

EPs will be taking industrial action (striking) this winter. Why?

Every year, tens of thousands of children and young people and their families are helped by an educational psychologist (EP).

EPs work with education professionals in nurseries, schools and other settings and with colleagues in youth justice and social care to help children overcome mental health issues like self-harm and anxiety and barriers to learning such as attention difficulties and dyslexia.

EPs also work with children and young people directly, offering therapeutic support for those who can't find help through CAMHS and specialist support for care experienced children and their carers.

EPs provide critical incident support when there has been a traumatic event in the community – it was EPs who were there after the Manchester Arena bombing and the Grenfell Tower fire.

EPs support young people up to the age of 25 to manage college, work experience, even independent or supported living.

And EPs help thousands of families with parenting advice and training as well as providing statutory assessments for Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) to unlock support for children in school.

Despite the vital services and support provided by EPs, local authorities in England and Wales are not investing in the profession and are now facing widespread recruitment and retention problems.

Over the past 13 years, EPs' pay has fallen by 17% compared to where pay should have been, had it kept up with inflation.

To afford their bills, EPs are moving to the private sector or leaving the profession altogether – leaving nearly 9 in 10 (88%) local authorities struggling to recruit EPs.

Nearly every (96%) local authority says the shortages are affecting children and young people.

Rocketing EP workload means children and young people are waiting far too long to be seen by a professional – or worse, do not get to see an EP at all.

Department for Education (DfE) figures from June 2023 show almost half of EHCPs in England are issued late – lengthening children and young people's distress and leading to an increased need for a plan.

Our profession is in crisis. EPs are trained over three years to doctoral level and are qualified to take on high levels of responsibility, but they're working unacceptable hours to help children, young people and their families to not only survive but thrive in the education system. They are burning out.

Many EPs will be taking industrial action in 135 local authorities in England and Wales – to protect their colleagues, their services and, most importantly, to protect your children.

In the short term, the industrial action may mean further delays in seeing an EP. But EPs are taking action with a view to the long term – to make sure those waits become a thing of the past so that in the future your children will have access to the specialist support that EPs offer, when they need it.

