

PPN MIDLANDS BRIEFING NOTE

Clinical Associate in Psychology (CAP) apprentices: Profession-specific clarifications

Situation and Context

During the development of the Level 7 Apprenticeship (Mitigation) Fund guidance (May 2026), a number of profession-specific clarifications were proposed. Some of these points, particularly those relating to the Clinical Associate in Psychology (CAP) apprenticeship, were not carried through into the final published guidance. This briefing note has therefore been prepared to support consistent interpretation and application of the national guidance across NHS-commissioned services, including by employers, education providers and professional leads involved in local workforce decision-making.

Advisory Guidance

This briefing note should be read alongside the main [Level 7 Apprenticeship \(Mitigation\) Fund guidance](#) (May 2026).

It provides additional clarification in relation to the Clinical Associate in Psychology apprenticeship and the associated expectations which apply across NHS-commissioned services, including those delivered by partner or independent providers. The [Trailblazer FAQ](#) and [PPN Midlands CAP Guide](#) also provide further useful information about CAPs.

1. Supervision and local delivery arrangements

Employers are expected to ensure that apprentices have access to appropriate professional and clinical supervision, consistent with the scope of practice of the role and local governance arrangements. For Clinical Associate in Psychology apprentices, this includes access to appropriately qualified and registered psychological professionals, with supervision arrangements proportionate to the scope of practice and required to ensure safe and effective service delivery.

Employers should also satisfy themselves that sufficient education, placement and supervisory capacity is in place before confirming an apprenticeship start.

2. Scope of practice

The Level 7 Apprenticeship (Mitigation) Fund supports the education costs of the approved apprenticeship only. It does not alter the defined scope of practice of the Clinical Associate in Psychology role, which continues to be determined by the apprenticeship standard and must be adhered to within local professional governance arrangements.

3. Principles relating to trainee banding

In NHS-commissioned services, the Agenda for Change banding approaches for nationally recognised training roles should normally be the starting point for local decision-making. In this context, the established expectation is that Clinical Associate in Psychology training roles are typically aligned to Agenda for Change Band 5. This reflects the level of training, scope of practice, responsibility and supervision required to support safe, high quality care and a robust training experience. The banding applied to the post should therefore align with the level of training, expected scope of practice, degree of responsibility and supervision arrangements associated with the role. In this context, banding is relevant not only to affordability, but also to the way in which the role is understood and implemented within local professional governance arrangements.

Where trainees undertaking the same or substantively similar nationally recognised training are appointed at different bands, organisations should consider the implications for consistency, parity and equitable access. This is particularly relevant where trainees are working towards comparable learning outcomes, contributing in similar ways to service delivery and progressing towards equivalent qualified roles.

Organisations should also consider the governance, training quality and patient safety implications of any departure from established banding assumptions. This includes the potential impact on protected learning time, service expectations, supervision arrangements and the overall developmental nature of the post. These considerations should be assessed in the context of the purpose of the training, the integrity of the training experience, the defined scope of practice and the local framework for safe delivery of care.

4. Relationship to practitioner psychologist training

The Clinical Associate in Psychology apprenticeship leads to a distinct professional occupation with its own scope of practice. It is not designed or funded as a direct route into regulated practitioner psychologist training. While local development and progression opportunities may exist, these are separate from the purpose of this funding.

5. Application of the two-year psychological professions funding rule

The Clinical Associate in Psychology apprenticeship is an NHS-funded psychological professions training route and is therefore subject to the existing [two-year psychological professions funding rule](#). This means that where an individual has completed, withdrawn from, or not completed an NHS-funded psychological professions training programme, they will normally need to wait a minimum of two years from the date of the relevant exam board or equivalent award decision before starting another NHS-funded psychological professions training programme where this would lead to a change of occupational role.

Employers and education providers should ensure that applicants are made aware of this requirement when considering future training and career progression.

6. Continuing professional development

This funding is limited to the education costs of the approved Level 7 apprenticeship. It does not cover continuing professional development beyond the apprenticeship. Ongoing CPD and professional development remain the responsibility of the employer under existing arrangements as part of ongoing workforce development and service quality assurance.

Please email bsmhft.ppnmidlands@nhs.net if further clarification is required on this briefing note and the information referred to.

Dr Sunny Kalsy-Lillico

Chair of PPN Midlands

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