

## How educational psychologists support children and young people with SEND

Educational Psychologists (EPs) work within the Local Authority in partnership with education settings (early years, schools, and alternative provision and further education colleges), families, and other practitioners to help children and young people (CYP) have an improved experience of education by achieving success in their learning and their social and emotional development. Tameside Educational Psychology Service (EPS) is a partly-traded service. The EPS carry out some work commissioned by the LA (statutory assessment and LA funded cluster time for training and projects) and some work commissioned directly by schools or other partners (e.g. the Virtual School, Youth Justice Service and Fostering Service). All schools in Tameside who buy into the EPS have a link EP. The work completed with schools (to support individual children, groups of children and whole school approaches) is agreed through collaborative planning meetings with key school staff. Early Years settings have access to training and workshops supported by the EPS through the Early Years Quality Team. They also have access to individual support for children through the SENDIF funding process whereby they can request EP involvement. Social Workers, Designated Teachers and Foster Carers can contact the Virtual School about accessing EP support for Cared for Children. The EPS also support CYP who are supported by the Youth Justice Service. Information about Tameside EPS can be found on the Tameside Local Offer page: our website: [Education Psychology Service - Information for Parents \(tameside.gov.uk\)](https://www.tameside.gov.uk/education-psychology-service-information-for-parents)

Education settings are responsible for ensuring that the educational needs of CYP with special educational needs and/or disability (SEND) are met. This involves early identification of need, assessing and supporting them towards achieving identified outcomes. Education settings are required to make reasonable adjustments in order to remove any barriers to learning and to put in place special education provision to help the CYP make progress. Settings can use Tameside SEND Children Thrive: Matching Provision to Need documents to support the identification, assessment and intervention planning for children with SEND:

- Early Years - [https://www.tameside.gov.uk/TamesideMBC/media/policy/Early-Years-\(Tameside\).pdf](https://www.tameside.gov.uk/TamesideMBC/media/policy/Early-Years-(Tameside).pdf)
- School Age- [https://www.tameside.gov.uk/TamesideMBC/media/policy/SCHOOL-AGE-\(Tameside\).pdf](https://www.tameside.gov.uk/TamesideMBC/media/policy/SCHOOL-AGE-(Tameside).pdf)
- Post 16 - [https://www.tameside.gov.uk/TamesideMBC/media/policy/POST-16-\(Tameside\).pdf](https://www.tameside.gov.uk/TamesideMBC/media/policy/POST-16-(Tameside).pdf)

In addition to the SEND Children Thrive: Matching Provision to Need document, education settings should consider how support is offered to all CYP by drawing from the variety of:

- *whole school approaches* (e.g. Emotionally Friendly Schools, Emotionally Friendly Settings, EBSA), and
- *group initiatives* (e.g. ELSA) available each year in Tameside.

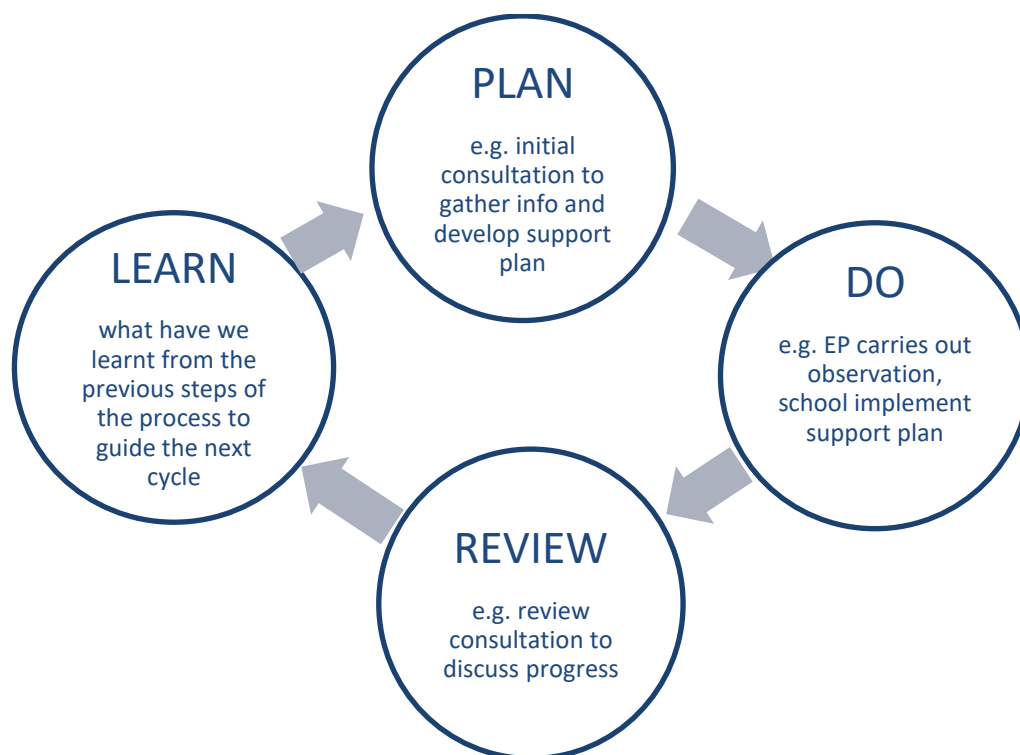
Education settings are expected to record and monitor progress through a Provision Map (or individualised support plan or similar) which should be developed in partnership with the CYP and their parent/carer and reviewed at least termly. If despite whole school and individual support arrangements a CYP has not made the expected progress, then specialist support, such as the involvement of the Specialist Outreach Support Service, Primary and Secondary Outreach, Early Years Quality Team, ISCAN etc. or an EP may be requested.

