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The role of educational psychologists in Wales

Information on the role of educational psychologists and the services they can provide.

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About this document

This document provides information about the role of educational psychologists and their contribution to supporting the education and wellbeing of children and young people, their families, and communities in Wales. It is for information only and is aimed at anyone with an interest in the work of educational psychologists in Wales.

It has been produced in the context of legislative changes relating to the **Additional Learning Needs and Educational Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018** (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2018/2/contents>), as well as the **Curriculum for Wales** (<https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales>), and aims to provide a greater understanding of the essential contribution that educational psychologists make within the education system in Wales.

It has been written in partnership with the Association of Educational Psychologists (AEP), which is the trade union and professional association for educational psychologists in the United Kingdom.

The role of the educational psychologist

Educational psychologists support schools and the local authority to improve all children's and young people's experiences of learning. This will include support for wellbeing, emotional and social development, and to ensure all children and young people make progress with learning and achievement.

The focus of an educational psychologist's work is to share knowledge of psychology and child development to identify any barriers to learning and promote inclusive approaches that can help achieve the best possible outcomes for all children and young people.

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Professional requirements for educational psychologists

‘Educational psychologist’ is a protected title, and all educational psychologists will have:

- specialist graduate and postgraduate qualifications in applying psychology in education (Masters or Doctorate in educational psychology)
- knowledge of current education systems and practice in Wales
- detailed understanding of child development and additional learning needs (ALN)
- substantial experience working with children and young people
- experience in undertaking research and in delivering training and other activities to develop the skills of others

Educational psychologists receive continuing professional development (CPD) to ensure that they remain at the forefront of practice and receive regular professional or clinical supervision. They are registered with the **Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC)** (<https://www.hcpc-uk.org/>). The HCPC is a regulatory body which ensures registrants adhere to the highest professional standards.

Who educational psychologists work with

The majority of educational psychologists in Wales are employed by local authorities. Every local authority has an educational psychology service (EPS) but there are variations in service delivery to meet local needs.

Educational psychologists work across all ages up to 25, either at group or individual levels, and have extensive training and experience to support all aspects of children and young people’s development. They work with local authority officers, professionals from health and social services, specialist

teaching colleagues, pre-school settings, schools, families, children and young people who may experience barriers to learning and wellbeing.

They work in a wide range of areas including:

- cognition and learning
- language development and communication difficulties
- developmental difficulties
- sensory and physical impairments
- social and emotional development
- wellbeing and resilience
- behaviour and mental health needs
- loss and bereavement
- attachment and relationships

How educational psychologists work

Educational psychologists work in a person-centred way in partnership with parents, carers, families and others. They promote a holistic and inclusive approach to support the teaching, parenting and development of children and young people. They listen to and promote the voice of the children and young people. They promote psychology within wider systems such as local authorities, community groups and schools, as well as working to support individuals and their families.

Educational psychologists are trained to use their knowledge of psychology and child development through:

- use of consultation to respond to school requests for support and advice
- promotion of reflection and formulations aimed at working towards developing solutions that address concerns
- undertaking psychological interventions, planning intervention and support

programmes and undertaking observations of children and young people

- undertaking a wide range of assessments, working directly with children and young people to assess their strengths and challenges
- ensuring that children and young people's views are gathered using a range of person-centred practices (PCP)
- developing and delivering training on a range of topics for teachers, parents, carers and other professionals
- supporting the development of inclusive learning practices as part of wider school improvement
- designing and undertaking action research and evaluations that help to develop and inform educational practice and that also lead or contribute to the development of local authority policy and practice supporting children and young people
- supporting communities by responding to critical incidents and sad events
- contribute to children and young people's reviews and multi-agency meetings providing a psychological perspective
- provide psychological advice for the purpose of a tribunal

If direct involvement with children is requested, then parent or carer consent would be obtained. Young people can give consent for themselves, depending on their level of understanding or their 'capacity to consent'.

The unique contribution of the educational psychologist

Educational psychologists collaborate with children, young people, families and other stakeholders, using psychology to develop formulations and hypotheses that help to make sense of the systems within which children and young people live and learn. From these formulations, they can offer support and guidance to stakeholders to help them create positive change for the child or young person. As part of this support, they may also offer direct work, for example assessment or therapeutic interventions.

Educational psychologists are trained:

- in critically employing a broad range of psychological theories and frameworks in a way that is effective to the particular situation they find themselves working in, ensuring flexibility of thought and a bespoke, dynamic way of working
- in the use of psychology through consultation with children, young people, parents, carers, teachers, assistants, and other professionals and stakeholders, facilitating the thinking of others to help collaboratively identify and solve problems
- to think in a critical, analytical and evidence-based way about the systems and practices present in schools and wider society, they may act as a 'critical friend', bringing in new perspectives or ways of working based on either a close interrogation of the literature or the introduction of an alternative set of assumptions or psychological school of thought
- in 'systems thinking', collaborating with leaders in institutions such as schools, local government and national government to consider how policy, organisational structure and staff training can lead to whole institution change that can benefit children and young people

The values and principles of educational psychologists

While educational psychologists find themselves working within a broad range of situations and contexts, they adhere to a set of general values and principles that help guide and anchor practice.

These include the following:

- Being person-centred, ensuring that everything is done for the benefit of the child or young person.
- Taking a holistic approach that considers not only the child or young person's learning and cognition needs, but also their communication, mental

health and physical needs and how all these factors interact with each other.

- Considering the system within which the child or young person lives and learns and how it influences their subjective experiences.
- Adopting an approach that emphasises the importance of positive, loving and nurturing relationships as the foundation for positive outcomes for children and young people.

Work in the local authority and the community

Work in the local authority

Within the local authority, educational psychologists respond flexibly to local authority priorities and so undertake a wide range of duties which can include the following.

Strategic development

- Contributing to the development of corporate plans and local authority's single integrated plan, reporting to council and local authority scrutiny committees, when required.
- Advising at a strategic level around attendance and wellbeing needs.
- Undertaking work developing ALN provision at a strategic level.
- Advising on some school admissions, representing the local authority in various forums.
- Helping the local authority to support schools and other services in responding to post-inspection action plans, including undertaking targeted work with schools that have been identified as needing support.
- Working with advisory and inspectorial bodies to facilitate school improvement.

- Determining entry and exit criteria for provision.

Policy and protocol development

- Developing policy and practice in a wide range of areas, including critical incident response, local authority anti-bullying action plans, wellbeing, domestic abuse, transgender guidance, emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA), managed moves.

