



ASSOCIATION OF CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGISTS

# What is a Trainee Clinical Psychologist?

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## The role of a Trainee Clinical Psychologist

A Trainee Clinical Psychologist is in training to become a Clinical Psychologist, a highly trained healthcare professional regulated by the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC). Trainees are employed by an NHS Trust at Band 6. During training, a qualified Clinical Psychologist is responsible for the Trainee and provides formal supervision to them on a regular basis. The guideline from the British Psychological Society is that Trainees should receive a minimum of 1 hour of clinical supervision a week (in practice it is usually more than this) from a Clinical Psychologist who has been working for at least two years. On placement, trainees will usually carry out similar work to a fully qualified Clinical Psychologist, including:

Assessment	Supervision
Formulation	Managerial/leadership duties
Treatment	Audits and evaluation
Consultation	Group work

In addition to clinical work, Trainee Clinical Psychologists also attend teaching and training at the university hosting their programme. Trainees are different from 'Psychology Students' because they have already completed their undergraduate degree, are paid for their role, and are required to work (and are assessed) at doctoral level.

## Training in Clinical Psychology

Trainees are enrolled on a Professional Doctorate in Clinical Psychology. This is a 3-year, doctoral level programme comprising NHS clinical placement learning and assessment, research training, personal study and academic assessment. The amount of time the trainee will spend on placement varies widely and depends on the course's particular requirements. The table below outlines the typical estimated time allocation of trainees per academic year.

	Teaching	Placement	Study
Year 1	40%	50%	10%
Year 2	25%	55%	20%
Year 3	15%	60%	25%

Note: this does not include annual leave and other leave arrangements. Study days will mainly consist of research tasks and academic assignments.

Admission onto training is highly competitive; only 15% of applicants will be offered a place on one of the 30 programmes in the UK. Candidates must usually demonstrate excellent academic ability and relevant work experience before applying. The interview process is rigorous and is often accompanied by a pre-interview screening test.

Trainees are required to work across a range of services and settings before they qualify, and they must have experience of working with clients across the lifespan, and of dealing with problems of varying severity and complexity.

The third year often involves selecting a specialist placement based on personal interests or to address gaps in competencies that were not achieved in the first two years. Once a Trainee Clinical Psychologist has successfully completed training, they will usually enter the profession as a Band 7 employee in a psychological service and will register with the HCPC as a Practitioner Psychologist.

### Trainee employment conditions

Training courses and salaries for Trainee Clinical Psychologists are fully funded in the UK. In England, this is funded by Health Education England (HEE), Scottish places are funded by NHS Education for Scotland (NES), whilst Northern Irish places are funded by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety. Trainees are a vital part of the psychology workforce: they support fully qualified Clinical Psychologists with their work; they hold a high level of responsibility and caseload; and they often undertake leadership tasks such as service overviews and supporting institutional change.

## FAQs About Trainee Clinical Psychologists

### Do you get the summer off?

No – Trainee Clinical Psychologists have the typical annual leave allowance in line with their NHS terms and conditions and will arrange the leave they take with their placement supervisors and programme.

### Why aren't you here on some days?

Trainees have several commitments, which can be categorised into academic, clinical, and research responsibilities. Trainees are allocated study days to ensure they have protected time to complete responsibilities outside of their clinical time.

### How much supervision do you receive?

According to guidelines produced by The British Psychological Society (BPS) Trainees should receive a minimum of one hour of supervision a week. In practice, Trainees often receive more than this.

### Why don't you know as much as [the last/other trainee] about [subject area]?

Routes into training vary for each individual trainee. Although the training undertaken covers the same minimal core competencies, the individual trainees will have their own interests leading them to specialise in specific areas. This is important as it helps to maintain diversity within Clinical Psychology as a profession. Trainees' pre-training experience might also affect this. Why not ask your Trainee what their areas of expertise are?

## I know someone who did a degree in Psychology; isn't that the same thing?

No – a degree in Psychology is usually an undergraduate degree and is not the same as the Doctorate in Clinical Psychology. As explained above, after completing an undergraduate degree, people need to gain significant experience and go through a competitive application process before starting the training to be a Clinical Psychologist. Why not ask your Trainee what their route to training was?

## Is getting onto training difficult?

Many trainees will have applied several times to get onto training. In 2019, there were 4,054 applicants for 614 places, which is a 15% success rate. Many trainees will have had to prove their academic abilities with a good undergraduate degree, and also show evidence of relevant clinical or research experience. Trainees will typically spend an average of three years gaining experience before getting onto training. Some may need less, whilst others need more. Some trainees will have a Master's level degree or even a PhD before training. The selection process is very rigorous, which helps to maintain the high quality of the profession.

## Can't you just pay for a funded place?

One of the unique things about Clinical Psychology training is that there are actually few places that are self-funded, and those that are still involve a competitive application process. Non-EU international students would usually have to pay to fund their own Clinical Psychology training. Other psychology doctoral programmes, such as Counselling Psychology, are not funded.

