
Frequently Asked Questions

Can I get work experience with a therapist at Berkshire Healthcare?

Currently, the only work experience we offer with our psychologists and psychological therapists are to those already on a formal psychological therapy training course to work in the professions.

Unfortunately, we do not have capacity to facilitate other placements as our clinicians are busy meeting clinical demand.

We do very occasionally offer student placements for undergraduates within our psychological therapy services and when this happens, the placement will be advertised on our website and/or to universities.

What work experience does Berkshire Healthcare offer?

Very occasionally, we offer work experience with our psychological therapy teams, for example if we have an audit or another piece of work that a student can help us with.

There are lots of other ways to gain valuable insights and learning in our services, for example working as a volunteer in our mental and physical care services, as nursing assistants, porters or other jobs.

How do I get a placement at Berkshire Healthcare?

Placements will be advertised on our website and/or to universities.

What is the best way of gaining work experience?

Generally speaking, any experience working directly with people, particularly who have additional needs, learning disabilities, substance misuse or mental health issues, will be relevant and valued by university courses and employers.

It is worth approaching charities, for example, and enquiring about voluntary roles. This experience does not need to necessarily be about providing 'therapy', but rather supporting in other ways, offering activities, etc. Look out for roles as a voluntary telephone counsellor with the Samaritans or ChildLine, helping to run local support groups, working within charities etc as just a few examples.

The job role of 'support worker' can also be very good experience. The specifics of this role would greatly depend on the kind of service which it is with, and the kind of clients you are supporting.

Support worker roles do not normally require a degree in psychology and might require no degree of any subject. However, they can be a good step in gaining experience, towards a graduate role, so it is fairly common for graduates to apply for them as a first step.

Can you describe a typical day as a therapist?

We were asked this question for all the professions and so have given an overview.

As a psychological therapist, a typical day will involve seeing clients (individually or in groups), writing up associated clinical notes, reports and letters, attending team meetings and liaising with other professionals.

All therapists will also engage in updating their skills and knowledge through reading and further training.

Depending on your job role, you may also be involved in providing training, consultation, supervision and support to staff members, taking part in service or trust projects and undertaking research.

What is the difference between a Psychiatrist and a Psychologist?

A Psychiatrist is a medical doctor who has specialised in mental health difficulties and their treatments.

Psychiatrists tend to offer a medical/biological understanding to mental health difficulties, and as such, diagnosing and prescribing medication are their main responsibilities.

A Psychologist will have completed their degree in psychology and then gone on to complete their professional doctorate in one of the applied psychology post-graduate courses. Psychologists offer more individual formulations of psychological distress/mental health difficulties, and offer talking therapy as the predominant treatment.

Often psychiatrists and psychologists work alongside each other but are distinct professions/have very different training backgrounds.

Can you work in psychology if you do a dual degree of psychology and another subject?

As long as the psychology part of the degree is accredited by the British Psychological Society (BPS).

Would attending the Open University affect whether you were able to become a Counselling Psychologist?

No, not at all. As long as your psychology degree is accredited by the British Psychological Society (BPS). If it isn't, or you are doing an alternative degree, then you can do a conversion course in psychology to then start that training pathway.

assistant work experience can be very helpful in gaining experience that then enables you to be competitive in applying for an Assistant Psychologist role. Research experience is also valuable.

Is an Assistant Psychologist role for 12 months relevant experience to get onto the PWP training?

Yes, this would be good experience. It's difficult to say what is the 'right amount' and of course the more experience the better, generally speaking.

However, it is highly likely you will have gained some relevant and valuable experience working as an Assistant Psychologist that would enable you to apply for a Psychological Wellbeing Practitioner (PWP) training position.

Is working as an Assistant Psychologist necessary before moving on to being a Clinical Psychologist?

Working as an Assistant Psychologist can be an excellent way of demonstrating relevant experience in order to get onto the doctorate. However, it is not essential and there are a wide

Do Psychologists working in the NHS also do research?

