GCC Code of Practice and Standards of Proficiency. I must also complete a minimum of 30 hours Continued Professional Development (CPD) each year and provide evidence of this to the regulator. This learning can be formal lectures or courses or more informal learning and case conferences.

### How would you outline your role?

As a chiropractor, I diagnose and treat problems with joints, bones and muscles, and the effects they have on the nervous system, without drugs or surgery. I work with all the joints of the body, concentrating particularly on the spine and use my hands to make gentle, specific adjustments to improve the efficiency of the nervous system and release the body's natural healing ability. As well as diagnosing and treating, I also can advise patients about lifestyle changes that will help them avoid similar problems in the future.

### What type of patients do you treat?

All kinds of people can benefit from chiropractic treatment; from babies, children, adults and pregnant women through to the elderly. I modify my techniques to suit the specific needs of each patient.

### Do you work closely with medical practitioners?

Some patients are referred to me by local GPs or other healthcare professionals, but individuals are free to 'self refer' ie. call to make an appointment for themselves. If a patient comes to see me I will, out of courtesy, write to their GP to give an update on the patient's diagnosis and treatment. This enables someone's medical records to be complete. Chiropractic is covered by most private health insurance plans too.

### Do you use any special tools or equipment?

The basic equipment needs for a chiropractor are a treatment room, containing an adjustable treatment table. I also have ultrasound equipment that I use for treating some of my patients. The other small pieces of equipment in my treatment room are aids to certain techniques of treatment that I may utilise in the course of my practise. I use a small desk and chairs for consultation with patients and also keep a stethoscope and sphygmomanometer there to enable me to check a patient's blood pressure, heart and lungs.

### What hours do you work?

As a chiropractor, one of the great things is that you can work flexibly – choosing the hours to work that suit your needs, aspirations and home life.

At the moment, I am working over 40 hours a week but this is a particularly busy time as I am working as an associate at one clinic, whilst in the process of establishing my own clinic. If you choose to set up on your own, then it is like any other small business, you do need to invest time and energy into getting it established, but the feeling of independence is great.

As a chiropractor, you must expect some evening and weekend work as this is when patients who work during the day will want to see you.

#### **What skills and qualities are important?**

You need to be good with your hands and good co-ordination is helpful. I also think that being able to ask the right questions and, importantly, listen to the answers is key; particularly when examining patients on their first visit and when assessing their progress at each treatment visit. Having a genuine and caring side to your character and being someone who can empathise with people without getting too emotionally attached will enable you to effectively treat patients. People often think that you need to be physically strong to train as a chiropractor. You actually do not have to have immense physical strength, but it does help if you are quite an active or sports oriented person to begin with, as the work can be physically demanding. You do also learn skills and techniques whilst training that help. Finally, I would say you need to be good at problem solving and be quite an organised person, as keeping clear and ordered patient notes is an important part of my role.

#### *The British Chiropractic Association (BCA)*

The BCA was founded in 1925 and is the largest and longest-standing association for chiropractors in the UK; requiring the highest standards of education, training and conduct from its members.

The BCA offers its chiropractic members a wide range of services, including professional indemnity insurance, marketing and promotion, business support services, general advice, communications and profession updates.

It also aims to increase awareness of chiropractic treatment within the UK and acts as a source of information to the public.

*Membership of the BCA is free to all students studying at the Anglo European College of Chiropractic and the Welsh Institute of Chiropractic.*

#### **To find a BCA chiropractor in your local area:**

The British Chiropractic Association

59 Castle Street

Reading

Berkshire RG1 7SN

Tel: 0118 950 5950

E-mail: [enquiries@chiropractic-uk.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@chiropractic-uk.co.uk)

Website: [www.chiropractic-uk.co.uk](http://www.chiropractic-uk.co.uk)



#### *Notes*

*\* Important notes about registering as a chiropractor*

Any person wanting to train as a chiropractor must note that **on graduating** and when registering with the UK regulator, The General Chiropractic Council (GCC), they will be required:

- To provide a Criminal Record Certificate or Police Record Check Certificate.
- To disclose any criminal conviction, regardless of where or when it was.
- To disclose any disciplinary proceedings by a professional regulatory body.
- To disclose any proceeding or findings relating to professional negligence.

Any queries regarding this should be directed to the GCC on 020 7713 5155

Details of current registration requirements for chiropractors in the UK can be found by visiting the GCC website [www.gcc-uk.org](http://www.gcc-uk.org)

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