



Halton Educational Psychology Service Guide

Applying psychology to promote the achievements and well-being of children and young people in Halton.

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Introduction

This guide has been produced to provide information about the Halton Educational Psychology Service within the Inclusion Service of the Local Authority

The guide has been put together to help promote better understanding of the range and diversity of activities in which psychologists become involved. The psychology team is a service with statutory responsibilities related to children with Additional Learning Special Educational (SEN), with partners in education, health, social care and the voluntary sector. Our aim is to promote the inclusion and well-being of all children and young people and especially those who are vulnerable because of special educational needs, challenging circumstances.

The work of the team can be at a number of levels including working with individual children and their families as well as working with other teams and organisations who are supporting children's health and development and providing education and care.

In most cases, psychologists will be working with you to help address issues and problems that are complex. In doing so, psychologists will be drawing on their knowledge and experience of child development which includes aspects of learning, language, behaviour and social skills, relationships and self-esteem. They aim to support you to promote positive interactions between children and young people and the adults who teach and support them. They also aim to provide a supportive role to parents and carers.

It is hoped that you will find the following pages useful in determining the best ways to work with our service to achieve positive outcomes.

“working with you to help tackle problems which are complex”

Who we are

Staff List

The list of staff and their current roles is at the back of this guide. We will send you an updated list whenever there are changes.

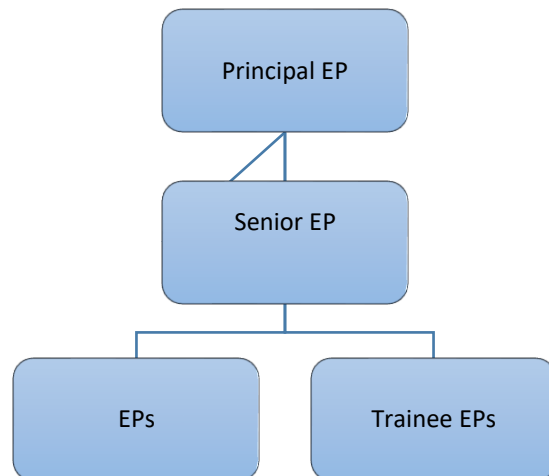
How the team is organised

The Educational Psychology Team is one of the support services within the Inclusion Service of the Local Authority.

It consists of a team of Educational Psychologists (EPs) whose current contact details are given at the back of the guide.

All EPs are responsible for arranging the delivery of service to a number of schools. In addition:

- The Principal EP manages the Halton EP service.
- The Senior EP is part of the senior Management team.
- Some Educational Psychologists (EPs) have specialist interests. They include, Early Years, Speech, Language and Communication (including Autism), Behaviour, Cognition & Learning, Emotional health and mental well-being and Children in Care. The EPs provide a strategic lead in their given specialism.
- We frequently have Trainee EPs join the service as part of their doctoral training. They work as a full member of the service and are closely supervised by qualified EPs.



Core beliefs and values

As a group of professionals we are committed to seeking new ideas and ways of working to enhance the opportunities available to vulnerable groups of children and young people.

Core values

We believe:

- In effective inclusion
- In the achievement of all pupils
- In the rights of the child and of parents as adults within a local community
- That change is always possible
- In continuing to develop as individuals and as a team
- In applying psychology to promote the development and education of children and young people
- In basing our working practices on research evidence wherever possible
- In open communication
- In collaborative problem solving
- In high professional standards

Core priorities

- Supporting and challenging to promote equality and inclusion
- Supporting early intervention to promote all aspects of child development
- Working closely and collaboratively with other agencies to support children, school staff and parents/carers
- Working effectively with parents and carers
- Contributing to positive teaching, learning and care environments
- Applying effective models of psychology to promote positive change and to raise standards of achievement and well-being
- A focus on consultation, which is the application of researched and evaluated problem solving models

Skills of an Educational Psychologist

All EPs in the Service are registered with the Health Care Professions Council (HCPC).

They have:

- A degree in Psychology.
- Specialist training in Educational Psychology

We work according to strict ethical principles set out by the British Psychological Society and HCPC. Our code of ethics informs all of our working practices.

EPs are applied psychologists who have training, skills and experience in:

- Learning, development and behaviour of children and young people aged 0-25
- SEN and the associated legislation;
- Consultation and associated problem solving approaches and psychological theory;
- Assessment, interviewing and review;
- Person centred planning;
- Policy development;
- In-service training for teachers and other professionals;
- Working collaboratively with other professionals;
- Research, evaluation and project work;
- Personal construct work and solution focused approaches to supporting children;
- Counselling skills and therapeutic interventions.