Regional initiatives

- Working with other local authorities to organise regionally consistent responses.

Training

- Developing and delivering a range of local and regional training.
- Consulting and advising around school governor management and training.

Coaching, supervision, management

- Managing and developing children and young people's counselling services.
- Supervising and coaching trainee educational psychologists, assistant educational psychologists and other professionals working within the local authority.
- Supervising and managing other teams.

Multi-agency work

- Psychological interventions with families to support children and young people with complex needs.
- Safeguarding work, including training.
- Working with the children and young people's disability teams.
- Supporting children looked after and the children looked after teams.
- Working with fostering and adoption services to support children and young people.
- Consultations and partnership working with social workers to support children and young people with complex needs, including placement and child protection needs.
- Working with other departments and outside agencies.

Statutory processes (relating to the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 (ALNET Act))

The **Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018** (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2018/2/contents/enacted>) is an important piece of legislation that redefines the way in which children and young people with additional learning needs (ALN) are supported in the education system. The **Additional Learning Needs Code for Wales 202** (<https://www.gov.wales/additional-learning-needs-code>)¹ contains statutory guidance on the ALNET Act. Together, the ALNET Act, regulations made under the ALNET Act and the ALN Code provide the legal framework for ALN in Wales.

Depending on the circumstances, a school or college can seek advice from an educational psychologist if they feel it would be relevant. Local authorities must consider whether to seek advice from an educational psychologist when they decide if a child or young person has ALN and when preparing an individual development plan (IDP).

Educational psychologists will provide a response reflecting the level and stage of involvement that is requested and required and in line with local authority guidance. This is always in collaboration with parents, carers, the school and other key adults or agencies. However, it is recognised that in some more complex cases, psychological advice may be needed more immediately, in direct response to a sudden critical situation, rather than an emerging need.

An educational psychologist role within the ALNET Act may include:

- participation in the development of individual development plans (IDPs)
- attending person-centred reviews where appropriate
- supporting the development of ALN policy and process as a response to the ALN Code
- providing evidence for mediation and tribunals
- advising on entry to education, planning and pre-school assessments

Work in the community

Within the community, educational psychologists work with the following:

- Local health boards
 - Joint working with specialist Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).
 - Inputting to neuro-development pathway work and strategy monitoring and development, and joint work with health visitors.
- Community services
 - Working directly with parents and carers.
 - Working with parent partnership.
 - Providing psychological consultation and training to a wide range of community services.

Work with the Welsh Government

Educational psychologists work with the Welsh Government in the following ways:

- Responding to consultations on a wide range of subjects.
- Contributing to a wide range of Welsh Government training initiatives.
- Supporting targeted projects through early intervention and enhanced support.

Work with other organisations

Educational psychologists are involved with supporting **Cardiff University's Doctorate in Educational Psychology** (<https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/study/postgraduate/research/programmes/programme/doctorate-in-educational-psychology>), with involvement in the doctoral interviews and by offering trainee educational psychology placements.

Early years (up to age 6)

In the early years, for children up to age 6, educational psychologists may work in a wide range of different settings that could include:

- early years settings (maintained and non-maintained), for example school-based nurseries, playgroups, private nurseries, schools, children's centres, clinics
- Flying Start settings
- the child's home

Alongside parents and carers, educational psychologists work with a wide range of professionals, including:

- paediatricians
- health visitors
- speech and language therapists
- physiotherapists
- occupational therapists
- specialist teachers
- early years ALN lead officers
- early years educators

Supporting children up to age 6

Educational psychologists can support children up to the age of 6 in the following ways.

Wider systems work

- Contributing to the development of early years policies and procedures.
- Supervising, mentoring and managing some early years teams and workers.
- Providing bespoke training.
- Working with early years ALN lead officers, early years settings and other professionals.
- Being part of early years panels or forums and supporting decision-making around provision and placement.
- Participating in multi-agency teams' which discuss children and young people who have social, emotional and mental health needs.

Group work

- Supporting parents and carers, providing information and delivering on a wide range of parenting programmes.
- Providing group consultation for early years professionals.
- Working with groups of children modelling an intervention for a member of staff to continue individual work.
- Supporting robust transition processes from home to pre-school settings.
- Collaborating with other early years professionals to consider whole-setting priorities and supporting with training and development.
- Working with paediatricians, general practitioners (GPs), health visitors, pre-school, staff, nursery staff, school staff and other professionals to support the development of children with ALN.

Individual work

- Using consultation and formulation meetings to identify strengths, areas for development, what works and what doesn't work to plan interventions.
- Providing interventions, such as play-based therapies.
- Supporting the transition from home or pre-school setting to school using person-centred approaches.
- Undertaking observation or assessment appropriate to the age and stage of development of the child.
- Reviewing progress and providing written feedback for parents, carers, settings, schools and the local authority.

Primary (aged 6 to 11)

Each primary school usually has a named or link education psychologist who

regularly visits the school and works closely with school staff to support them.

Their work can take place in different environments such as in:

- nurseries and school
- the child's home, including foster and care homes
- out-of-county settings
- specialist provisions

Alongside parents and carers, educational psychologists can work with a range of professionals, including:

- specialist teachers
- ALN co-ordinators (ALNCos)
- specialist CAMHS
- health professionals, including paediatricians, speech and language therapists, and occupational therapists
- attendance and wellbeing officers
- family engagement officers
- children's services, including social workers

Supporting children aged 6 to 11

Educational psychologists can support children aged 6 to 11 in the following ways.

Wider systems work

- Planning visits and responding collaboratively to whole-school self-evaluations, through using and referencing research and evidence-based whole-school approaches.

- Offering training to help teachers, support staff and others improve their practice and facilitate school improvement.
- Supporting the evaluation of interventions and approaches to measure impact.
- Providing cluster-based consultations to support school-to-school learning and solution-focused approaches.
- Providing supervision and training for emotional literacy support assistants (ELSAs).
- Participating in panels and forums.
- Supporting decision-making around provision and placement.

Group work

- Providing support to establish specific interventions in school.
- Using consultation and formulation around a whole-class need.
- Collaborating, through a process of consultation, between home, school and other professionals to understand and address concerns, and plan next steps.
- Working with paediatricians, general practitioners (GPs), school staff and other professionals to support the development of children with ALN.

