
Clinical Psychology

What is Clinical Psychology?

Clinical Psychology is an applied psychology profession meaning that psychological research and theory is put into practice working directly with people and organisations. Clinical Psychology is focused on the delivery of evidence-based assessment and intervention for a wide range of mental and physical health problems including addiction, anxiety, depression, learning difficulties and relationship issues.

Clinical psychologists can be trained in a range of psychological therapies; training usually focuses primarily on four: Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), systemic or family therapy, psychodynamic, and humanistic. The term 'Clinical Psychologist' is a protected title, meaning that the profession is regulated and you are only able to use the title of Clinical Psychologist if you have undertaken the accredited doctoral level training course.

What do Clinical Psychologists do?

Clinical Psychologists work directly with people, teams and organisations. One of the most significant roles of a Clinical Psychologist is to offer therapy to people with a range of mental health difficulties, emotional struggles and relationship difficulties. Clinical Psychologists are highly skilled in the assessment of mental distress, considering a range of factors that contribute and maintain someone's suffering, and working actively in therapy with clients to alleviate distress and change unhelpful patterns. Clinical Psychologists also have skills in applying their understanding of behaviour and distress to teams and groups, helping to highlight where changes can be made in this context. Clinical Psychologists also engage in teaching, research and audit work, as well as offering supervision and leading / managing services.

How do I train?

In order to become a Clinical Psychologist, you will need to complete a 3 year Doctorate in Clinical Psychology. There are several Doctorate courses available throughout the UK. Places on these courses are usually funded by the NHS, but in some circumstances places can be self-funded. All courses involve teaching/lectures, require you to work in NHS settings on 'placements' and require at least one research project to be undertaken.

[Visit Leeds Clearing House \(https://www.leeds.ac.uk/chpccp/courses.html\) for more information about each course.](https://www.leeds.ac.uk/chpccp/courses.html)

All the courses are approved by the Health & Care Professions Council and make you eligible to apply for registration with them as a clinical psychologist. All the courses are also accredited by the British Psychological Society.

Entry Requirements

Applications for the Doctorate in Clinical Psychology courses will only be accepted if the following entry requirements are fulfilled.

- You have attended an undergraduate psychology course that meets the criteria for Graduate Basis for Chartered Membership (GBC), or you have taken a BPS approved conversion course.
- A 1st class honours or a "good" 2:1 in your undergraduate degree.
- Some courses consider applicants with a 2:2 but they often ask for further evidence of academic ability (for example an MSc in Psychology with a heavy emphasis on research methods).
- You should gain some relevant clinically-related and research experience before applying for clinical psychology courses.

Visit [Leeds Clearing House \(https://www.leeds.ac.uk/chpccp/entry.html\)](https://www.leeds.ac.uk/chpccp/entry.html) for more information - this information is taken from the Doctorate in Clinical Psychology Application website.

Previous Experiences Required

Clinical Psychology applications ask for details of your previous experiences, and are primarily interested in what you have learnt from this, both personally and professionally. This helps to establish that you know what you are applying for and that you have a good understanding of what clinical psychologists do. You do not necessarily need a long list of varied clinical experience: quality of experience is valued alongside quantity. The course is competitive to get onto, but it is do-able. If you are interested in Clinical Psychology as a career, it can be worth trying to get experience as early as possible.

Some courses require a minimum of 12 months of relevant experience for your application to be considered, however successful candidates tend to have more, given the high numbers that apply to the course. Relevant clinical experience can include part-time or full-time, voluntary or paid work, involving caring or service roles with a relevant client group, whether in the public, private or charitable sectors. Research experience (in addition to any undergraduate projects you completed) can also be relevant if it gives some direct involvement in a clinical area (e.g. where it involves direct contact with users of clinical psychology services, or where the results of the research are clinically applicable).

Career Prospects

Clinical Psychologists work in a range of settings; the NHS being the most prominent. Within this context, Clinical Psychologists can work in a range of services, from primary care (IAPT) to inpatient mental health hospitals, as well as in physical health settings or specialist psychological therapy services. Clinical Psychologists also work in private settings, in voluntary settings, in schools/colleges, in prisons/forensic settings, as part of Employee Assistance Programmes, for corporations, with occupational health departments and in independent practice as self-employed psychologists. Clinical Psychologists can also work in the academic sector, teaching and training on established psychology programmes.

On qualifying, Clinical Psychologists, working in the NHS, would be employed, as all applied psychologists, at a Band 7 on the Agenda for Change Pay Scale; for 2020 the starting salary would be £38,890 and would rise to £44,503. Progression through the NHS grades is typically achieved through being appointed to new roles. As a Clinical Psychologist your progression would be from a Band 7 (newly qualified) up to a Band 9 for Heads of Psychology Services, with Bands 8c and 8d representing Consultant Clinical Psychologist levels.

Any other relevant information

Questions often get asked about the difference between a clinical psychologist, counselling psychologist and counsellor and we have discussed there further in the leaflet titled "FAQs/Differences amongst professions"

Useful Organisations

[British Psychological Society \(https://www.jobsinpsychology.co.uk/\)](https://www.jobsinpsychology.co.uk/)

[The Clearing House for Clinical Psychology \(https://www.leeds.ac.uk/chpccp/index.html\)](https://www.leeds.ac.uk/chpccp/index.html)