What our role is

Our aim as EPs is to bring about positive change for children and young people where there are concerns about their learning, behaviour or emotional well-being. We do this by working with the people who know children best – their families, their teachers and other professionals who are involved.

Much of our work is in schools but we also work in other settings and with other agencies such as the SEN team, EHC coordinators, specialist teachers, Portage Team, Early Years Team, Speech, Language and Communication Service, Behaviour and Attendance Team, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, etc.

- The EP works in the interest of children and young people;
- EPs work with children and young people between the ages of 0-25 who are resident in Halton;
- EPs have a wide variety of responsibilities which arise from legislation including Halton's Strategic Priorities, Halton Children's Trust Priorities, the Local Authority's Development Plan and Codes of Professional Ethics. This includes supporting the Local Authority in meeting their statutory responsibilities for children and young people with SEN as detailed within the Children and Families act 2014 and the SEND code.

EP Work

EPs work with groups of educational settings including Primary schools, Secondary Schools, special provision and early years settings.

EP support is allocated to schools using a time allocation process based on numbers of pupils on roll, measures of social disadvantage, number of children on the code of practice, CiC, exclusions, attendance, number of children with Enhanced provision, number of children with plans and statements and the schools OFSTED grade. These are compared to national averages and RAG rated then compared to local knowledge and reviewed. This process is not fixed and will be reviewed regularly.

The EP core priorities in working with schools consultatively are:

- To undertake statutory work on behalf of the Local Authority
- To advise schools on the effective use of resources for pupils with SEND
- To advise on interventions for vulnerable pupils- those with the most exceptional needs, Children Looked After and those at risk of exclusion
- To support inclusive placements
- To support children with significant, long term social and emotional difficulties;
- To support whole school developments

To form part of the graduated response to needs as set out in the SEN code of Practice 2015

We apply models of psychology to bring about change and to remove barriers to learning and progress. In order to achieve this EPs work at 3 levels with schools – whole school, classroom and individual child level.

Educational Psychologists:

- Use a systems approach
- Support the development of school based solutions
- Promote an assessment through interventions model
- Support the school in conducting their own action based assessment
- Support in solving problems and seeking solutions
- Advise on the provision that needs to be in place to support a child's needs – we do not make decisions about placement or whether pupils will get extra help.
- Focus our efforts on supporting the adults who work directly with the child
- Work with children in their familiar learning context as we recognise that behaviour is an interaction between the context and the individual
- Only work with children when parents have given their informed written consent

EP Work

We believe in an interactive model that views problems and solutions arising from the interaction between children and their learning abilities and styles, the environments in which they live and learn, the curriculum opportunities they are provided with and the expectations of peers, school staff and families. Ways of addressing difficulties may lie in adjusting the environment, teaching and other factors in such a way as to remove any obstacles to successful learning and progress.

Whole school level

- Provision of whole school training on a broad range of topics relating to achievement and inclusion.
- Supporting the management of organisational change
- Supporting self-evaluation and school improvement
- Carrying out development work
- Being involved in school based projects and action research to enhance inclusion and equal opportunities
- Supporting the development and evaluation of policies and practice
- Supporting work with parents and carers

An EP undertook an action research project with a group of teachers in a high school within their patch. This work focussed on emotional health and wellbeing of teaching staff. The action research aim was to identify changes and actions that could be facilitated within a collaborative setting.

Classroom level

- Working with group of pupils to set up group based interventions
- Working with staff to set up group based interventions such as coaching staff support groups and carer group support
- Supporting professional development
- Guidance and advice on the management of classroom behaviour
- Guidance and advice on differentiating the curriculum for a range of needs

EP Work

An EP worked with staff to develop attention and listening skills in small group work. This involved working with the staff to develop their understanding and expertise in delivering the curriculum in this way using a variety of interventions underpinned by psychological principles in attention and listening.

Individual child level

- Consultation with school staff and parents around identified concerns
- Classroom observation focusing on interaction with the learning environment and context
- Working with the child or young person to ascertain their views, and assess and advise on their needs at SEN support and statutory level
- Support with the development implementation and review of individual SEN support plans and individual behaviour plans, pastoral support plans etc.
- Attending multi-agency meetings e.g. Annual reviews, transition planning.

