

A large, stylized wireframe figure of a person with arms outstretched, composed of light blue lines and dots, set against a dark blue background with faint geometric shapes and a network of lines.

WHO'S WHO

Understand what the different professionals within psychological health do

IT'S THE LITTLE THINGS

In the world of psychological professionals there are different individuals who are qualified in different ways. It can be difficult to know who to turn to and what sort of professional you need to see if you or someone you know is struggling with their mental health.

This handout aims to provide you with an understanding of who does what, as well as which professional governing body/organisation they should be registered with to ensure they meet the standards required for their professional title.

What is a Psychiatrist?

A Psychiatrist is a fully qualified medical doctor who specialises in diagnosing and treating mental health problems. Because they are medical doctors they can prescribe psychiatric medication if they feel it is required. Most Psychiatrists won't do talking therapy, therefore once they have done an assessment they will usually refer to a Psychologist or Psychotherapist who will be able to provide the talking therapy element of the treatment. Your GP can also prescribe you with medication if they feel you do not need a full psychiatric assessment with a Psychiatrist.

A fully qualified psychiatrist will be registered with the Royal College of Psychiatrists. You can find all registered Psychiatrists at www.rcpsych.ac.uk

What is a Psychologist?

There are a number of different types of Psychologist and they can work in different areas such as research, education and commercial settings. They are not medical doctors and therefore cannot prescribe drugs, but they can undertake full psychological assessments. Clinical and Counselling Psychologists have been trained in 'talking-therapy' (psychotherapy) and will use different types of models and approaches to work with individuals, groups, couples or families to help them understand and work through their problems. They will develop treatment plans and a variety of non-medical treatments to help them understand and hopefully alleviate the issues they are dealing with.

Psychologists will be trained in different models and approaches which can include:

- Cognitive behavioural therapies
- Psychoanalytic and Psychodynamic therapies
- Humanistic and integrative psychotherapies
- Systemic therapy
- Hypnotherapy
- Trauma focused therapy
- Other

A fully qualified psychologist will be registered with the British Psychological Society (BPS). You can find all registered Psychologists at www.bps.org.uk. In addition, Psychologists can be registered with the British Association for Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapies (BABCP) www.babcp.com whose members specialise in behavioural and cognitive approaches. These are the approaches most widely used by the NHS.

What is a Psychotherapist?

A Psychotherapist is someone who can help you deal with your emotions, thoughts and behaviours. Similar to Psychologists, a Psychotherapist works with individuals, couples, families and groups. Again, their aim is to help individuals understand their thoughts, behaviours and feelings to enable them to work through the difficulties they are experiencing. To become a Psychotherapist you would need to have undertaken a number of years training and they use a variety of approaches according to the theoretical models they adopt and the therapy they practise. Similar to a Psychologist their approaches could include:

- Cognitive behavioural therapies
- Psychoanalytic and Psychodynamic therapies
- Humanistic and integrative psychotherapies
- Systemic therapy
- Hypnotherapy
- Trauma focused therapy
- Other

A fully qualified Psychotherapist will be registered with either the UK Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP) www.psychotherapy.org.uk or the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) www.bacp.co.uk. In addition, Psychotherapists can be registered with the British Association for Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapy (BABCP) www.babcp.com whose members specialise in behavioural and cognitive approaches. These are the approaches most widely used by the NHS.

What is a Counsellor?

The difference between a counsellor and a Psychotherapist can sometimes be difficult to distinguish although a counsellor tends to provide only short-term support for individuals. A counsellor is someone who conducts face-to-face sessions and is able to practise after receiving relatively short training, although some have many years of experience.

A fully qualified Counsellor will be registered with the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) at www.bacp.co.uk. In addition, Counsellors can be registered with the British Association for Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapies (BABCP) www.babcp.com whose members specialise in behavioural and cognitive approaches. These are the approaches most widely used by the NHS.