



# Terms and Conditions of Service for Systemic Psychotherapists / Family Therapists

Information Sheet (External) /PI

Revised, July 2007

## INTRODUCTION

These Terms and Conditions of Service are intended to assist employers in developing, planning and devising job descriptions in establishing posts.

Registered systemic psychotherapists have the advanced level skills required to:

- provide systemic psychotherapy
- train and supervise the work of others
- consult about multi-complex family systems and
- apply systems thinking to the network of relatives, carers and professionals involved with clients.

Historically, posts have carried a number of titles: family therapist, systemic psychotherapist and systemic family psychotherapist etc. For the purpose of this document we will use the encompassing title 'systemic psychotherapist'.

## WHAT IS SYSTEMIC PSYCHOTHERAPY?

Systemic psychotherapy developed in response to a growing awareness that an individual's difficulties do not develop in isolation but within a context or pattern of relationships. This highlights the importance of families and relational networks in influencing the pathway of an individual's mental health and a family's resilience in living with it. Research into effective treatments for anorexia nervosa, asthma, childhood diabetes, schizophrenia, depression and drug abuse, amongst others, provide an evidence-base for this method of treatment.

## ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

The Association for Family Therapy and Systemic Practice in the UK (AFT) accreditation process requires entrants to qualifying courses (i.e. those that lead to the United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy – UKCP – registration) to have professional qualifications in social work, psychiatry, psychology, teaching (which has included work with children and families in a counselling capacity) nursing (mental health nursing and other nursing specialities which require a counselling role), occupational therapy, speech and language therapy and counselling (including at least three years' training, British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy – BACP –

registration and experience in the public or voluntary sectors), *and* four years' experience in a mental health or social welfare setting. (For further information see the AFT document 'Training in Family Therapy: Entry Requirements'.)

Qualifying level training in systemic psychotherapy is based and builds upon this prior knowledge of human growth and development, mental health and illness and statutory frameworks, including child protection and, in some cases, supervision and management. Hence, all systemic psychotherapy practice incorporates dual training. Job descriptions may specify which previous experience will better support the setting of the post. Those who are registered with the UKCP have the required qualifications and experience necessary to work within the private sector, the NHS or other public or voluntary sector agencies.

## THE STRUCTURE

### 1. Grading structure

1.1 Posts above trainee level can only be filled by qualified systemic psychotherapists who have successfully completed an AFT-accredited qualifying level course in systemic psychotherapy (320 hours of supervised clinical practice and 320 hours of postgraduate study) *or* who have met the equivalent criteria as laid down by the UKCP for 'grandparent' and 'APEL' (previous experience and learning) qualification as systemic psychotherapists.

1.2 For all appointments and posts, employers are advised to obtain appropriate professional advice from AFT, and their National Assessors.

The following factors should be taken into account when drawing up job descriptions:

- the size, complexity, range and level of the service managed or individually provided
- the level of any specialist experience required
- the extent to which the post carries duties outside the particular discipline, department or employing authority which may include wider management or planning duties or professional advisory roles
- the extent to which the post carries responsibility for research, evaluation and development, or direction of those functions
- the extent to which the post carries responsibility

for teaching, training, clinical supervision of trainee systemic psychotherapists and other health care staff, or direction of those functions

- the extent to which the post carries responsibility for providing clinical advice, interpretation or action
- the extent of responsibility for resource management, planning or policy-making
- the extent to which particular local factors impact on service development and provision e.g. geographical peculiarities, ethnic mix of the population and areas of deprivation.

1.3 Job descriptions and person specifications must be used to determine the banding of each post. They should be agreed with staff in post before posts are re-banded. In each band it is for the employing authority to decide the appropriate points on the pay band.

## **2. Trainee Systemic Psychotherapists, Bands 6 and 7**

2.1 A trainee systemic psychotherapist is one who is participating in an AFT-approved course and who is working under the supervision of a Highly Specialist or Consultant Psychotherapist, who has at least two years' whole time equivalent, post-qualification experience *and* is registered with the UKCP as a systemic psychotherapist. The trainee's experience, knowledge, qualifications and skills should be taken into consideration when looking at posts.