Before we are consulted about an individual child we must have written parental consent. A copy of our information booklet for parents is included with this guide. We listen to the views of children and young people and include them in agreeing how things can change. A copy of our information booklet for young people is included with this guide.

An EP worked with a child dealing with emotionally based school refusal. Working using a narrative therapeutic technique, the Psychologist and the child have re-authored the child's story to include strengths in tackling the problem. This was then shared with those key workers in the setting to enable a successful period of time back in to the school setting.

EP Work

Early Years Work

EPs also work with early years in maintained and non-maintained settings including

- Assessing and advising on young children's developmental needs
- Advising regarding school placement and transition
- Supporting the staff in settings to create change

The EP team is developing working with Early Years settings within Halton through the use of group consultation. This is to support setting staff creating positive change for the children who attend...

Local Authority Work

- Providing statutory psychological advice within agreed time-scales as part of the EHC process
- Monitoring the progress of pupils with EHC plans and or statements at key transfer points including those placed out of county
- Contributing to local authority support for school improvement
- Contributing to local authority programme of professional development for school staff
- Contributing to strategic development work in the local authority
- Key members of the local authority's critical incident response team

EPs in Halton have a number of training packages for school staff. These can be around a range of issues and can be bespoke. They address topics such as Emotional health and wellbeing, ADHD, ASD, SEN, Specific Learning difficulties, Speech, Language and Communication and attachment. This is not an exhaustive list and training in schools appears to be well received. Training aims to support positive change and capacity building.

How we work

The EP Service work in line with the Halton Children's Trust Priorities(HCTP)

Halton Children trust priorities are based on:

"communities which are able to support the development and learning of children and young people so they grow up feeling safe, secure, happy and healthy, ready to be Halton's present and Halton's future"

They aim to do this by focussing on three key priorities:

- Early intervention – ensuring families who need support get it at the right time or problems can be harder to sort out
- Achievement and ambition – we want our young people to do as well as others in the country on their exams and assessments so that they can achieve the education, training and jobs they want.
- Healthy and safe – we want children and young people to feel healthy and safe in their homes and in their communities. We want children and young people to be able to keep themselves safe and healthy.

(Source: Halton Children & Young People plan 2019-20)

The EP Service places a major emphasis on early intervention and on increasing the capacity of schools to deliver **good outcomes for all pupils.**

Consultation:

Consultation allows EPs to support schools in meeting the needs of pupils at earlier stages of the Code of Practice and marks a shift away from the traditional model of individual assessment with its emphasis on cognitive ability testing

Consultation is a collaborative solution focused approach which allows joint exploration of school based problems to bring about change. EPs consult with schools about individual pupils, classes or groups and on wider organisational issues.

In supporting early intervention much of our initial work involves consulting with key adults such as school and early years setting staff. The views of parents/carers, pupils and others inform this consultation process. This enables EPs to actively engage the ideas and views of the key adults who are supporting work around the child or young person as well as the pupil to work jointly on developing strategies and interventions which are relevant to the classroom context.

Consultation is a collaborative, preventative process where discussion is based on the exploration of a concern, strategies that have already been tried and their effectiveness and planning a way forward. It recognises that people are engaged in a constant process of learning and making sense of their

experience and assumes that all involved can contribute in terms of their own expertise. It differs from referral because the responsibility for action and control over who and what is discussed remains clearly with the persons requesting the consultation.

Consultation is therefore about:

- Problem solving
- Devising interventions together and evaluating them as part of a plan – do – review cycle

Group Consultation

The EP service also deliver service through the use of group consultation. This is where settings or schools are clustered and meet together with the EP to discuss cases and issues. This method enhances links between settings and schools, creates an excellent platform for CPD and helps build capacity. It is efficient as a method of delivery and allows schools a greater access to the service.

Benefits include:

- Early intervention and preventative strategies
- Helps person who is expressing concerns
- Focuses on factors that can be changed
- Recognises teacher knowledge and experience and skills
- Moves away from a within child focus to consider the concerns as part of a context
- Teachers report greater confidence in future problem solving.

The time required for a consultation meeting will depend upon the focus of the concern and the objectives for the meeting and is negotiated at the time the meeting is agreed. It would usually last up to an hour.

Traded work

The service operates on a partially traded model. Schools can buy back more of our time signing up to a service level agreement. This is capacity dependent and operates currently on a first come first served basis.