Yes. Although the main role of Psychologists working in the NHS is in the assessment and treatment of patients directly, it is also common for them to contribute to research as part of their NHS role. This may be through audits within their job role, or small scale research projects.

However, this is not the main focus of their role and for those that particularly enjoy this aspect of psychology, they can go on to work in academic or more research orientated settings.

Difference between an Assistant Psychologist, Trainee Psychologist and a Psychologist

Assistant Psychologists usually work under the supervision of a qualified Clinical or Counselling Psychologist. This is usually a role people undertake following their psychology degree and prior to going on to further professional training. What you do day to day will vary depending on which service you are in. It could be undertaking assessments with patients, running groups or helping the Clinical or Counselling Psychologist deliver interventions. It is a great opportunity to learn what a Clinical or Counselling Psychologist does in their work.

Trainee Clinical/Counselling Psychologists are undertaking a three-year Doctorate in Clinical or Counselling Psychology. They are based at a university and split their time between placements, teaching and research. Their placements will vary in length and service depending on the course structure and learning objectives. On placement, you will be working one-on-one with clients, delivering groups, learning how to apply different theories and interventions to different populations as well as developing your leadership competencies and contributing to other team responsibilities as agreed with your supervisor and placement tutor.

A qualified Psychologist has completed and passed their doctoral training and are registered with the Health Care and Professions Council (HCPC) as Practitioner Psychologists. You would be employed by a service and work in various ways according to the setting/service needs. You can hear more about the types of work qualified psychologists do in the presentations given and in the individual profession leaflets.

Typically, a psychologist's role will involve delivering direct therapy to clients, offering teaching/training, liaising with multi-disciplinary team members, contributing a psychological perspective to teams and understanding about clients, service development and improvement just to name a few roles.

How do I become an Assistant Psychologist?

You would first need to complete a psychology degree that was accredited by the British Psychological Society (BPS) and was eligible for Graduate Basis for Chartered Membership with the BPS (GBC). Following this, you would be able to apply for any assistant psychologist posts that get advertised. These are usually posted on the NHS Jobs website, Individual NHS Trusts websites, organisations websites and in the BPS' monthly magazine "The Psychologist".

Are Assistant Psychologist roles competitive to get? What advice is there for getting an Assistant Psychologist post?

Generally Assistant Psychologist roles have many applicants and so it can be very competitive to get this post. It is fairly common to need to apply to multiple Assistant Psychologist posts before securing one, so don't be discouraged if this happens. The more experience you can gain the better. Many organisations offer Honorary Assistant Psychologist positions, where you can work on a voluntary basis on a fixed project.

Other roles such as becoming a support worker or nursing range of other clinical experiences that are also considered suitable prior experience, e.g. voluntary roles, support worker roles, Psychological Wellbeing Practitioner (PWP), teaching assistant to name a few.

What is the difference between Clinical and Counselling Psychologist?

Over the years, the difference between these 2 professions has narrowed and largely lies in the training itself. Each Profession has a history to it and this informs the underlying philosophy of each, alongside the emphasis of each training programme.

Counselling Psychology is a self-funded programme, whereby Clinical Psychology is funded by the Department of Health.

Counselling Psychology teaching/placements are centred largely by therapeutic model, e.g. Humanistic, Psychodynamic, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), whereas Clinical Psychology by client group, e.g. adults, children, older adults, etc.

On placement, Counselling Psychology Trainees are required to obtain a set number of clinical hours, i.e. time spent with a client, whereas for Clinical Psychology Trainees, their requirement is connected to the number of clients worked with.

Clinical Psychology trainees often have competencies to demonstrate in the areas of teaching, training and leadership. Whilst this is not a necessity for Counselling Psychology Trainees, it is often encouraged on placement. Counselling Psychology Trainees are required, throughout their training, to engage in personal therapy; whereas this is optional for Clinical Psychology trainees.

Lastly, Clinical Psychology Trainees have to meet competencies in neuropsychological tests (often in their Learning Disability or Older Adult placements), whereas this is still in development and variable across Counselling Psychology programmes.

