

# Child and adolescent psychotherapist

Child and adolescent psychotherapists (CAPT) work with children and young people aged up to 25 and their families and carers to assess and treat a wide range of psychological problems.

Using psychoanalytic psychotherapy, you'll take a variety of approaches, including talking, playing or drawing, to suit the individual. You'll also talk to families, carers and other health professionals.



## Life as a child and adolescent psychotherapist

You'll usually work in children and young people's mental health services (CYPMHS). CYPMHS teams are based in the community and work with staff from other children's services, including education and social services. You may also see the term children and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) used. This is an older term for the main specialist NHS community service within the wider CYPMHS that may be available locally.

Your training will enable you to contribute a psychoanalytic approach to team thinking, to assess and treat problems that can be severe or long-standing, and also to lead and supervise colleagues. You'll work as part of a multidisciplinary team that includes [mental health nurses](#) <sup>[1]</sup>, [psychiatrists](#) <sup>[2]</sup> and [clinical psychologists](#) <sup>[3]</sup>.

You will be provided with ongoing supervision to help you engage in self-reflection, seek and respond to feedback, and develop your professional knowledge and skills.

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## How much can I earn?

If you're employed by the NHS, you'll be on a national pay and conditions system called [Agenda for Change](#) <sup>[4]</sup> ([AfC](#) <sup>[5]</sup>).

There are nine pay bands and you'll usually be paid at band 6 while you undertake clinical training. Once you qualify, you'll normally be offered a substantive post at band 7 and you'll have opportunities to progress with experience.

Terms and conditions can vary if you are employed outside the NHS.

## How about the benefits?

As a child and adolescent psychotherapist, you can:

- make a difference
- work flexible and part-time hours

If you're employed by the NHS, you'll also have good holiday entitlement and access to:

- fully funded training plus a salary while you train
- a nationally-recognised qualification and a career in the NHS
- an excellent pension scheme
- NHS discounts in shops and restaurants

## Must-have skills

You'll need a range of skills to be a psychotherapist, including:

- a keen awareness of people and their behaviour
- a capacity for study and continued learning
- the ability to relate to a wide range of children and young people
- a capacity for curiosity and self-reflection
- excellent communication skills
- the ability to work on your own as well as in consultation with others
- a responsible, professional approach, respecting the confidentiality of patients
- emotional resilience and maturity

You'll also need to be able to demonstrate the values of the NHS Constitution [6].

## Entry requirements

To train as a child and adolescent psychotherapist, you need to complete a pre-clinical course recognised by the Association of Child Psychotherapists [7] (ACP). These courses include psychoanalytic and child development theory and psychoanalytic observations of infants and young children.

The courses are for people from a range of personal and educational backgrounds and provide an opportunity to gain a postgraduate level qualification.

As well as a pre-clinical course, you must also have experience of working with children and adolescents, although this doesn't have to be in a mental health setting. It is strongly recommended that students undertake a period of personal psychoanalysis or psychotherapy

before commencing the training.

The clinical training is a four-year full-time doctorate programme, which includes teaching, supervision, training psychoanalysis and a salaried training post (paid at NHS Band 6) in a children and young people's mental health service (CYPMHS).

The [ACP website](#) [8] provides full details.

## How to become a child and adolescent psychotherapist

Assuming you have completed the appropriate pre-clinical course and experience outlined above, your next step is to apply for a place on the four-year clinical training doctorate programme. Part-time training over five years is also available. You'll need to apply directly to one or more of the training centres and, if you are successful, you will be supported to apply to trusts for an NHS training post.

During your training years, you will be required to undertake psychoanalysis four times per week.

There are five training centres in the UK: two in London, one in Birmingham, one in Leeds and one in Glasgow. Clinical training placements are available across the UK in NHS trusts or in partnership with other NHS-funded services. These posts provide paid training and additional financial support including for the trainee's psychoanalysis.

During your training you will undertake a wide range of clinical work with children, young people and their parents or carers. This develops the breadth and depth of skills and competencies needed to work as a child and adolescent psychotherapist in the NHS.

See the [ACP website](#) [9] for more information about the training centres and training content. Further information on NHS training posts and funding is available directly from the training centres.

During the NHS-funded training and once qualified, child and adolescent psychotherapists are registered with the [Association of Child Psychotherapists](#) [7] (ACP).

## Where a career as a child and adolescent psychotherapist can take you

In addition to community CYPMHS, you could work in:

- inpatient units
- looked after children's teams
- hospital teams for children with physical illness and disability
- eating disorder services
- perinatal and parent-infant services
- schools
- learning disability teams
- forensic services

As your career develops, you may choose to specialise in one or more of these areas or to progress into service leadership, supervision and teaching roles.

It's important to note that a two-year psychological professions funding rule policy was implemented on 1 April 2022. This means that if you start NHS-funded psychological professions training from April 2022, you won't be eligible for NHS funding for further psychological profession training for two years from the expected completion date of your first training, where it would lead to a change in your job role. ?

Visit the [funding for psychological professions training programmes web page](#) [10] for more information about NHS funding.

## Other roles that may interest you

- [Knowledge and library services](#) [11]
- [Experienced paramedic](#) [12]
- [Emergency care assistant](#) [13]
- [Health records staff](#) [14]

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