2.2 Band 6 on the pay spine is a trainee who has been appointed on the basis of a particular area of expertise e.g. a specific competence in understanding a culture or language or other exceptional skills, rather than formal professional qualifications. This reflects the high value systemic psychotherapy places on equal opportunities, increasing the diversity in the field in order to reach clients in all communities. Where a specialist relevant professional knowledge is developed during the employment, it should be logged for possible future use regarding higher bands.

2.3 Band 7 is a trainee with prior professional qualifications and post-qualifying experience.

2.4. Clinical responsibility is held by the trainee's supervisor.

## **3. Specialist Systemic Psychotherapists, Band 7**

3.1 A specialist systemic psychotherapist is one who has completed a qualifying level training course accredited by AFT, and who is registered or is eligible to register with the UKCP. It is an introductory band to the main career structure and is designed to provide a range of suitable

experience in preparation for work at a higher level. After two years the individual should have acquired the knowledge and skills to function at 8a level and the banding of the post should be reviewed in light of this. The post holder must have available the support and guidance of a systemic psychotherapist at Band 8a or above who has been qualified for two years or more.

3.2 There is a distinction made between newly qualified systemic psychotherapists without significant and/or substantial previous relevant clinical experience and newly qualified systemic psychotherapists with both substantial and significant previous relevant clinical experience and family therapy experience. This must be taken into consideration and systemic psychotherapists can start on Band 8a after training.

## **4. Highly Specialist Systemic Psychotherapists, Bands 8a and 8b**

Bands 8a and 8b are defined as the main professional career bands. Systemic psychotherapists at these levels can be expected to:

- provide highly specialist clinical service
- present systemic academic training and prepare teaching material internally in trusts or teams
- have the expertise to supervise systemic psychotherapists who are in training.

They are experienced professionals, autonomous workers, who assess and treat their own specialist caseload of clients, though it is expected that a systemic psychotherapist at Band 8a will still be gaining wider relevant experience.

### **Highly Specialist Systemic Psychotherapists, Band 8b**

Job descriptions need to specify the complexity of the post by describing the highly specialist skills required in a particular clinical area e.g. an adult mental health service, covering a specific geographical area, giving specialist training and supervision to other professional disciplines. Band 8b post holders can be expected to:

- take responsibility for a section of the service or department delegated to them *or* for identifying service priorities and initiating developments within the section
- take on distance supervisory responsibility outside their clinical setting, though they must be able to offer effective support and guidance
- provide, develop and manage highly specialist interventions
- participate in the organisation of the agency/health trust, contributing to relevant decision-taking and making recommendations
- implement policy for their own work area and

- propose service changes and policy
- offer supervision to systemic psychotherapy trainees on qualifying courses, qualified less-experienced same-model psychotherapists, and also other qualified multi-disciplined professionals e.g. by live supervision / organising family therapy teams using a one-way screen
  - have trainees on a clinical placement and other professionals wanting systemic experience e.g. honoraria agreements.
  - complete external academic presentations.

### **5. Consultant Systemic Psychotherapists, Band 8c**

5.1 Systemic psychotherapists Band 8c are responsible for service development and have a professional managerial role within a service. They provide professional leadership and may hold management responsibility for:

- ensuring clinical supervision of staff takes place, including qualified and multi-disciplinary/multi-agency teams, according to AFT guidelines. Band 8c postholders have supervisory qualifications or equivalent
- systemic training
- recruitment /professional development
- planning and development of the systemic psychotherapy service e.g. drawing up bids for future development and implementation of successful bids
- line management of those below Band 8c
- participation in the general management group
- audit and research.

5.2 Consultants are responsible for service development and have a professional managerial role, which may include responsibility for a budget. They are responsible for ensuring clinical supervision occurs and for clinical caseload planning and development of the systemic psychotherapy service.

5.3 Alternatively, the major responsibility of the post is to run an AFT-accredited qualifying course in family therapy.

### **6. Consultant Systemic Psychotherapists / Leads / Heads of Specialisms, Band 8d**

Consultants are expected to have overall responsibility for systemic psychotherapy services over a larger geographical area or across a range of services. They have responsibility for strategic planning, implementation and review.

