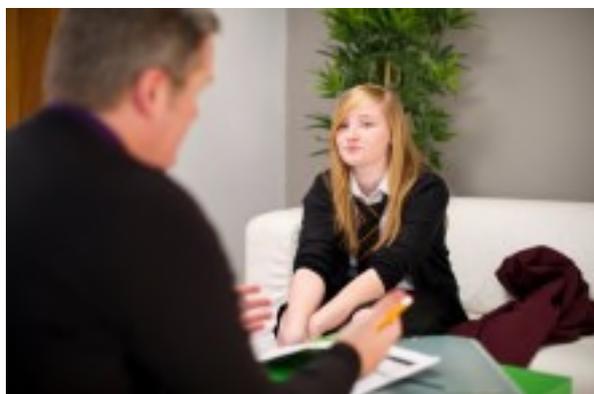


# **Educational Psychology: Helping children and young people achieve their potential**

Our helpline staff often talk to parents and carers about assessments – how to ask for one, how long it will take, how they will be involved etc. One question we get asked a lot is how educational psychologists are involved in assessing a child.

We've worked with educational psychologists from a number of local authorities to put together a short summary explaining their role and answer some of the most frequently asked questions.



## **What is the role of an educational psychologist?**

Educational psychologists usually work in a local authority educational psychology service. They work in partnership with schools and the local authority to improve children's experiences of learning. Educational psychologists and schools work to the principles of Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) to ensure that all children and young people are safe, healthy, nurtured, achieving, respected, responsible and included.

Educational Psychologists use their training in psychology and knowledge of child development to help others understand about:

- child development
- how children learn
- how children behave and manage their emotions
- how children develop positive relationships with others

## **How are educational psychology services organised?**

An educational psychology service is part of a network of support that is available to children within a local authority. Educational psychology services may differ from area to area but in general a school, cluster of schools or local area will be assigned to an educational psychologist/s.

Educational psychologists work at 3 levels: child & family; school; local authority.

They may do this in a number of ways:

- Provide training for people who work with children, on how to help children learn and develop.
- Provide advice in partnership with those who know the child best, on methods or strategies to help a child learn more effectively. Strategies may include teaching approaches, advice on curriculum materials and promoting positive behaviour and relationships.
- Provide assessment or intervention for a child when further information is required.
- Keeping up to date with recent research relating to how children learn and develop to inform local authority policy and practice.
- Being involved in, and advising, local authority groups considering additional support for learning needs.
- Project work in schools such as promoting nurturing approaches or developing literacy skills.

## **How do educational psychologists get involved with a child?**

In most local authorities a staged intervention process will be used in schools to help identify a child's support needs and to ensure that a child's needs are being met. An educational psychologist works within this staged process.

A Team around the Child (TAC) may request involvement from an educational psychologist or in some cases when a child has not yet started school, a child's needs can be discussed at an early year's multi-agency assessment team, which an educational psychologist may contribute to.

There needs to be a clear reason for an educational psychologist to become involved. This should be around promoting the wellbeing learning of the child and in relation to the teaching delivered by school staff.

Prior to involvement from an educational psychologist, the parent/carer must provide consent.

To find out more about an educational psychology service's process for becoming involved, please refer to the services' public websites, which will provide further information and leaflets on the role of the educational psychologist.

If a parent is concerned about their child's learning, they have the right to ask their education authority to find out whether their child has additional support needs and to request a specific assessment (which can include an educational psychology assessment). To find out more information see our Assessment factsheet <http://enquire.org.uk/publications/factsheets/factsheet-18-assessment>

## **How do educational psychologists assess a child?**

An educational psychologist usually joins the assessment process after the people who work directly with the child have gathered information and have provided and reviewed the success of strategies used.

An educational psychologist's role in the assessment process is often agreed through consultation or a collaborative discussion with parents/carers and others who work directly with the child and may involve either direct or indirect involvement with the child, or a combination of both. An educational psychologist will use an

approach that is the least disruptive for a child.

An educational psychologist's assessment may involve:

- talking to the child's teachers; parents/carers; child
- observing the child in the classroom
- looking at the child's work
- analysing existing assessment information
- questionnaires or specific assessment materials
- considering information wider than the child such as the impact of an event at home

An assessment will identify the child's strengths, difficulties and solutions to overcome the difficulties.

### **Do parents have to give consent for an educational psychologist to be involved with their child?**

In keeping with the additional support for learning legislation, the views of parents and carers must be sought and taken account of in the assessment process. Any direct work with a child should be done with the full consent of a child's parents or carers. The views of children and young people themselves should also be asked and taken account of.

### **How do educational psychologists support schools?**

Educational psychologists work with schools to help them look at the needs of the whole child so they are able to be included fully in class, school and community life.

They provide advice to head teachers and school staff where needed and provide training to help staff to develop skills to support children with specific needs and enhance all children's learning.

They provide advice on target setting for children's learning plans. They are not responsible for drawing up or implementing plans in schools.

They help schools to communicate about a child's needs and support them to fully involve parents.

### **Do educational psychologists only work with school age children?**

No. Educational psychologists do not just work with children and young people in school. They work with families with very young children in early years settings and in planning for young people leaving school and moving on to employment or further education.

### **Do educational psychologists decide which school a child attends?**

No. Educational psychologists work for the local authority providing their analysis of children's needs and how these can be met in particular environments. They may be involved in discussion, and consultation with parents, relating to which type of school placement would best meet a child's educational needs. The final decision about where a child is placed lies with the local authority. Parents have the right to make a placing request for their child to attend a particular school and to appeal this if refused. More information about placing requests can be found in [Factsheet 3: Placing Request](#)

For more information read *Educational Psychology Assessment in Scotland (2014)*

[http://www.bps.org.uk/system/files/Public%20files/Quals/aspep-sdep\\_assessment\\_position\\_paper\\_2014.pdf](http://www.bps.org.uk/system/files/Public%20files/Quals/aspep-sdep_assessment_position_paper_2014.pdf)