In regard to similarities, regarding training, both are doctoral programmes, and you have to demonstrate the same research ability/competency. You will often see many NHS jobs being advertised as Clinical/Counselling Psychologist demonstrating the equity in recruitment and salary in this setting.

The potential for progression up the NHS Agenda for Change scale remains the same, as does the roles/jobs conducted. As you may have noted above, the range of settings where a Counselling Psychologist can work is vast, and akin to that of where Clinical Psychologists also work. Both courses are competitive, with there being more demand than places available.

Therefore, the choice between the 2 professions really comes down the philosophy behind each profession and affordability.

What is a Clinical Neuropsychologist?

Clinical Neuropsychology is concerned with the assessment and rehabilitation of people with brain injury, neurological disease or neurodevelopmental conditions.

Brain injuries and neurological illnesses and conditions can affect the way a person thinks, feels and behaves.

Clinical Neuropsychologists complete comprehensive assessments of cognition, emotion and behaviour and prepare reports for clients and health professionals. They provide neuropsychological rehabilitation. Rehabilitation techniques stem from a broad range of psychological models but are typically goal focused and aimed at improving function, managing/adjusting to difficulties and understanding of the biopsychosocial factors influencing the client. The Clinical Neuropsychologist works closely with the family to provide psychoeducation and support adjustment.

Many Clinical Psychologists choose to work in an area of neuropsychology without taking further training. Neuropsychology is a post qualification discipline available to chartered clinical psychologists within the field of educational or clinical psychology.

[Learn about the Qualification in Clinical Neuropsychology \(QiCN\) Postgraduate Diploma on the British Psychological Society website \(https://www.bps.org.uk/qualification-clinical-neuropsychology\).](https://www.bps.org.uk/qualification-clinical-neuropsychology)

What is the difference between PhD and PsychD regarding Clinical Psychology and which one is more beneficial to have?

A PhD is purely research focused, whereas a 'DClinPsy' is the professional doctorate in clinical psychology, which allows you to become a qualified Clinical Psychologist. If you want to work in research then the PhD is beneficial. If you want to become a Clinical Psychologist, then you will need to do the PsychD / DClinPsy.

How does being a Counsellor differ from being a Counselling Psychologist?

Both Counselling Psychologists and Counsellors offer talking therapy to people in distress, however, the training pathway and level of experience varies greatly.

A Counselling Psychologist will have completed a psychology degree (or conversion), will have gained some post-graduate experience and then will have completed a doctoral programme in Counselling Psychology accredited by the BPS.

Counselling Psychologists will have been trained in different models of therapy and will have undertaken research at doctoral level. Counselling Psychologists are registered with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) and may also be Chartered with the British Psychological Society (BPS).

Counselling Psychologists work with a range of mental health difficulties and emotional struggles and can integrate working with early life difficulties as well as current difficulties. Many Counselling Psychologists are employed in the NHS.

A Counsellor follows a different training pathway and Counsellors are generally trained in one model of therapy, although many may undertake additional CPD courses once qualified.

To become a counsellor, as a minimum, you have to complete a 2-year diploma course, although many people hold degrees or go on to do a masters course in the subject. Counselling Courses are offered widely, so make sure it is a training which is eligible (and on qualifying, should be eligible) to be accredited by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) or United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP).

Counsellors tend to work with less complex difficulties than Counselling Psychologists and are rarely employed in the NHS.

Where can I find out more about Forensic Psychology?

Unfortunately, we don't have any Forensic Psychologists in post. However, the [British Psychological Society \(BPS\) website \(https://www.bps.org.uk/member-networks/division-forensic-psychology\)](https://www.bps.org.uk/member-networks/division-forensic-psychology) holds a lot of information about Forensic Psychology.

Is Social Work good work experience for getting a Doctorate in Clinical or Counselling Psychology?

Any work you do that involves working directly with people with mental health or learning difficulty needs would be relevant to all the psychological therapies professions as prior experience.