Individual work

- Using consultation and formulation meetings to identify strengths, areas for development, what works and what doesn't work to plan interventions.
- Supporting transition from home to school setting and to secondary school using person-centred approaches.
- Undertaking observation or assessment appropriate to the age and stage of development of the child.
- Listening to and recording the views of the child.
- Reviewing progress and provide written feedback for parents, carers,

schools and the local authority.

Other work

- Supporting a child back into school after a prolonged absence.
- Supporting a family and school to resolve a dispute around a child's ALN.
- Training other key adults in school.
- Working with, and providing training and advice, for parents and carers.

Secondary (aged 11 to 16) (aged 17 to 19 in local authority school, sixth form, further education college or special school)

Each secondary school usually has a named or link educational psychologist who regularly visits the school.

Their work can take place in a range of environments including:

- schools and colleges
- the young person's home, including foster and care homes
- out-of-county settings
- specialist provisions including pupil referral units (PRUs) and alternative provisions

Alongside parents and carers, educational psychologists can work with a range of professionals, including:

- specialist teachers
- ALN co-ordinators (ALNCos)
- specialist CAMHS

- health professionals, including paediatricians, speech and language therapists, and occupational therapists
- education other than at school (EOTAS)
- youth and community workers
- education and welfare services
- counselling services
- youth services, including social services
- youth offending team (YOT)

Some of the key needs that educational psychologists are regularly consulted on for young people aged 11 to 19 include:

- wellbeing and resilience
- relationships
- emotional-based school avoidance
- understanding the impact of developmental difficulties on learning and friendships
- anxiety
- emotional regulation
- substance misuse
- social media use and misuse
- sexual identity
- self-harm
- offending behaviour
- managing loss, bereavement and significant family changes

Supporting young people aged 11 to 19

Educational psychologists can support young people aged 11 to 19 in the following ways.

Wider systems work

- Planning visits and responding collaboratively to whole-school self-evaluations, through using and referencing research and evidence-based whole-school approaches.
- Offering training to help teachers, support staff and others improve their practice and facilitate school improvement.
- Supporting evaluations to measure the impact of different approaches and interventions.
- Providing cluster-based consultations to support school-to-school learning and solution-focused approaches.
- Providing supervision and training for emotional literacy support assistants (ELSAs).
- Participating in panels and forums.
- Supporting decision-making around provision and placement.

Group work

- Providing support to establish specific interventions in school or college.
- Using consultation and formulation around a whole-class need.
- Collaborating, through a process of consultation, between home, school and other professionals to understand and address concerns, and plan next steps.
- Working with paediatricians, general practitioners (GPs), school staff and other professionals to support the development of young people with ALN.

Individual work

- Using consultation and formulation meetings to identify strengths, areas for development, what works and what doesn't work to plan interventions.

- Providing interventions, such as cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT).
- Undertaking observation or assessment appropriate to the age of the young person and with their assent.
- Gathering pupil voice, reviewing progress and providing written feedback for young people, parents, carers, schools, colleges, and the local authority.
- Using person-centred tools to develop pathways to encourage aspiration and support transitions.

Other work

- Arranging special examination arrangements (dispensation).
- Undertaking restorative practices for relational problems.
- Working to support an anxious young person with emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA) to gradually return to school or an alternative provision.

Post-16 (further education and specialist college placement up to age 25)

Post-16, which includes further education and specialist college placement for young people up to the age of 25, is a developing area for educational psychologists and is required under the ALNET Act. Educational psychologist services in Wales are currently working with the post-16 sector to agree expectations and service level agreements. These agreements are likely to vary between local authority teams and will be developed over time, in line with the ALN Code.

Young people up to the age of 25 with ALN may be involved with an educational psychologist. They might work across a range of settings, as agreed with the local authority, for example:

- school sixth forms
- colleges (providing a service for those in further education but not for higher education courses provided by further education colleges)
- youth and community provisions
- the young person's home, including foster and care homes
- out-of-county settings
- independent special post-16 institutions (ISPIs)

Alongside young people, parents and carers, educational psychologists can work with a range of professionals, including:

- youth and community workers
- specialist CAHMS
- health professionals, including mental health nurses
- counselling services
- youth offending teams
- youth services, including social services
- police
- additional learning needs co-ordinators (ALNCos)
- college tutors
- careers advisors
- drug and rehabilitation workers
- housing organisations and advisers

Many of the needs of post-16 learners will also be supported by other agencies who have specific areas of expertise (such as Careers Wales and third sector agencies) or from within the school or further education college pastoral and counselling systems and services.

Supporting young people up to the age of 25

Educational psychologists can support young people aged up to 25 in the

following ways.

Wider systems work

- Planning and delivering training to other professionals and young people.
- Facilitating group consultation and supervision in relation to college systems.
- Supporting the development of college processes and systems for inclusion and behaviour support.
- Consulting on and providing formulations in relation to the needs of learners with specific ALN.
- Supporting the development of policies.

Group work

- Advising on group working.
- Supporting staff in devising and delivering interventions for groups of young people, targeted at the development of several different skill areas.
- Working alongside teaching and wellbeing staff to model interventions, building capacity and sustainability.

Individual work

- Working at individual level to consider if the young person has ALN and what additional learning provision (ALP) is required to meet their ALN.
- Exploring the views and aspirations of the young person, considering what it is that the young person wants to change or develop.
- Carrying out individual casework following a person-centred planning meeting for a range of purposes, such as:
 - supporting the transition from secondary school to post-16 settings and from college onward

- collaborating with other professionals involved in post-16 education
- assessing young people's strengths and areas of need to help to plan ALP

Other work educational psychologists undertake

Special schools and specialist provisions

Educational psychologists deliver a full range of services in local authority special schools and specialist provisions.

This includes:

- strategic work
- training
- providing consultation
- observation
- assessment
- collaborative practices to support children and young people with complex and multiple learning difficulties

Specialist roles

Some local authorities have specific specialist roles for educational psychologists for example:

- early years children
- vulnerable children or young people, such as children looked after
- specific areas of need, such as children and young people with autism

This allows those educational psychologists to develop skills, knowledge and expertise in these areas so that they can support additional and targeted approaches for these groups of children and young people.

Other educational psychologist roles

Assistant educational psychologists

Assistant educational psychologist roles are undertaken by those with a psychology degree who have experience in working with children or young people and are interested in becoming an educational psychologist. They will undertake a range of duties or tasks, all under the supervision of a qualified and experienced or senior educational psychologist, who will themselves be supervised by the Principal Educational Psychologist, having oversight of the assistant educational psychologist's work.

