

# Counselling psychologist

Counselling psychologists examine a person's experience and explore underlying issues.

They treat a wide range of mental health problems such as depression and anxiety, eating disorders, psychosis, 'personality disorder', negative life events, bereavement, domestic violence, sexual, emotional and physical abuse, trauma and relationship issues.



## Working life

You will consider how people relate, how they think and behave, their experiences of the world and how they function in their everyday life. This will include exploring people's social, economic, cultural, spiritual and physical health experiences. Counselling psychologists use psychological and psychotherapeutic theory and research. They work to reduce psychological distress and to promote the well-being of individuals, groups and families.

The relationship between you and your client is considered to be central to understanding particular psychological difficulties and how they apply to them. To help recognise the relationship between personal development and professional practice, you will be required to have personal therapy as a client

as part of your training and continued professional development.

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## Who will I work with?

You will work with individuals, (children, young people, adults and older adults), couples, families, with groups and at an organisational and community level.

You may work as part of multi-professional teams including doctors [1], nurses [2] and allied health professionals [3] and a range of other psychological professionals [4].

In a management [5] or leadership role, you could contribute to the design and implementation of services for patients.

## Where will I work?

Working within the NHS as a counselling psychologist, you'll work in:

- mental health services
- GP surgeries
- hospitals
- other health settings

You could also work in academia, teaching, social justice, advocacy or research in your area of expertise.

## Entry requirements

To enter a counselling psychology training programme, you will need either an undergraduate or Master's degree that is accredited by the British Psychological Society [6] (BPS) and leads to graduate membership [7]. As well as this, you will need some experience working with adults or children.

To qualify, counselling psychologists complete a Health and Care Professions Council [8]-accredited practitioner doctoral degree, which require at least 450 hours of supervised counselling practice over three or more years. These hours should be undertaken in a variety of settings. Trainees are also required to receive personal therapy during training.

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**Pay and**

## **conditions**

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collapse**

Most jobs in the NHS are covered by the Agenda for Change (AfC) pay scales <sup>[9]</sup>. This pay system covers all staff except doctors, dentists and the most senior managers.

After completing their training, counselling psychologists will be paid at band 7, with some opportunities to progress to higher bands later in their career. Psychologists in the NHS work full or part time. Terms and conditions can vary for employers outside of the NHS.

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## **Where the role can lead**

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Once you have qualified as a counselling psychologist, there is a wide range of opportunities. With further experience you could qualify for the Register of Psychologists Specialising in psychotherapy or become a clinical supervisor. You could apply for more senior positions e.g. head of a psychology service or consultant psychologist. As psychology relies heavily on research, you could contribute to the development of the profession through research work and teaching. You could apply for a trainee high intensity therapist position <sup>[10]</sup>, enabling you to work under the Improving Access to Psychological Therapies initiative ([IAPT](#) <sup>[11]</sup>).

More information on training and development in counselling psychology. <sup>[12]</sup>

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## **Job market and vacancies**

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In January 2018, there were 22,960 practitioner psychologists registered with the Health and Care Professions Council <sup>[13]</sup>.

The last recorded figures show that there are over nearly 3,000 counselling

psychologists in the UK.

Most NHS organisations advertise their job and apprenticeship vacancies on NHS Jobs [14], including those who run NHS services. Some advertise on their own websites. You can find a list of NHS organisations at NHS Choices [15].

If you're applying for a role either directly in the NHS or in an organisation that provides NHS services, you'll be asked to show how you think the values of the [NHS Constitution](#) [16] apply in your everyday work. The same will be true if you are applying for a university course funded by the NHS.

Find out more about NHS values [17]

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- British Psychological Society [18]
- Health and Care Professions Council [19] [19]

## Other roles that may interest you

- High intensity therapist [20]
- Psychological wellbeing practitioner [21]
- Adult psychotherapist [22]
- Clinical psychologist [23]

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**Source URL:** <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/psychological-therapies/roles/counselling-psychologist>

### Links

- [1] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/doctors>
- [2] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/nursing>
- [3] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/allied-health-professionals>
- [4] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/psychological-professions>
- [5] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/management>
- [6] <https://www.bps.org.uk/>
- [7] <https://www.bps.org.uk/join-us/membership>
- [8] <https://www.hcpc-uk.org/>
- [9] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/about/careers-nhs/nhs-pay-and-benefits/agenda-change-pay-rates>
- [10] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/psychological-therapies/high-intensity-therapist>
- [11] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#IAPT>
- [12] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/psychological-therapies/counselling-psychologist/training-and-development-counselling>
- [13] <http://www.hcpc-uk.org>
- [14] <https://www.jobs.nhs.uk/>

- [15] <http://www.nhs.uk/service-search>
- [16] [https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#NHS\\_Constitution](https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#NHS_Constitution)
- [17] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/about/working-health/nhs-constitution>
- [18] <http://www.bps.org.uk/careers-in-psychology>
- [19] <http://www.hpc-uk.org/>
- [20] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/psychological-therapies/roles/high-intensity-therapist>
- [21] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/psychological-therapies/roles/psychological-wellbeing-practitioner>
- [22] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/psychological-therapies/roles/psychotherapist>
- [23] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/psychological-therapies/roles/clinical-psychologist>