However, in order to qualify as a Clinical or Counselling Psychologist, specifically, you will have need to have done a psychology degree (or conversion course accredited by the British Psychological Society (BPS)) and then the relevant professional doctorate. This may be something you chose to do after having done your social worker degree and in fact, many people do Counselling Psychology as 2nd profession later in life. For the other professions, you will still need to do the formal professional training as outlined in each leaflet to qualify as a therapist.

What is the difference between Counsellors and Psychodynamic Psychotherapists?

Both counsellors and psychotherapists offer 'talking' therapy. Their training differs in length and the depth at which psychological work is then offered.

Counsellors often work to support people with less complex here-and-now issues such as stress, bereavement, relationship difficulties or depressed mood. A psychotherapist will also be looking at what might be at the root of emotional struggles and tend to work with more complex difficulties

too. This involves links to the past and consideration of unconscious material. As a result, psychotherapy usually requires more time and works at greater depth.

Generally, the trainings differ by the length of time for example a minimum of 4 continuous years as opposed to 3 for a psychotherapist, the depth of the work, frequency of personal therapy and theoretical emphasis.

Most counsellors tend to be registered with an organisation called BACP. If the training is validated by BACP then it would be a counselling training. If in doubt about a psychotherapy training check with UKCP or BCP who register psychotherapy trainings. In the NHS often there is little employment for counsellors as it tends to be psychotherapy trained person who is more sought after.

How would I go at getting into Drama Therapy?

[There is the British Association of Dramatherapists \(https://www.badth.org.uk/\) where you can find out more information about Drama Therapy.](https://www.badth.org.uk/)

What training do Family and Systemic Psychotherapists Need?

Family therapists usually have a core profession like social worker, nurse, psychologist, counsellor and then do further part-time training leading to a qualification as a Family Therapy Practitioner after introductory and follow up courses and then as a fully qualified Family and Systemic Psychotherapist after a two-year part time Masters degree. It is also possible to go on and get a DPsych Psychotherapy in Family Therapy. The doctorate is a research degree which may be combined with supervision and teaching skills.

Family and Systemic Psychotherapists work in a number of different NHS settings and client groups, from Child and Adolescent Mental Health, to Eating Disorders, to Early Intervention in Psychosis, to Older Adult teams. Sometimes they consult to organisations and teams. Their focus is on relationships, communication and mobilising family/team strengths to work towards solutions.

Does CBT deal with the past?

Yes, it does, however unlike other therapies it is not the main focus. CBT therapists tend to take relevant background information as people's early experience tends to shape their thoughts and behaviours. The main focus in CBT is on the here and now.

Do you need to have your own therapy in order to become a CBT therapist?

No, you do not. Clinicians often recommend having their own therapy to allow for greater awareness of what they are recommending to client's they work with in practice and their own cognitive biases, however this is not essential for the career.

Do you need to be accredited to work as a CBT therapist?

Most places will ask for you to be registered with the British Association of Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapy (BABCP) or working towards accreditation with them if you want to work

as a CBT Therapist. Most training programmes in CBT Therapy usually fulfil all the requirements for accreditation and would assist you with applying for accreditation on completion of your course.

What's the difference between CBT and Dialectical Behavioural Therapy (DBT)?

DBT is a third-wave type of CBT, designed by Marsha Linehan in the late 1980s, specifically to treat individuals with Emotionally Unstable Personality Disorder (EUPD; also known as Borderline Personality Disorder).

DBT incorporates many of the CBT principles i.e. it also deals with thoughts, emotions, body sensations and behaviours. As well as this it also focusses on giving people skills to tolerate their distress, regulate their emotions, learn mindfulness skills and become more interpersonally effective. DBT has a strong evidence base for a range of other clinical presentations.

Is being a CBT therapist limiting?

No, CBT has applicability in several settings and clinical presentations and is recommended by in the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines for a number of mental health difficulties.

As a CBT Therapist you can work across a range of different settings, for example, in specialist psychological therapy services, in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), in Community Mental Health Teams (CMHTs) with working age adults or older adults, Eating Disorders, Improving Access to Psychological Therapy (IAPT) services, Forensic, Peri-Natal and Trauma services.