Trainee educational psychologists

Trainee educational psychologists have placements in local authorities for a year and will work under direct supervision of a qualified and experienced educational psychologist or senior educational psychologist. They complete work as an educational psychologist in training, often providing support and a service to a small number of schools. The placement follows university professional teaching and doctoral studies. Each year the trainee educational psychologist will move to a different placement, to gather a wide range of experiences and better support their understanding and skills in the varied role of an educational psychologist.

Educational psychologists not employed through education services

Educational psychologists will usually be employed through education or children's services in local authorities, but some educational psychologists are employed by health services in specific roles.

Educational psychologists in private practice

Some educational psychologists choose to provide their own private practice. All practicing educational psychologists need to be registered with the **Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC)** (<https://www.hcpc-uk.org/>). You can check if an educational psychologist is registered through the **HCPC register** (<https://www.hcpc-uk.org/check-the-register/>).

Critical incidents

Unfortunately, schools and communities experience challenging events. They may experience these as critical incidents that occur in the community and impact schools directly.

During these difficult times, educational psychologists can provide support to school communities and work with other services to help staff, children, young people, parents and carers through these difficult experiences and to develop coping strategies.

Examples of practice

Early years: example of wider systems work

Background

It can be challenging for some children to transition from pre-school into an educational setting. The Educational Psychology Service in one local authority supports the school entry process by equipping the adults working with those children with the information and understanding that they need.

Educational psychologist involvement

Educational psychologists co-ordinate and facilitate:

- regular online consultation sessions to support and develop practice in early years settings, offering regular consultation and casework supervision to other early years colleagues in Flying Start and other early years teams
- person-centred school entry planning meetings held with all involved at the receiving school once school places are confirmed (April or later)
- holding a person-centred school entry review with all involved (around October half term of Reception year) where previous actions are reviewed and further ones are developed together
- the co-creation of actions in the school entry planning to support the child's best possible transition into school

Outcome

Anecdotal evidence is that this system is perceived positively by those involved

in the process. Children were supported to settle into their new school more quickly and staff felt more confident about meeting their needs.

Early years: example of group work

Background

To support staff with meeting the needs of the children in their setting, the Educational Psychology Service introduced group consultation. These were open to all early years staff on a half termly basis.

The group consultation involves the educational psychologist working collaboratively with the people who know the child best to explore the needs in more depth and to agree actions for positive change. It is led by the educational psychologist within a supportive peer group environment (for example multiple staff from different early years settings attending one consultation meeting).

Educational psychologist involvement

The educational psychologists used consultation and group problem-solving skills to facilitate the hour-long group consultation sessions which were attended by staff from various early years settings. By facilitating the process, the educational psychologists supported early years practitioners to share their skills and examples of good practice.

Outcome

Group consultation provided the early years staff with a unique opportunity to develop their skills and understanding by working collaboratively with their

peers, and listening to each other's cases, opinions and ideas for positive change. They were then able to apply these ideas to their own settings and to future cases. The educational psychologists were also able to highlight further opportunities for training and development to the staff. Other benefits included co-creation of quick, accessible solutions, and staff feeling heard and valued.

Early years: example of individual work

Background

The early years educational psychology team wanted to improve the transition process from pre-school to nursery school for children with additional learning needs (ALN) using digital stories. Digital stories are short, person-centred videos that display a child's strengths, interests, and needs. The videos focus on the child's perspective, allowing their voice to be heard.

Educational psychologist involvement

Under the supervision of the lead early years educational psychologist, a trainee educational psychologist and an assistant educational psychologist led the digital stories project. They delivered training and developed resources on digital stories for 2 pre-schools. Two children from each pre-school were chosen to have a digital story. Ben was one of the chosen children.

With weekly supervision to support them through the process, by the end of the training the pre-school staff were able to film and edit all the footage. Ben's digital story was shown to his parents, pre-school staff and his future nursery school during a transition meeting.

Outcome

The main outcome was placing Ben at the centre of the transition process. He gave his own perspective and was included in the decision-making process.

The pre-school staff who created Ben's digital story had a more holistic understanding of his individual strengths and needs. Ben's parents felt empowered watching the digital story as they could see their child achieving things that they had previously thought he wouldn't be able to do. Furthermore, when Ben's digital story was shared with his nursery school, they had a better understanding of how they could implement strategies and resources for him before he joined them.

Moving forward, the team would like to train more pre-schools and nurseries across the local authority so more children can benefit from having a digital story.

Early years: example of work in the community

Background

A team of early years educational psychologists and local health leads developed a model to increase capacity to support children and families below statutory school age across their local authority. This followed an increase in the number of families experiencing challenging personal circumstances because of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and cost of living crisis. The 'Community Early Years Educational Psychology Circles of Support' model was launched in September 2021.

Educational psychologist involvement

As part of the model, community link early years educational psychologists collaborate with others in the community, such as health visitors, early years practitioners, family or parenting support workers, to help decide what might be the most helpful next steps in supporting a family and a child, depending on the child's or family's strengths, interests and support needs.

An initial consultation is undertaken by an educational psychologist who directs the case to the appropriate forum. The circular levels of the model radiate outwards, with levels of educational psychologist support assigned accordingly. Inner circles denote high levels of educational psychologist involvement, for example at the initial consultation, while outer circles imply a greater inter-agency approach through community collaborations or wider resource planning. The model creates a wider focus on support around a child (the outer circles of support) rather than specialised support on an individual basis.

Outcome

Feedback received after the model was implemented was positive. The number of parents and carers who felt able to meet or understand their child's needs increased by 32.9% after their consultation to 93.1%.

The use of the model also increases capacity and efficiency for the wider team of early years educational psychologists, allowing them to see a greater number of children and families in need.

Primary: example of wider systems work

Background

There were concerns within the local authority that a small number of young children were presenting with behaviours communicating significant attachment needs. As a result of their traumatic early years, these children had not experienced strong or positive emotional bonds with their carers.

Identified behaviours included:

- an aversion to touch and physical affection
- showing a desire to remain in control to avoid feeling helpless
- disobedience, defiance and argumentative behaviour
- expressions of anger, such as tantrums or 'acting out'
- difficulties expressing care for others
- difficulties with accountability, likely related to experiences of shame

These children were in different mainstream primary schools and each had a teaching assistant working with them.

Educational psychologist involvement

The educational psychologists in the local authority offered attachment-specific training and follow-on group supervision to the teaching assistants who were working in a one-to-one capacity with a child with attachment needs.

