

Play therapist

Play therapists help children to make sense of difficult life experiences or complex psychological issues through play.

Salary: £25,000 to £41,000 average per year

Hours: Variable per week

1. [Entry requirements](#)
 2. [Skills required](#)
 3. [What you'll do](#)
 4. [Salary](#)
 5. [Working hours, patterns and environment](#)
 6. [Career path and progression](#)
-

1. Entry requirements

You'll usually need a degree and background in teaching, psychotherapy, social services or children's healthcare.

Many people move into play therapy as a second career, after working extensively with children.

Many employers will prefer you to have an approved postgraduate qualification and registration with the [British Association of Play Therapists](#) (BAPT) or [Play Therapy UK](#) (PTUK).

You'll need clearance from the [Disclosure and Barring Service](#) (DBS).

2. Skills required

You'll need:

- empathy and an open and friendly manner
- the ability to gain the trust of children
- resilience and insight for working with children in emotional distress
- good spoken and written communication skills
- a broad knowledge of child development
- a good understanding of the different ways children communicate their feelings
- the ability to work with difficult behaviour or facts, without making judgements
- a good understanding of issues surrounding confidentiality

3. What you'll do

You'll usually work with children aged between 3 and 11 on a one-to-one basis, or in groups of up to 6 children.

You'll use play as a way for children to communicate and express themselves.

You'll work with children experiencing severe emotional pain and distress caused by issues like abuse, domestic violence and family breakdown.

Your day-to-day duties might include:

- assessing the child's needs
- running therapy sessions at a regular time and place
- making use of creative arts, like drawing, clay, sand, movement, music and therapeutic storytelling
- communicating with children and making a connection between the signs, symbols and actions the child creates through play
- promoting positive change in the child by helping them to help themselves

4. Salary

Starter: £25,000

Experienced: Up to £31,000

Highly Experienced: Up to £41,000

These figures are a guide.

5. Working hours, patterns and environment

Many jobs within play therapy are offered on a part-time basis, and you may need to work with more than one organisation or work within another profession in order to achieve full-time hours.

You'll mainly work indoors, in a specially equipped playroom or a child's home or school.

You'll work in a number of different settings during your working week, like social services and education departments, child mental health services, family centres, and with voluntary services like Barnardos and the NSPCC.

6. Career path and progression

With experience and further training, you could supervise less experienced therapists, and provide a consultation service to professionals in the community.

You could also move into training, lecturing or clinical supervision.

Related careers

You may be interested in:

- [Children's nurse](#)
- [Music therapist](#)
- [Nursery worker](#)
- [Playworker](#)