
Psychotherapy

What is Psychotherapy?

Psychoanalytic or psychodynamic psychotherapy draws on theories and practices of analytical psychology and psychoanalysis. This is based on the idea that what we experience as a conscious difficulty in the present may point to an unconscious problem which has its roots in our early life. It aims to help patients understand and resolve their problems by increasing awareness of their inner world and its influence over our past and present relationships. It differs from most other therapies in aiming for deep seated change in personality and emotional development.

What do Psychotherapists do?

Psychoanalytic and psychodynamic psychotherapy is designed to help people with serious psychological disorders to understand and change complex emotional and relational problems thereby reducing symptoms and alleviating distress. However, their role is not limited only to those with mental health problems. Many people who experience a loss of meaning in their lives or who are seeking a greater sense of fulfilment may be helped by psychoanalytic or psychodynamic psychotherapy.

Therapists meet their patients on a regular basis in a carefully maintained setting. This treatment typically lasts longer than other types of talking therapy because key components include exploration of emotions and life history and internalisation of a different way of relating to oneself and others.

The relationship with the therapist is a crucial element in the work. The therapist offers a confidential and private setting which facilitates a process where unconscious patterns of the patient's inner world become reflected in the patient's relationship with the therapist (transference). This helps patients to gradually identify these patterns and, in becoming conscious of them, to develop the capacity to understand and change them.

The terms 'psychoanalytic' and 'psychodynamic' are both used to describe psychotherapy based on psychoanalytic principles.

Visit the British Psychoanalytic Council we (<https://www.bpc.org.uk/about-psychotherapy/what-psychotherapy>).

How do I train?

It can be quite confusing when looking for a suitable programme, but make sure that the training is approved and recognised by the BPC or UKCP. The UKCP is a large organisation separated into different colleges (10) and each college comprises of a number of approved trainings.

As the UKCP validates a vast number of different trainings, please make sure you select the right one for you and that it gives you full membership in your chosen modality. The NHS currently recognises psychoanalytic and psychodynamic orientations (the college is usually the CJPA), family therapy, and art psychotherapy. Always check as there are a number of organisations which claim their course leads to validation, but this is not always the case.

All recognised psychotherapy trainings require you to be in personal therapy for at least 1-3 times a week throughout your training. It is often mandatory that you are in personal therapy prior to your application to train and that this therapy is recognised by the training organisation. Generally training is part time for at least 4 continuous years with personal therapy running in parallel. It is a considerable investment both emotionally, personally and financially but is a hallmark of the depth at which you will be practising.

Entry Requirements

In order to train to be a psychotherapist you need to have some life experience and have reached the academic equivalent to undergraduate or Masters level study. It helps if you have a first degree in a related professional field (psychology, social work, OT, teaching), but this is not essential. The entry requirements are based more on your capacity to work in this field and you will undergo a number of interviews to determine this.

Previous Experiences Required

One of the most important experiences needed before applying for training is to have started in your own therapy with a suitably qualified and recognised psychotherapist linked with the training you wish to apply for. This is a prerequisite of all trainings. Some applicants may have had some prior counselling experience or work in a job that offers this.

Whilst in training one of the main things you also undertake is a voluntary/honorary placement for your clinical work. Many people do this alongside other paid work as all psychotherapy trainings are part time.

Career Prospects

Qualified psychotherapists have a variety of career prospects such as in Psychological Therapy departments within the NHS, private clinics and/ or in private practice.

Any other relevant information

Questions often get asked about the difference between a psychotherapist and a counsellor and we have discussed this further in the leaflet titled "FAQs/Differences amongst professions".

Useful Organisations

[British Psychoanalytic council \(https://www.bpc.org.uk\)](https://www.bpc.org.uk)

[United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy \(https://www.psychotherapy.org.uk/about-ukcp/\)](https://www.psychotherapy.org.uk/about-ukcp/)

[British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy \(https://www.bacp.co.uk/\)](https://www.bacp.co.uk/)

[Institute of Group Analysis \(https://www.groupanalysis.org/\)](https://www.groupanalysis.org/)