For children with complex SEND, EPs play an important role in providing support to the CYP, their parent/carer and the education setting. This support can take a variety of forms based on direct and/or indirect involvement with the CYP. The EP will help the education setting to review the existing support that is in place, offer advice about teaching approaches, interventions and appropriate adaptations that might be needed to support the CYP's progress.

### What Assessment Approaches are used by an Educational Psychologist?

Tameside Educational Psychology Service are a consultation-led service; this approach takes the form of 'conversations that make a difference' with those who know the child or young person best, including their parents or carers, key school or setting staff and other services where appropriate. We have found that this approach has the greatest impact and leads to better outcomes for schools, settings and CYP. It also allows the views and expertise of all those involved to be considered, to support positive change. A consultation guide for school/ setting staff, and guides for parents and carers, are available from the EPS; please ask your link EP or contact [EPfeedback@Tameside.gov.uk](mailto:EPfeedback@Tameside.gov.uk) for further information.

Consultation is a process based on a plan-do-review framework and is used at individual, group and whole-school levels.



Plan-do-review cycles typically involve:

- Initial consultation with key stakeholders, to discuss strengths, concerns and what has already been tried. The meeting will also involve agreeing and setting actions, with agreement of who has responsibility for each part of the plan and timescales for carrying these out. Consultation is a key part of our assessment approach.
- The 'do' part of the cycle may include assessments carried out by staff or other support services, or assessment or observation by the EP if this is agreed to have a clear purpose within the consultation. Assessment is agreed on an individual basis, to gather further information that is needed and to test hypotheses. Examples of possible EP assessment are included below.

- Actions are 'reviewed' at an agreed time within a review consultation, so that progress towards the identified objectives can be discussed; there can be identification of what has worked or not worked, and what the next steps should be.

EPs use a range of assessment approaches, including:

- Speaking with teachers, parents/carers and practitioners involved (e.g. consultation).
- Speaking with the CYP person to find out their views (what is working and not working with regards to their education and what support they feel they need).
- Observing how the CYP responds in the learning environment – looking at how they respond to the demands of the learning task, and their social interactions with others.
- Looking at the CYP's school work.
- Using questionnaires and rating scales to investigate how the CYP thinks, feels, and behaves.
- Questionnaires and rating scales to assess the learning environment (for example, the physical layout of the classroom, the social interactions and how the class and lessons are organised).
- Looking at school-based assessments - or developmental profiles for young children.
- Dynamic assessment methods that look at the CYP's approach to learning, their response to different teaching approaches and their capacity to learn.
- Psychometric assessment which looks at how the CYP's skills, knowledge and development compares with other CYP the same age. This may include non-verbal assessments which can be completed by teaching staff (e.g. Ravens Progressive Matrices) or the Learning Support Service (LSS).

The assessment approach that the EP uses should seek to give clarity and develop a holistic understanding about a CYP's strengths and needs and should take into account all the information that is already known about the CYP (i.e. information from the educational setting, parents/carers, and other practitioners). The assessment should be effective, efficient and use the least intrusive approach to gathering information in order to provide high quality psychological advice.