You can treat a wide range of mental health difficulties, e.g. Anxiety, Depression, PTSD, OCD, Psychosis, and Eating Disorders to name just a few.

Having qualified as a CBT Therapist enables you to go onto further training and specialities in things like Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), Compassion Focused Therapy (CFT), Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing (EMDR) and Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT).

As a CBT Therapist, do you work with long term clients?

This would depend on the service you work in. Most CBT therapists would work in line with the NICE guidelines and this can range from 6-24 sessions depending on the client's clinical presentation.

Do PWPs work with all ages or are some specialised to children?

Psychological Wellbeing Practitioners (PWPs) in IAPT services work with adults only (17 years old onwards). There is a newer route to train as a PWP for children, but is not, yet as well established as IAPT services for adults. You can find out more about IAPT on the [NHS England website\(https://www.england.nhs.uk/mental-health/adults/iapt/\)](https://www.england.nhs.uk/mental-health/adults/iapt/) and the [Association for Child and Adolescent Mental Health website \(https://www.acamh.org/research-digest/cyp-iapt/\)](https://www.acamh.org/research-digest/cyp-iapt/).

Is the only route to becoming a High Intensity Therapist through training as a PWP first?

No. Whilst many may choose to do the PWP training and then go on to become a High Intensity Therapist (HI Therapist), this is not necessary.

To be a HI therapist, you need to have a core profession as a requirement and then you can undertake the HI Therapy training. This core profession could be in nursing, social work, or occupational therapy to name a few.

Alternatively, some people may have done a Postgraduate Diploma in CBT prior to becoming a HI therapist. The HI Therapist role is specific to IAPT services (as is the PWP role).

How do I get 12 months mental health experience to be a trainee PWP?

We look for 12 months working in community Mental Health (preferably adults) in any capacity. This could be through volunteering or charity work. It could be an AP role or working on a ward or perhaps through being an admin team member taking calls/emails from clients with MH difficulties. Samaritans is often good experience.

What does a typical day as a PWP look like?

Within the PWP role, you will be conducting Wellbeing Assessments and providing low intensity CBT over the phone, online or in groups, with some face to face work. Your day will be made up of a mixture of the above appointments along with weekly supervision and monthly training and meetings. The PWP role is high volume and fast paced so you will be expected to see many patients back to back.

How do professionals continue their study in CPD?

In a number of ways - there are workshops, training courses etc that psychological therapists can attend to learn about different therapies, new research, or different skills. Professionals also use supervision and learn from each other, as well as ensuring that we keep up to date with reading research papers/books etc. Learning never stops!

Do I need to have a psychology degree for all these professions?

No, you do not. Please see below a diagram to help you consider your options.

[There is also a version of this at the Psychological Professions Network \(PPN\) \(https://www.ppn.nhs.uk/resources/careers-map\).](https://www.ppn.nhs.uk/resources/careers-map)

Useful Organisations/Links

[British Psychological Society \(BPS\) \(https://careers.bps.org.uk\)](https://careers.bps.org.uk)

[Psychological Professions Network \(PPN\) \(https://www.ppn.nhs.uk/resources/careers-map\)](https://www.ppn.nhs.uk/resources/careers-map)

[British Association for Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapies \(BABCP\) \(https://babcp.com/\)](https://babcp.com/)

[UK Council for Psychotherapy \(UKCP\) \(https://www.psychotherapy.org.uk/\)](https://www.psychotherapy.org.uk/)

[British Association of Art Therapists \(https://www.baat.org/Careers-Training\)](https://www.baat.org/Careers-Training)

[Association of Dance Movement Psychotherapy \(https://admp.org.uk/\)](https://admp.org.uk/)

[British Association of Music Therapy \(https://www.bamt.org/music-therapy\)](https://www.bamt.org/music-therapy)

[The Association for Family Therapy and Systemic Practice \(AFT\) \(https://www.aft.org.uk/\)](https://www.aft.org.uk/)