### **7. Consultant Systemic Psychotherapists / Heads of Service / Teachers, Band 9**

The most experienced group of senior clinicians who are able to undertake all of the above. They

are expected to:

- manage multi-specialist services and advise directors and senior managers on strategic and policy development
- share responsibilities for the operational and strategic development of services at all levels throughout the organisation as part of executive management
- functions as professional head for clinical workers within the organisation.

7.2 The most experienced senior clinicians demonstrate the capacity to undertake all of the above. Additionally, they manage multi-specialist services and advise directors and senior managers on strategy, planning and development. They hold responsibilities for the operational and strategic development of services at all levels of the organisation as part of executive management and/or are recognised for an exceptionally distinguished contribution they are continuing to make to the field of systemic psychotherapy.

### **GRIEVANCE**

Individual members of staff may pursue any personal grievances relating to decisions on their allocation to the above bands with the relevant employing authorities.

### **CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

It is a requirement of continuing registration as a systemic psychotherapist with UKCP, that a registrant keep up-to-date with their professional knowledge and skills. In common with other professions, this involves a variety of learning experiences over the course of each year, principally, but not exclusively, by attendance at academic or clinical training events, ranging from an hour to one or more days.

Because of the requirement of ongoing CPD to maintain registration, and the expectation in these terms and conditions that systemic psychotherapists will be, and continue to be, registered, it follows that maintaining CPD is a necessary activity for all qualified psychotherapists. The precise amount and nature of CPD to be achieved over a given period of time is set out by UKCP, and the monitoring of this in reality for each registrant is devolved to the body which supports registration, in most cases AFT, via the Registration Committee.

It is therefore essential that staff are enabled by their employing body to gain the necessary CPD by the provision of:

- a. direct provision of suitable training relevant to systemic training.
- b. funding support to attend training outside the employing organisation
- c. paid time off to pursue relevant training and professional events.

This is ultimately to the mutual benefit of the employee, the employing body and service users.

### **TEACHING**

The profession is dependant on the input of experienced clinicians who can provide training to ensure that trainees, newly qualified systemic psychotherapists and staff from different professional groups are able to apply systemic concepts to their practice within a variety of clinical settings. Training is essential to ensure that members of the profession are ethical practitioners who are able to critique their practice and draw on theory and research in their clinical work. Teaching is of mutual benefit to the trainee, the clinician and the profession as a whole in that it provides the opportunity for staff to continually evaluate their practice. From an agency perspective, teaching also plays a role in raising the profile of the service. There is an expectation that all systemic psychotherapists will be actively involved in transmitting skills and professional expertise to others. This includes providing training and supervision to members of the discipline and to other professionals, dependant on the level of experience.

### **SUPERVISION AND CONSULTATION**

Clear distinctions need to be made between supervision that includes clinical and/or managerial accountability, and that which does not. Supervision is a skill that can, though not always, confer responsibility and accountability. Different levels of responsibility require different levels of skill and experience that should be reflected in the banding. Supervision may be of systemic psychotherapist trainees and qualified systemic psychotherapist or clinicians from other disciplines. The supervision may involve one or more clinicians seeing a 'live family' and leading a group of trainees/clinicians, who are 'behind the screen'. It may be retrospective, reflecting on the process to obtain post-session understanding. The supervisor may only provide case-by-case supervision without accountability, that may more accurately be described as consultation; or be responsible for an individual's caseload, which includes caseload management and clinical accountability; or at the highest level have line management with overall accountability and responsibility for professional practice and development.

### **MANAGEMENT TRAINING**

Short or long training courses relevant to the development of management skills may become appropriate in a systemic psychotherapy career pathway, dependent on the demands of posts that are occupied at more senior grades. These

demands may require people management skills, resources management skills, or both. Some management training may become relevant at Band 8b, since Highly Specialist Systemic Psychotherapists are expected to make a contribution to the organisation and development processes within their agency.

### **RESEARCH AND AUDIT**

A research-based approach is essential for objective monitoring of clinical efficacy and evaluation of service provision. It is therefore important that family therapists have opportunities to undertake audit and participate in, as well as initiate, research to monitor the effectiveness of their interventions.

There is much to be learned about how to conduct family therapy and other psychotherapies effectively, and appropriate research and scholarship are crucial to the development of more effective services. Advancement of knowledge and clinical practice in the field are necessary in order to make a contribution to evidence-based practice. Family therapists should make every effort to undertake such work and to communicate their theoretical knowledge and empirical findings.