Cognitive assessments are one type of assessment that an EP may carry out, this would always follow a discussion through consultation to ensure this would be purposeful and informative, rather than a standalone piece of work. These discussions will establish whether a cognitive assessment would be accessible for a CYP or appropriate at a given time and identify what the most useful type of assessment to provide the required information might be. For example, it might not be appropriate to complete a cognitive assessment if:

- A CYP cannot attend to an adult-led activity for the required amount of time;
- They have English as an Additional Language or identified communication needs which would impact their ability to understand the instructions or tasks; or
- A CYP is presenting with high levels of anxiety which would impact their performance and the experience could be detrimental for them.

Any assessment would be carried out as part of a holistic understanding of the CYP's strengths and needs and triangulated with other sources of information (e.g. views from parent/ carer; CYP's views; information and assessment from the school/ setting or other services).

### **What is important about how Educational Psychologists work?**

All EPs are registered with the Health and Care Professionals Council which confirms the high standard of their professional work. At all times EPs:

- Act in the best interests of the CYP with their views being at the centre of the process.
- Ensure that informed consent is obtained by all those providing information.
- Respect the confidentiality of those providing information, whilst working within safeguarding policy.

- Act in a non-discriminatory manner.
- Work in partnership with others and aim for a shared understanding of CYP's individual strengths and support needs.
- Ensure effective communication with those involved in the consultation and support process – including liaison with other professionals and services.
- Maintain clarity regarding their professional role.
- Use high quality, evidence-informed assessment methods and approaches.
- Monitor interventions over time to inform assessment (as part of plan-do-review-learn cycles).
- Ensure a range of factors are taken into consideration during the assessment process e.g. the learning environment, the context in which the CYP lives and learns and the perspectives of the CYP and those around them.
- Clearly identify assessment information which is reported by others, and make clear which assessment information is based on their own direct involvement with the CYP.
- Maintain clarity around interpretation of assessment information and recommendations made and exercise a duty of care to all those with whom they work.

### **What is the role of an Educational Psychologist in the education health and care needs assessment?**

If the education setting feels that the CYP has significant difficulty with learning and or social and emotional development, and may require an education, health and care needs assessment leading towards an Educational Health and Care Plan (EHCP), they can make a formal request to the local authority, and demonstrate the action they have taken through the CYP's individual support plans. If the local authority agrees to the assessment, then the EP will be requested to provide information and advice, alongside other professionals such as Speech and Language Therapists, Community Paediatricians, Specialist Teachers, Early Years Quality Team and Social Care to help the local authority decide whether an EHCP is required. When providing their advice, the EP will consider what psychological assessment information is already available about the CYP and then decide whether additional psychological information is needed. As detailed above, EPs use a range of assessment approaches and work in collaboration with parents/carers, setting staff and other professionals.

### **What is the role of an Educational Psychologist in annual reviews and interim reviews?**

The local authority must review the EHCP at least annually (every six months until the child reaches the age of 5 years). The meetings are led by the education setting as they are in the best position to know the CYP as they have the closest contact with them and their family, as well as the most up to date information about progress and next steps. These meeting must focus on progress towards achieving the outcomes listed in the EHCP, and on any changes to be made to the outcomes or support needed to help the CYP continue to make progress.

In preparing for review meetings, education settings should be discussing the CYP's progress with parents/carers. If progress is not being made then the education setting should consider whether further school/setting based assessment may be needed to help identify any additional support the CYP might need. The Best Practice Walkthrough section within the SEND Children Thrive: Matching Provision to Need documents provide guidance for settings before, during, and following annual review meetings alongside 'top tips' to help these meetings run smoothly.

If there are worries that the CYP's needs have significantly changed, or that the provision may no longer be meeting the CYP's needs, then the educational setting can discuss this with their link EP (*if they buy into Tameside EPS*) or if they buy in from another EP service and request their involvement. This involvement

may be attendance at the annual review, or prior work (e.g. consultation or assessment work to clarify the CYP's specific needs and advise on additional support that might be needed). Details of the EP's involvement should be included in the education setting's annual review paperwork.

The annual review process ensures that the EHCP remains relevant and appropriate to the needs of the CYP. If, at the annual review it is agreed that the needs of the CYP have changed significantly and/or the provision is no longer able to address the CYP's needs then the local authority will be asked to make a decision about updating the EHCP and/or exploring more suitable education provision. Occasionally, the local authority may require additional information in order to make its decision and may call upon the EP to provide updated psychological advice.

### References:

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