Evaluating our work

We are currently working on developing ways of evaluating the impact of the work that we do.

This includes:

- Asking service users about what works best for them and areas for improvement;
- Looking at specific evaluation methods such as Appreciative Inquiry and COMOIRA where this is appropriate.
- Questionnaires to parents about their views on EP involvement;
- Talking with young people about how the service they received could be improved.
- Developing and trialling impact measures for use following training.
- Using a Solution focussed brief therapy scaling document after every consultation

SOME FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

- *Who attends a consultation?*

We consult with whoever holds the concern. Often but not exclusively this is the class teacher but it can involve the SENCo, the head and or TA's and parents. Sometimes we may consult directly with young people. Consultation is a problem solving conversation where solutions to complex problems are sought. For this reason, decisions on who attends consultation are made on a case by case basis and are matched to the presenting need and situation.

- *How long does an assessment take?*

We prefer to work in line with a graduated approach. To this end, we will often have involvement over a long period of time and assessment will make part of that process. We currently believe that it take 5 sessions (2.5 days) to complete an EHC assessment, however this is not a hard and fast rule and some EHC's, depending on the complexity, may take longer.

- *We haven't got the consent forms signed but the parent has verbally agreed to the consultation, can it still go ahead today?*

We are unable to make any records without parental consent. As part of the consultation process, you should have completed a pre consultation request form. To complete this ready for consultation, you will have had to speak with parents to inform them of what is about to happen. As part of the process, you would have already have met with parents to discuss and review the outcomes of any plans you have made through adopting a graduated approach to need. It is therefore unlikely that you will not have been able to get signed consent. In the event that the paperwork has not been returned, but you are confident that has been completed, we can complete a consultation, however without further evidence of consent any records created would be destroyed.

- *Parents won't agree to EP involvement but we are really struggling and need support to help their child, what can we do?*

You can discuss any issue with us on a no named, no consent basis. No records will be made as we have no permission to create a file and hold records. Therefore these consultations need to be anonymous. We aim to support you at school and we may offer a point of contact for a parent if they are resistant.

- *We only have a small allocation of time but high needs -what do we do?*

The service is partially traded. It is capacity dependent but there is the opportunity to buy back service at the beginning of the academic year. This is currently allocated on a first

come first served basis. If you have a need that is greater but you have not bought back service, please contact the Principal Educational Psychologist who can discuss with you what is possible within the capacity of the team to meet your needs.

- *The EP wants to consult about a child who is close to permanent exclusion but we had prioritised other children for consultation, what happens?*

If a child is at the point of permanent exclusion, their needs are such that they should already be on a fully evidenced graduated approach and be at the top of the list of priority for schools and settings. Often these young people are highly vulnerable and the safest place for them is in school. It is important that permanent exclusions are kept to an absolute minimum. Using the Educational Psychology service to support you in school is one way of ensuring inclusive practice.

- *A new pupil has started at our school and we urgently need EP support but have used all our allocated time -what can we do?*

We recognise that sometimes things happen and with the best laid plans, events mean we have to make changes. In the event of requiring further support outside of your allocated time, please contact the Principal Educational Psychologist. This is to ensure that following time allocations are adjusted according to need AND it allows the service to collect hard evidence regarding the need in schools compared to capacity.

- *We are not able to release teachers from class for consultation, is it ok to have them with the class TA instead?*

We really need to consult with the person who holds the concern and with the person who holds the responsibility for teaching and learning within the classroom. It is important therefore to release teachers to be able to consult about issues they face in their classrooms. The most effective use of our time is to work with those who create the context. This often means that a one hour consultation (where a teacher works with us in consultation for 45 minutes) in a full teaching week can mean the difference to a successful half term teaching a variety of children with and without SEN. Often in consultation, strategies devised benefit many children in a classroom, so the benefits of covering a class room for 45 minutes outweigh the issue of finding cover for 45 minutes. We do aim to be as helpful as possible and try to fit in with you as a school when it is easiest to release staff for consultation to take place.

- *A SENCo from a neighbouring school wants to attend our EP consultation meetings and I attend theirs, is this ok?*

This is fine if all parties are in agreement, Parents would need to be fully aware that other professionals from neighbouring schools are also present and there needs to be a clear rationale as to why it is helpful to create these links. We are always working to apply psychology to create positive change. Therefore understand that joint working and

supportive networks can facilitate and support change and we are happy to work in this way if it thought helpful.



Contact information:

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