Participating teaching assistants were drawn from across several schools within the local authority via a launch conference that helped to define and promote an understanding of attachment needs in school populations.

The principles of **attachment theory** (<https://www.simplypsychology.org/attachment.html>) were used as a framework for making sense of the behaviours that are seen in school, and to inform planning and appropriate responses. It was recognised that sometimes initiatives and ideas 'got lost' when mainly focused upon consultative working at the senior management level in schools. Therefore, it was proposed to approach this change via both 'top down' and 'bottom up' approaches.

The 'top down' approach involved key members of school leadership teams being invited to attend a practical training day on understanding and meeting the attachment needs of children in schools. The 'bottom up' element was the second phase of the project where places were offered to teaching assistants and a member of the school leadership team from schools to participate in reflection and skill development supervision sessions.

The project aimed to focus upon moving away from the idea of 'just giving support' to consideration of the functions of that support, where attachment frameworks place a greater emphasis on the relational aspects of the adult-child interaction in meeting the child's attachment needs.

Outcome

At the end of the first year of the project, the teaching assistants were interviewed by educational psychologists to explore their experiences of participating in the training and supervision sessions, their thinking about children's behaviour in schools, their knowledge and ability to apply attachment theory in work with children, and the strengths and limitations of the intervention.

Interview data was analysed and several themes were identified from the interviews that allowed the educational psychologist service to further develop their intervention based upon this feedback. Findings from this research project influenced how the training was developed for the second year.

Primary: example of wider systems work

Background

The **mediating learning support assistant (MeLSA)** (<https://research-information.bris.ac.uk/en/publications/the-psychological-foundations-of-the-mediating-learning-support-a>) is an initiative designed by educational psychologists to build the capacity of schools to support all learning. It recognises the importance of adults working with children understanding the development of the thinking skills necessary for learning. It also recognises the importance of helping adults working with children to know how to help them become an efficient and independent thinker.

MeLSA delivers evidence-based research in an accessible and interactive manner to ensure teaching assistants have a sound understanding of the psychology of learning. It supports the teaching assistant to utilise this psychological knowledge of learning to support children to learn, using the skills of mediating.

The psychological basis of MeLSA is based on **Vygotsky's zone of actual development (ZAD)** (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sYF5HefF6wA>) (YouTube), which is what a child or young person can do on their own, without support. The zone of proximal, or next, development (ZPD) is what a child or young person can achieve with the help of a more experienced other. The 'other', for the purpose of this training, will be a MeLSA. The ZPD emphasis is on potential to learn rather than readiness and the role of the 'more knowledgeable other' (MeLSA) is immensely important.

Educational psychologist involvement

MeLSAs are teaching assistants who have received 6 days additional training from educational psychologists on aspects of learning theory and practice. MeLSAs will need to participate in ongoing supervision after the training to maintain their MeLSA training. Ongoing support is essential to ensure training is implemented. This model is very similar to the emotional literacy support assistant (ELSA) framework, which has been adopted in many educational psychology services in Wales.

Inclusion of children with cognitive and learning challenges is essential, they may be supported by teaching assistants, who work with them to enable their learning. Targeted training for teaching assistants has been identified as significant, to maximise their impact (see Peter Farrell, The impact of teaching assistants, Education Review, 2010).

MeLSAs can implement their training in a way that is useful to their school. They could:

- work individually with a struggling learner to investigate skills
- work on the development and application of learning skills to foster independence
- work with small groups to develop thinking skills
- apply MeLSA knowledge during whole-class work
- train other teaching assistants in aspects of the MeLSA training

Outcome

The educational psychologists have planned a research project to investigate the self-efficacy of MeLSAs. Research is part of the matrix of ways in which educational psychologists can use their professional training to ensure evidence-

based practice.

Local authorities in Wales have started their MeLSA journey and a **support network for MeLSAs in Wales** (<https://hwb.gov.wales/networks/af906072-17be-4fe7-9e6a-b1a63333d0d3/overview>) has been established.

Primary: example of group work

Background

The educational psychologist and teaching assistants in the school noted concerns related to some children learning and retaining the basic information needed to acquire literacy and numeracy skills.

These included:

- high-frequency words
- basic phonic patterns
- number bonds

Difficulties in these areas resulted in very slow progress being made in acquiring basic literacy and numeracy skills.

Educational psychologist involvement

The educational psychologist suggested that precision teaching might help address these difficulties with fundamental skills, such as recalling initial phonic skills, sight-reading high-frequency words and basic arithmetic skills. They provided training for the teaching assistants who implemented the programme.

Outcome

The training was highly beneficial. The precision teaching programmes put into place were very effective. The positive outcomes were shared at the cluster group meetings and shared with other colleagues throughout the local authority. Other schools requested the training, which the Educational Psychology Service provided.

Primary: example of group work

Background

The Educational Psychology Service offers group consultation sessions to all primary schools as part of the graduated approach to support learners and their families. Educational psychologists and teachers meet regularly to share knowledge of pedagogy and psychology to co-construct action plans that can be used for individual children, groups or whole-school development. Several teachers at group consultation reported concerns around literacy acquisition, in particular reading, for learners in relevant year groups.

Educational psychologist involvement

A specialist educational psychologist and a trainee educational psychologist agreed to offer all primary schools the opportunity to take part in a project to address the development of reading skills. The action research project was developed to improve reading skills, increase motivation and build confidence. Teachers were asked to commit to several elements including providing pre- and post-project data for project evaluation purposes.

Paired reading was chosen as a model for teaching as this is known to have a strong evidence base as a method to improve children's reading accuracy, fluency and comprehension (Topping, 1995, 2001). Children choose their own books and enjoy reading with an adult in a one-to-one situation for 10 to 15 minutes.

Progress with literacy is often influenced by other factors, such as motivation, enjoyment, experiencing success and academic self-concept. The educational psychologist felt that it could be beneficial to combine paired reading with video self-modelling. This is an intervention that has been shown to be effective in bringing about positive changes in self-esteem, attitude and behaviour.

Video self-modelling can be used to promote rapid skill acquisition, increase motivation and instil confidence (Buggey, 2007.) Using video that puts children centre stage, being successful and enjoying themselves, enables them to envisage what they can do. Children are involved in creating a short film using selected video clips taken by an adult. They add their own ideas, such as images and music, then watch their film at intervals over several weeks. They may also choose to share their film with others such as family members.

Both paired reading and video self-modelling provide experiences for children that promote resilience.

