

NHS Talking Therapies for Anxiety and Depression services pay equity support pack

We're aware of widespread challenges many of you working in NHS Talking Therapies services across England are facing. Pay is lower than that of other psychological therapist colleagues working in the same services and with the same cohort service users.

This inequity in pay and conditions is wrong and not supported by NHS England.

To support you, if you wish to challenge this pay inequity, we've collated resources and evidence that might be of use. The resources demonstrate why all practitioners delivering high intensity therapy in NHS Talking Therapies services should receive the same pay and conditions.

These resources may assist you in discussions with service leaders, your colleagues, unions or us as your professional body.

Context

NHS Talking Therapies for Anxiety and Depression services is the main way adults in England access psychological therapies through the NHS.

The service is based on a stepped care model. Low intensity CBT interventions are offered at Step 2. A range of high intensity psychological therapies, including CBT, Person Centred Experiential Counselling for Depression (PCE-CfD), Dynamic Interpersonal Therapy (DIT), Interpersonal Therapy (IPT) and Couples Counselling for Depression (CCfD), are offered at Step 3.

A key feature of a good NHS Talking Therapies service, as set out by NHS England in the [Talking Therapies for Anxiety and Depression manual](#), is ensuring a choice of interventions are made available to service users so they can co-create their care plans.

The case

NHS England says that all the interventions recommended for use at Step 2 and at Step 3 are equally effective for use at their respective step. A person is offered an intervention based on their individual choice, not because one is better than the other. This is made clear in the NHS Talking Therapies manual.

NHS England also clearly states, in both the [NHS Talking Therapies manual](#) and NHS England's [Agenda for Change pay scales](#), that all low intensity practitioners delivering interventions at Step 2 are considered equal to each other and should be paid as such. It also emphasises that all High Intensity Practitioners delivering interventions at Step 3, including counsellors, psychotherapists and CBT therapists, are considered equal and should be paid equally.

NHS England's [Agenda for Change pay scales](#) sets out that trainee 'High Intensity Practitioners' should be paid at a Band 6 and qualified 'High Intensity Practitioners' should be paid at Band 7.

NHS England defines what a trainee High Intensity Practitioner and a qualified High Intensity Practitioner is in the [NHS Talking Therapies manual](#). An example of a trainee is a practitioner working towards the completion of the recognised top up training for one of the NHS Talking Therapies high intensity modalities, or required professional membership level. They become 'qualified' high intensity therapist once the practitioner meets criteria set out in the [NHS Talking Therapies manual](#).

Dr Adrian Whittington, National Clinical Lead for Psychological Professions at NHS England, has provided support and clarification to this being the case from NHS England. He says:

"We [NHS England] support that all high intensity practitioners working within NHS Talking Therapy Services who have completed a NHS Talking Therapies qualification (PCE-CfD, IPT, DIT, CBT etc) should be paid at a band 7 - irrespective of the high intensity modality they practice and that those who are working towards an IAPT qualification and don't yet meet all the requirements of practitioners set out in the IAPT manual are paid at band 6."

[supporting information provided by Dr Whittington specifically for this briefing addressing pay equity in NHS Talking Therapies services, June 2023].

In addition, the current [Psychotherapeutic Counselling NHS Training Pathway pilot](#) has established clear precedent for non-CBT practitioners working in NHS Talking Therapies services to be paid in line with their CBT colleagues. The pilot aims to provide a core psychotherapeutic counselling training and embedded NHS Talking Therapies qualification in either person centred experiential counselling for depression, dynamic interpersonal therapy or couple's counselling for depression,

To support achieving pay equity across all NHS Talking Therapies services, NHS England has published Band 7 job description exemplars for High Intensity Practitioner roles within NHS Talking Therapies services. These exemplars provide examples of band 7 practitioner role descriptions and what qualifications and competences roles would typically require. These exemplar job descriptions are linked to in the resource section below.

How we can support

We can provide information and support to counsellors and psychotherapists affected by pay inequity where the issue poses a reasonable risk to the continued provision of services to the public and where the issue affects the profession, rather than an individual practitioner. Such as providing resources like this support pack.

But as a charity there are limitations to the personal support we're able to give individuals, when it relates to their specific employment circumstances.

We'd encourage you to get in touch with your trade union representatives to discuss your personal case. We're happy to provide information and resources to unions and union representatives to help them best support you.

Key resources

NHS Talking Therapies manual

(<https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/the-nhs-talking-therapies-manual-v6.pdf>)

The whole document is really useful, but in particular:

- Section 4.1.2 *High Intensity Workforce* (page 16-17) which establishes that NHS England and the IAPT National Team see having a choice of high intensity interventions as an essential for a 'good' service.
- *Table 9: Recognised qualifications and individual accreditations for clinicians in IAPT services* - establishes which modalities are considered high intensity modalities in NHS Talking Therapies services and that counselling for depression is one of them.

Agenda for Change Pay scales for the NHS in England -

<https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/psychological-therapies/roles/high-intensity-therapist>

<https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/working-health/working-nhs/nhs-pay-and-benefits/agenda-change-pay-rates>

These two links establish that:

- Trainee high intensity therapists (i.e. those yet to complete the top up training in PCE-CfD for example) should be Band 6 roles. This is established by the health careers web link.
- High intensity therapists (those that have completed the relevant top up high intensity trainings and have the required professional memberships as set out in Table 9 in the NHS Talking Therapies manual) should be Band 7 roles. This is established by both links.

Taking these sources together we've established that counsellors and psychotherapists, meeting the criteria in the NHS Talking Therapies manual, delivering one of the recognised high intensity modalities should be paid at Band 6 while undertaking the top up training, and Band 7 once that is complete.

Band 7 Exemplar job descriptions

We've attached the Band 7 exemplar job description documents from NHS England, which have been produced to reinforce that all high intensity therapists working within NHS Talking Therapies services should be paid at a band 7 once they meet all the criteria set out in the NHS Talking Therapies manual.

Psychotherapeutic Counselling Pilot Training Pathway

<https://www.metanoia.ac.uk/programmes/career-development-pathways/nhs-psychotherapeutic-counselling-programme-person-centred-experiential-counselling-for-depression-pathway/>

The Metanoia Institute is providing the training for those going through the PCE-CfD psychotherapeutic counselling pathway. Roehampton University is providing the training for the DIT psychotherapeutic counselling pathway and Tavistock is providing the training for the couples counselling psychotherapeutic counselling pathway.

The NHS psychotherapeutic counselling pilot training pathway helps establish a number of precedents for the role of counsellors in the NHS:

- It says trainees should be paid Band 6, qualified practitioners meeting the requirements in the NHS Talking Therapies manual should be paid Band 7
- It highlights that the NHS sees a role for counsellors to be part of the workforce even as a trainee.

Dr Adrian Whittington, National Clinical Lead for Psychological Professions at NHS England

“We [NHS England] support that all high intensity practitioners working within NHS Talking Therapy Services who have completed a NHS Talking Therapies qualification (PCE-CfD, IPT, DIT, CBT etc) should be paid at a band 7 - irrespective of the high intensity modality they practice and that those who are working towards an IAPT qualification and don’t yet meet all the requirements of practitioners set out in the IAPT manual are paid at band 6.”

[supporting information provided by Dr Whittington specifically for this briefing addressing pay equity in NHS Talking Therapies services, June 2023].

If you would like to discuss pay equity in the NHS further, or have any questions about the resources in this support pack, please contact Matthew Smith-Lilley, Policy and Engagement Lead for Mental Health (matthew.smith-lilley@bacp.co.uk).