

Family and systemic psychotherapist

Family and systemic psychotherapists work with groups and families to assess and treat a wide range of psychological and relationship problems affecting emotional, mental and physical health.

You'll provide therapy for whole families, parts of a family, individuals and couples, and may work with a variety of teams and services.



Life as a family and systemic psychotherapist

You'll use your expertise in psychotherapeutic approaches to provide help people change the ways they think and behave or find better ways to cope.

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. You could provide supervision and support to other professionals and teams, get involved in developing services or carry out research.

You could work in a range of different services, including hospitals and community teams. Wherever you're based, you'll be part of a multidisciplinary team with many other professionals, including, for example, mental health nurses, psychiatrists and clinical psychologists.

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](#) ^[1] ([AfC](#) ^[2]).

There are nine pay bands. As a newly-qualified family and systemic psychotherapist you would usually be employed at band 7 and you'll have opportunities to progress with experience. Terms and conditions can vary if you are employed outside the NHS.

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How about the benefits?

As a family and systemic therapist, 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:

- 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 people
- 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](#) [3].

Entry requirements

To practise as a family and systemic psychotherapist, you'll need to undertake appropriate training, in the form of a taught Master's degree or doctorate recognised by the Association for Family Therapy and Systemic Practice (AFT). To qualify for training, you'll usually need a clinical qualification such as clinical psychology, social work, psychiatry or mental health nursing.

You'll also need substantial work experience that relates to the field of psychotherapy and an ability to reflect on your own life and relationships. The Master's degree is usually part time while you continue in your current job role.

A unique aspect of training in family and systemic psychotherapy is the 'live supervision' element. This provides the benefit of your clinical supervisor observing your work to guide your learning and skill development. You will also complete research, teaching and personal development components.

How to become a family and systemic psychotherapist?

You'll need to apply for a place on a four-year course leading to a Master's certificate and professional qualification in family therapy and systemic psychology. [The AFT](#) ^[4] accredits courses, but the applications process is managed by individual providers.

You can find training providers near you by checking on the [AFT website](#) ^[5].

Where a career as a family and systemic psychotherapist can take you

As a family and systemic psychotherapist, you may have opportunities to progress into roles where you:

- supervise and lead other psychological professionals or multi-professional clinical teams
- specialise in areas such as eating disorders or child and adolescent mental health
- progress into a training role or undertake research

Some family and systemic psychotherapists go on to hold senior leadership positions.

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](#) ^[6] for more information about NHS funding.??

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- Health records staff [10]

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