These include:

- being part of a special project
- developing positive relationships
- taking part in an enjoyable activity with an adult while experiencing praise and success
- making choices about their own learning
- their efforts being valued and recognised

The educational psychologist was interested to find out whether there would be

any difference between children that received paired reading only and children that received both paired reading and video self-modelling.

The 8 schools taking part were split into 2 groups and teacher questionnaires and scales completed pre- and post-intervention. Additional comments were also invited and child views sought. The project continued beyond data collection in order that all children benefitted from paired reading and video self-modelling.

Outcome

All of the 12 children that took part in the project made gains with reading skills within the 7-week period. Children who had also received the video self-modelling intervention (group 1) during the 7 weeks made significantly higher gains on all 11 measures, in particular 'willingness to read', 'pleasure from reading', 'interested in reading', 'confident to read', 'demonstrate accuracy in reading', 'can concentrate when reading' and 'self-esteem is generally good'.

Qualitative data reported by teachers of their children included:

- improvements in well-being and happiness in school
- improvements in independent working
- improvements in spelling and writing
- reading in class when they wouldn't before
- a change in attitude towards reading after 2 weeks
- taking the lead more often
- increased positive attitude
- talking more to adults and other children
- reading as more of a routine at home that child enjoys
- increased friendships

Schools are continuing to ask the Educational Psychology Service for training in

paired reading. Individual schools and school clusters are also requesting video self-modelling training as it is seen as a child-centred approach that can be used in a range of settings for children of all age groups. Paired reading supports positive behaviour changes in a variety of scenarios, enhances skills, and improves confidence and wellbeing.

Primary: example of individual work

Background

It was noted by school that Ffion, aged 6, had begun to have difficulties with certain tasks and activities, and that she was often reported to be 'clumsy'. An initial consultation between the educational psychologist and the school's additional learning needs coordinator (ALNCo) took place where it was agreed that Ffion would benefit from having her vision and hearing checked. It was found that she had a degenerative eye condition.

Educational psychologist involvement

Consultation meetings were held between the educational psychologist, Ffion's parents, her class teacher, the advisory teacher for visual impairment (VI) and the ALNCo to help to determine if Ffion had ALN and if she would require an individual development plan (IDP) to support her needs. A learning support assistant (LSA) met with Ffion before the consultation meetings to gather her views and these were shared during the meeting. The educational psychologist drew on knowledge of Ffion's development, and the psychological and environmental factors impacting on her educational needs. Positive ideas for change were discussed and agreed actions were set. Review dates were arranged so that Ffion's progress was closely monitored. All this information fed into her IDP.

After 12 months Ffion's needs were becoming more intense because of the degenerative nature of her condition. A person-centred review was held and it was felt that Ffion needed access to more specialist support and resources to meet her educational needs. It was jointly agreed that Ffion's school would make a request to the local authority for a local authority maintained IDP.

The local authority determined that an assessment for a local authority maintained IDP was appropriate. The educational psychologist took a holistic view of Ffion's strengths and the ALN that were affecting her education. Gathering further information through consultation, information obtained from other colleagues and working directly with Ffion, the educational psychologist prepared the psychological report.

Outcome

It was decided by the local authority that Ffion's needs were severe and complex and that they required her having a local authority maintained IDP. A meeting, involving Ffion and all those working with her, was held. Specific outcomes for moving Ffion towards her aspirations and goals, and the support that would be needed to enable Ffion to achieve these outcomes, were jointly determined. Ffion's progress was regularly reviewed by all those working with her.

Secondary: example of wider systems work

Background

The emotional literacy support assistant (ELSA) training is a package developed and delivered by educational psychologists and is delivered to school staff members, mainly teaching assistants.

The course outlines and applies psychological theories to highlight the importance of emotional literacy and wellbeing as a precursor to readiness to learn.

There are 6 days of training which cover:

- raising awareness of emotional literacy in schools
- building resilience and self-esteem
- recognising and managing emotions
- social and friendship skills
- bereavement and loss
- therapeutic and social stories
- active listening and reflective conversations
- creative approaches to working

The course aims to equip teaching assistants with the skills and understanding to plan and deliver bespoke and flexible wellbeing interventions with young people one-to-one or in small groups.

ELSAs might work with young people who:

- are demonstrating challenging behaviours and require support to recognise and manage their emotions
- require support to make and maintain friendships
- may lack confidence in school
- may benefit from support to improve their mental health

The role of an ELSA can vary depending on each young person and their age, ability and circumstances.

Educational psychologist involvement

Educational psychologists provide ongoing support through regular ELSA group

supervision sessions. Supervision provides a supportive space for ELSAs to continue to develop their skills and competence and share successful practice.

Outcome

Research exploring the efficacy of ELSA suggests that ELSA sessions can have a positive impact on friendship skills, self-confidence and academic achievement (Shotton and Burton, 2008). Teachers have reported significant improvement in learners' emotional literacy and behaviour (Burton et al., 2010) and ability to empathise (Murray, 2010) because of the ELSA intervention. There is also tentative evidence for the impact of ELSA intervention in supporting children and young people's emotional literacy beyond a 6-week intervention timeframe (Silver, Emanuel and Jones, 2024). Research exploring feedback from children suggests that the majority report ELSA sessions were a positive experience for them (Mann and Russell, 2011).

More information regarding ELSA and research can be found on the [ELSA Network website](https://www.elsanetwork.org/elsa-network/evaluation-reports/) (<https://www.elsanetwork.org/elsa-network/evaluation-reports/>).

Secondary: example of wider systems work

Background

Emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA) (<https://adyach.cymru/en/Parents/Access-to-the-Service/Educational-Psychology-Service/Emotionally-Based-School-Avoidance-EBSA/Emotionally-Based-School-Avoidance-EBSA.aspx>) is a complex area of need. The 'EBSA Project: Changing Language and Perspectives' provides an embedded training and support programme for school leadership teams, school-based staff, and other professionals supporting children and young people. The aim is to support early and effective intervention to assess and intervene in the

most timely and helpful way, to prevent entrenched EBSA and promote positive outcomes.

The need for this project was first highlighted prior to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. However, the pandemic provided a catalyst and the project took root considering the expected increase in child and parental anxiety following the prolonged closure of schools. In a study looking at learner views on their education in the context of the pandemic, 1,758 children and young people completed questionnaires (Sivers, Wendland, Baggley, Boyle, Popoola, and Looney (2020)).

