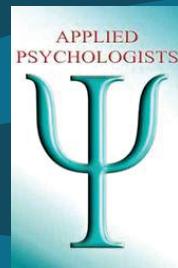


Unite the Union's Applied Psychologists Organising Professional Committee



August 2025

Unite Applied Psychology national committee response to NHS England announcement on continued funding of Level 7 apprenticeships in five professions (Clinical associate in psychology (CAP)) in health and social care until 2029

Unite welcomes NHS England's efforts to increase the mental health workforce¹ at a time of great pressure in mental health services, which follows over a decade of underfunding, predicted heightened need after the COVID-19 pandemic and widening social inequality. The announcement follows the Government's recent release of the 10 Year Health Plan².

A recent news report (BBC, 7 August 2025³) has highlighted ongoing, chronic problems in achieving parity of esteem between the offer to mental health care, compared with physical healthcare.

The Clinical Associate in Psychology (CAP) England posts are designed to help ensure that there is capacity to meet population need for healthcare, and to improve social mobility by widening access for recruitment, 'considering the needs of working class, coastal and rural communities'. It is stated that an aim is to allow opportunities for health and care staff to progress their clinical careers (NHSE briefing, 9 August 2025)

Whilst Unite welcomes moves to increase the applied psychology workforce, we remain concerned about the qualifying banding of CAP posts in England. We outlined our concerns in previous bulletins (November 2020, October 2021 and April 2024). These bulletins note that the qualifying banding outcome is unsafe due to the incorrect matching of factor 2 of Agenda for Change. This is particularly concerning as these roles are meant to help applicants from socially disadvantaged and minoritised backgrounds.

The CAP (England) posts are also misaligned with CAAP (Scotland) and CAAP (Wales), who qualify at Band 7.

Furthermore, there are ongoing concerns that once CAP (England) staff are employed into the NHS, they appear to have little to no routes for further career progression, and that there is often role confusion about their remit. There is a danger that these staff will leave the NHS as a result. We have also raised concerns about the interface with Assistant Psychology roles, as the introduction of CAP (England), may lead to less opportunities to employ assistant psychologists, a developmental role which can lead to onward training in doctoral level training.

The concerns about career development and progression are already being raised by applied psychologists who are essentially unable to progress beyond a fixed banding.

¹ <https://www.nhsemployers.org/news/nhs-england-confirms-mitigation-funding-level-7-apprenticeships>

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/10-year-health-plan-for-england-fit-for-the-future>

³ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cm2v4mmgvmwo>

Unite strongly recommends that

1. NHS England/Department of Health & Social Care (DHSC) work with CAP (England) employing organisation and addresses the unsafe job evaluation that has occurred in a number of organisations, and works with Unite and the NHS Staff Council Job Evaluation Group (JEG) to address this issue.
2. NHS England/Department of Health & Social Care works with recognised trade unions, the British Psychological Society, education providers and employers to ensure that there are options for applied psychology staff to develop their careers beyond their qualifying band, in order to retain staff and protect workforce and service provision going forward.

Khadija Rouf
Incoming Chair

Antony Vassalos
Outgoing Chair

Unite Applied Psychologists Organising Professional Committee
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