### **PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES**

Systemic psychotherapists are encouraged to participate in the activities of the professional association. AFT approves and accredits professional training courses, provides advice and guidance with respect to professional ethics, promotes and encourages research, organises conferences and training events and speaks on behalf of the profession in many forums. It provides information, advice and assistance regarding professional matters not only to its members but also to employers. The National Assessor service, for example, is provided by a panel of experienced systemic psychotherapists in designated posts who assist employers with the recruitment process and the implementation of these terms and conditions. As well as national activities, there are many active local branches. Systemic psychotherapists may therefore be involved in the work of their local branch and/ or the work of national committees.

**Supervision:** for the first three years post-qualification, systemic psychotherapists must have supervision for a minimum of 1.5 hours per month. This would normally be face-to-face and from a supervisor who is registered with the Family Couple Sexual Systemic Therapy (FCSST) Section of the UKCP. Supervision with someone who has achieved approved supervisor status with AFT or another approved agency is particularly recommended. After three years of post-qualified

practice, systemic psychotherapists are required to undertake a minimum of 12 hours supervision per year.

**Attendance at workshops and other training events:** in accordance with the current UKCP requirements. This training must involve attending a conference or participating in a workshop or other specific training event. Systemic psychotherapists should be able to demonstrate the relevance of this training to their practice and development.

**Keeping up to date:** there is an expectation that all systemic psychotherapists, as professional people, will keep up-to-date with current developments in the field. Systemic psychotherapists may wish to contribute directly to the work of AFT or other related organisations through membership of committees.

**Further training:** AFT recognises that individuals develop in a variety of ways. Some systemic psychotherapists may wish to undertake further training in a different psychotherapy modality in order to enrich their work by broadening their practice.

**Annual re-registration:** each year systemic psychotherapists are required to register with the FCSST section of the UKCP. This requires members to complete a questionnaire detailing the extent of their practice, their current arrangements for supervision and their professional development during the year. Every three years a registered systemic psychotherapist will also be expected to have a CRB police check.

#### **KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS FRAMEWORK**

Please see AFT's Guidance on Knowledge and Skills Framework (KSF), though these are not prescriptive. Systemic psychotherapists in consultation with their managers can choose to place themselves on a higher level than that suggested but must remember that they have to provide evidence at their PDR that they are meeting all the indicators: 'The KSF outline should provide a fair and objective framework on which to base review and development for all staff'. A KSF

outline must be produced against the job description and post, and as job descriptions vary, different dimensions and levels may be required.

#### **ANNUAL LEAVE**

Systemic psychotherapists employed full-time in the NHS have the following entitlement to annual leave:

Length of service	Annual Leave	Public Holidays
On appointment	27 days	8 days
After five years	29 days	8 days
After 10 years	33 days	8 days

Those employees who go on to train as systemic psychotherapist from existing posts within the NHS will be entitled to their leave entitlement prior to training unless the annual leave entitlement as a newly qualified trained systemic psychotherapist is greater than their existing leave entitlement.

#### **HOURS OF WORK**

Standard full-time hours for all will be 37.5 hours per week.

#### **TRAVEL EXPENSES**

It will be a condition of employment that travel expenses incurred in relation to the post-holder's duties will be reimbursed.

#### **STUDY LEAVE**

UKCP-registered systemic psychotherapists are required to have adequate study leave for continuing professional development. See AFT's Continuing Professional Development Policy (April, 2006).

#### **OTHER RESOURCES**

Employers are expected to provide the facilities and resources for the live supervision requirements of systemic psychotherapists. Assessors will advise when systemic psychotherapist posts are established. Employers are expected to ensure that appropriate resources are available when posts are established. Assessors will advise employers.

*The Chair of the Professional Affairs Committee (PAC) welcomes general feedback and suggestions on Information Sheets and can be contacted via Sue Kennedy, AFT Administrative Secretary, 7 Executive Suite, St James Court, Wilderspool Causeway, Warrington WA4 6PS. Tel: 01925 444414 Email: s.kennedy@aft.org.uk. AFT is a company limited by guarantee. Registered in England, No. 3018026. Registered Charity No. 1063639. Registered office is the administrative office, as above.*