A key message emerged about the development of local policy on a graduated response to EBSA so that local authorities could better support schools in identifying and working with learners who show EBSA, and their families. Preventative work and early intervention was required, with the need for a 'continuum of intervention' to provide earlier intervention for learners who were beginning to present with EBSA.

Educational psychologist involvement

The Educational Psychology Service established a cross-directorate EBSA group to coordinate a professional development training programme and pathway of graduated response to EBSA. This focuses on early identification and enhanced understanding of the complexities facing children and young people and their families.

Underpinning this initial proposal were factors identified within the evidence base that are associated with positive outcomes, emphasising the importance of a multi-agency approach. The project comprised of 5 phases which included developing and producing EBSA guidance and resources, including an EBSA pathway, an EBSA support plan, good practice support guidelines for schools for attendance and wellbeing, and downloadable resources for use to understand

and listen to the voice of the young person.

A cross-directorate 'Introduction to EBSA' training package was created which highlighted the importance of the development of EBSA awareness, EBSA processes and a whole-school approach for working with children and young people. A rolling model of professional training and support was developed and embedded to ensure sustainability and fidelity. This support model includes the offer of online EBSA consultation sessions facilitated by the Educational Psychology Service and family support services, with 1 session each year focusing specifically on Year 6 to Year 7 transition. It also provides a clear plan of how to support a child or young person at risk of or experiencing EBSA.

The EBSA consultation sessions are utilised as a solution-focused space, where good practice is shared between schools, professionals and local authority officers supporting EBSA. Professionals can discuss learners anonymously to find a way forward to supporting those who are showing signs of EBSA.

Outcome

The requirement for accessing education other than at school (EOTAS) provision changed from requiring the report of a consultant to broadening this to include educational psychologist reports. This reduces the potential period of time that a child or young person has to wait for EOTAS provision if they are experiencing significant EBSA and are not currently able to access school-based provision.

Training has been delivered in all 4 of the area's secondary schools. This training has been well received, with 100% of attendees agreeing that the training increased their understanding of EBSA and its impact on children and young people's wellbeing, and an average rating of 4.5 out of 5 in terms of the training having a high impact on their work with children and young people.

A complementary training package 'Autism and Girls' has been developed by the local authority with the input of a parent of a daughter with autism experiencing EBSA. This training was positively evaluated, and staff increased their understanding of the presentation of autism in girls.

In addition to this an educational psychologist and a family support worker have developed and run 'Working with Worries', a parent and carer workshop offered during the summer holidays.

One secondary school, in partnership with the local authority, has developed bespoke provision for a small group of learners presenting with EBSA. This pilot provision is in the process of being evaluated. The EBSA project is now in the process of developing an EBSA support offer for parents and carers, with input from parents and carers of learners accessing this provision.

Grant funding has also been used to introduce cross-phase ALN support officers. These are based in each secondary school, who work into the cluster primary schools, to promote their inclusion and wellbeing, and to support the transition from primary to secondary school. This includes working preventatively with children and young people at risk of EBSA.

There has been a shift in the understanding, perspectives taken and support offered by professionals supporting children and young people across the local authority. Schools now have a clear package of guidance, resources and support to enable them to take early, preventative action.

Secondary: example of wider systems work

Background

In one local authority area the educational psychologists are commissioned to

work with the Youth Justice Team on prevention work.

This involves:

- enhanced case management meetings (ECM) with case workers in the Youth Justice Team around complex cases involving youth offending and history of trauma
- use of the trauma recovery model (TRM) and developmental mapping tool to support educational psychologists' formulations and recommendations
- possible engagement, at an individual level, with the young person and family
- possible assessment or observation at an individual level

Educational psychologist involvement

Educational psychologists are well placed to work with the Youth Justice Team as often the young people are known to the local authority and may have a history of non-engagement or intervention over time. Some young people are currently attending school or further education. Educational psychologists working with other teams within the directorate builds closer working relationships and a more holistic picture of the young person's needs.

Benefits of working in preventative work within the Youth Justice Team include:

- prevention of reoffending behaviour
- support with trauma recovery
- supporting case workers to be emotionally available adults through consultation, such as change in perception of trauma and the way that they engage with the young person

Outcome

Through identifying strategic approaches to enhancing provision, for example by embedding trauma informed approaches, young people supported by the Youth Justice Team further received complementary support in their education placements (such as pupil referral units (PRU) or specialist settings). This allowed for appropriate interventions to be delivered, more sensitive responses from adults and, ultimately, a reduction in reoffending.

Secondary: example of group work

Background

Across the local authority, headteachers from secondary schools had increasing concerns regarding the wellbeing of their Year 11 learners. These learners have faced a lot of uncertainty related to the effects of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Prolonged periods of school absence left them feeling worried, anxious and nervous about their future. A questionnaire revealed the current concerns facing the Year 11 learners were:

- credibility of grades
- increased testing
- transition to post-16 education

Educational psychologist involvement

Practitioners from the Educational Psychology Service, the Wellbeing Team and the School-Based Counselling Service collaborated to plan and deliver an online workshop to support Year 11 learners. The 1-hour workshop focused on a

variety of topics including self-care, mindfulness, reframing negative thoughts and positive psychology. Each school shared the workshop with their learners. At the end of the workshop, learners had the opportunity to speak to a member of the Educational Psychology Service or Wellbeing Team if they wished to. They were also signposted to further resources created by the Educational Psychology Service.

Outcome

Learners reported that the workshop helped them to think about stress in a different way. They could see that there were potential benefits of having stress, for example to motivate them to study for examinations, but also understood how to better regulate anxious feelings.

Due to the workshop incorporating many different topics, each individual learner had at least 1 activity they could engage with and enjoy, helping them to reduce their stress levels. Some learners commented that they were thankful to have the opportunity to speak to an educational psychologist afterwards.

Secondary: example of group work

Background

Some educational psychologists are based, for part of their time, in the local authority youth service. This helps to upskill and empower youth workers, and to benefit young people accessing local authority youth services.

Educational psychologist involvement

At an individual level, the educational psychologist offers one-to-one consultation with youth workers to discuss groups or individual young people, with a goal to upskill and empower youth workers. These are voluntary and young people are discussed anonymously, unless parental consent has been obtained, or the young person is over 16 and has consented. One-to-one support or supervision is also offered, to allow reflection regarding professional practice in a non-managerial capacity.

On a group level, the educational psychologist facilitates a weekly reflection session for staff. These are valued and attended well. Every other week, a 'talking shop' is delivered, which is theme-based and inspired by current issues that arise within the service. A solution-focused drop-in session is held every other week to discuss specific young people or groups with a goal of within-team problem-solving, utilising the expertise within the team.

Systemic level work includes multi-agency liaison, resource development and training, which is developed and delivered on a bespoke, dynamic and needs-led basis. The educational psychologist creates resources in collaboration with youth workers as needed, which has included the development of a range of emotional literacy (anxiety, anger management) groups and transition groups. The educational psychologist also delivers training to the team (for example trauma-informed approaches) and training in the use of specific psychological activities to elicit the young people's views (for example sand tray, big empathy drawings, kinetic family drawings). Where appropriate, links with other agencies are also made to deliver bespoke training.

Outcome

Youth workers have access to training and development to improve their

practice and build their confidence. Young people have support from youth workers who better understand their needs and respond sensitively. Groups are provided to the community to address specific gaps in provision.

Post-16: example of wider systems work

Background

An internal review was undertaken in the further education college to assess the life skills of students with complex needs. It noted that staff were struggling as the students' independence levels were very low and staff were unsure of how best to support students with additional learning needs (ALN) in the college setting.

The educational psychologist was consulted and in discussion with the staff it was decided to devise a life skills-based toolkit to help staff address the needs of the students with ALN for them to achieve greater independence.

The skills needed included improving basic number and literacy skills in order that students could fully participate in the following activities:

- shopping
- managing money at a simple level
- travelling by public transport
- telling the time
- having a sufficient social sight vocabulary to be safe in the community
- road safety
- cooking skills
- basic computer skills

Educational psychologist involvement

Initially the educational psychologist and head of learner support services in the college held a consultation regarding the outcomes of the life skills review within the college. It was agreed that a life skills support working group would be established. The educational psychologist and the head of learner support services in the college chaired the group. An action plan was agreed and one of the key focus areas was to train staff in using the life skills toolkit so that all staff would have access to it to support their teaching approaches with students who had low life skills levels.

In addition to the toolkit, training was given by the educational psychologist and the head of learner support services to the college staff to ensure full awareness of the toolkit and its resources. A life skills teaching workbook was produced by the educational psychologist and head of learner support services. This complements the training and is designed to be delivered to whole-staff groups.

Outcome

The toolkit and training has impacted upon life skills policies, procedures and practices within the college. In total, 92% of the students have reported that they have found the resources in the toolkit helpful in enhancing their life skills. Another local college has indicated that they would like to access the toolkit and training for their college staff.

The educational psychologist and the head of learner support services collected qualitative and quantitative data regarding the toolkit and its effectiveness. The publication of a research paper will seek to enhance professionals' practice in the wider area.

Post-16: example of individual work

Background

Arwel was on an engineering apprenticeship at college which encompassed time in college and time on placement. A request for involvement from the Educational Psychology Service had been made by college, with Arwel's consent, in relation to concerns regarding behavioural needs and his forthcoming transition to a different campus as part of his course requirement.

Arwel was experiencing attention and concentration difficulties and was hyperactive and impulsive. He was keen to know why he was experiencing such difficulties (he had done so since a child). Tutors were concerned that the effective strategies in place at his current campus would not transfer to the new campus resulting in Arwel being at high risk of losing either his work placement or place on the college course. He needed both to complete his apprenticeship.

Educational psychologist involvement

The educational psychologist met with Arwel to discuss his concerns and agree a way forward. Consultations were also carried out with his current tutors and his parent. Arwel was fully aware of the consultations.

Following the consultations, with Arwel's consent and in agreement with his parent, a report was written and forwarded to Adult Mental Health (cross-county borders) to help explore Arwel's presenting needs. This was extremely important to Arwel and his main priority, he wanted answers and this was having a negative impact on his emotional health and wellbeing.

A meeting between his current campus tutors, future tutor (new campus),

additional learning needs department, Arwel and his parent was also carried out to share good practice, explore concerns and agree future actions. Arwel's needs and aspirations were an important aspect of the meeting. The educational psychologist helped to facilitate the discussion and provide a shared understanding of Arwel's needs and effective strategies. A discussion of the barriers he was facing was also shared, leading to a collective understanding. The meeting was person centred following training that had been delivered previously to college staff by the educational psychologist.

Outcome

Arwel transitioned to the new campus. He completed his apprenticeship, winning an award.

Arwel received a diagnosis of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) which, although not the main priority for educational psychologist involvement, was extremely important to Arwel as he felt a heightened need to understand why he was experiencing such difficulties.

Post 16: example of individual work

Background

Two senior specialist educational psychologists and two educational psychologists work systemically within children's services. The social workers within the childcare teams are split into small sub teams (known as pods) with each holding a certain number of cases. The pods discuss these cases on a regular basis with the attending psychologists being able to provide an alternative perspective. The pod meetings also act as case supervision for the social workers. Everyone within each pod will know each other's cases,

providing a more robust support for families and the childcare, fostering, adoption and disability teams.

On occasions, the educational psychologists may work with families or young people alongside the social workers, modelling interventions or providing therapeutic input. They may undertake work designated by court or carry out cognitive assessments to advise appropriate strategies to support parents or carers who may have learning difficulties.

Educational psychologist involvement

One pod discussion focussed on a young girl who was unaware of many of the factors surrounding her birth, family history and sexual abuse. Due to concerns for her safety, she was taken into foster care and investigations started into her background. A complicating factor was that there was no known history of the mother and she was unwilling to work with social services. At this point a great deal of additional information came to light. One of the senior educational psychologists was tasked with the role of working alongside the social worker using a narrative therapeutic type approach to deliver some significant information about which she was unaware.

The case went to court with the mother seeking the return of her daughter to her care and the senior educational psychologist was asked to give evidence about the emotional responses of the young girl to the information given, her feelings about returning to her mother and her wishes for the future. The senior educational psychologist's views were considered a significant piece of evidence and the girl remained in foster care.

Additionally, and throughout the case, the senior educational psychologist worked with the social work team to explore many factors that were pertinent to this case, such as sexual abuse, stability and disruption of child-parent relationships, impact of foster placement, and the long-term implications

of disrupted childhood relationships.

Outcome

Considering the wider family system together with the new information, the social workers managed to trace the girl's father who was living abroad. The senior educational psychologist prepared the girl for the meeting and voiced her views to the guardian and the social work team. Advice was also provided to the father who, until this point, had no idea he had a daughter. After considerable preparation and several assessments into his suitability, the father and daughter finally met, and the girl eventually went to live with him.

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