



BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGISTS AND PRIVATE EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGISTS: WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

Background

This paper has been written in response to head teachers' request for greater clarity about Private Psychology Practice and how to advise parents requesting an Educational Psychology (EP) assessment for their child given the high demand for EPs and limited BCC EPS time available.

Introduction

There are more similarities than differences between Buckinghamshire County Council (BCC) EPs and private EPs. The main differences arise from the source of the enquiry, the focus for concern and the questions raised. These lead to different lines of information gathering, assessment, future actions, interventions and recommendations, monitoring and reporting based on application of psychology.

Qualifications, Training and Codes of Conduct

All applied psychologists recognize the need for the highest standards of professional education and knowledge through suitable qualification and observance of strict rules of professional practice and conduct. They need to provide evidence of psychology graduate basis for registration in order to apply for advanced professional training.

BCC EPs have all followed postgraduate British Psychological Society (BPS) accredited programmes of study and specialist training for Educational Psychology. Some private psychologists may have followed different applied psychology training routes and sometimes may not have followed specific 'educational' psychology training. For example, some private psychologists specialise in expert witness work for the courts and may have a clinical psychology background.

Health Professions Council

From 1 July 2009, all applied psychologists will need to register, with the Health Professions Council (HPC) and comply with its regulations. This will be a legal requirement in order to practice.

HPC will be responsible for regulation, training and dealing with complaints from the public about psychologists. Registered psychologists will be required to keep a log of continuing professional training.

Certain titles, including 'educational psychologist' are now protected by law.



The HPC will be assuming the role of regulator of initial professional training and education.

British Psychological Society (BPS, the Society)

The British Psychological Society, under the terms of its Royal Charter, is required to maintain a Code of Conduct, Ethical Principles and Guidelines. As the professional and learned body for psychology, it is responsible for promoting excellence and ethical practice in science, education, research and practical applications of psychology.

Some psychologists in private practice are not members of the BPS.

The BPS is responsible for setting the academic gold standard for psychology teaching and professional training and until recently has had a voluntary regulatory function to protect the public. It has held a voluntary register of Chartered Psychologists, who have been required to adhere to the code of conduct and ethical practice and maintain professional development.

Chartered Psychologist

The title "Chartered Psychologist" is protected by the BPS. It is deemed misconduct to claim such a title without the relevant professional training qualification. Titles such as **Consultant or Consulting Psychologist** are not recognised by the Society or HPC. Chartered Psychologists need to provide a log of on going professional development including supervision and training to maintain knowledge and skills.

Code of Conduct

All members of the BPS are required to comply with the Code of Conduct. The Code addresses issues such as consent, confidentiality, competence and communication as well as ethical issues related to assessment, intervention and research.

Association of Educational Psychologists (AEP)

AEP is the recognised Trade Union for EPs. It is affiliated to the Trades Union Congress (TUC). The AEP also has a code of conduct for its members. It also negotiates with the Soulbury Committee on EP pay scales. Many BCC EPs belong to the AEP.

Sources of requests for involvement – open access

Usually BCC EP work arises from notifications from paediatricians for children under five years old where a child may have special educational needs, maintained schools and the Local Authority. BCC employs EPs to provide psychological advice for statutory assessment of children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) under the 1996 Education Act.

EPs provide a consultation service to all maintained schools, special schools and specialist provision and this may lead to a range of assessment and intervention work, development work with staff or research and policy development for the school as a whole.

Private psychologist work is more likely to come as a request from parents of children in the independent, non-maintained and private education sector or via a solicitor for the Court or SEN and Disability Tribunal. It is often individual child focussed. Some



psychologists in private practice offer a consultancy service to schools in the private sector or special projects in Local Authorities.

Private psychologists should inform parents that EP services are available free at the point of delivery, particularly for children or young people with special educational needs.

The source of request for EP involvement leads to differences for example:

- Nature of concerns and reasons for involvement
- Consent and confidentiality issues
- Assessment and intervention
- Monitoring and follow-up arrangements
- Reporting and recording
- Recommendation and implementation
- Statutory Assessment under 1996 Education Act
- Fees payable
- Accountability

Common reasons for requests for Private Psychologist involvement

Examination access arrangements

Parents are often concerned that their child needs additional time for public examinations. In Buckinghamshire the Cognition and Learning Team provides assessment and reports and is available to all schools at a cost determined annually. Schools are able to make their own access arrangements for SATs.

The EPS is not resourced to provide assessment for students not previously known to the service with respect to Disabled Student Allowance (DSA) prior going on to higher education.

Parental Request for Statutory Assessment (Education Act 1996)

Parents can submit reports from private psychologists to Buckinghamshire's Formal Assessment and Placement Group (FAP), which will take them into consideration in making its decision. Additional information and involvement of Local Authority staff is usually required. BCC EPs have to write the psychological advice under 1996 Education Act.

To confirm dyslexia, dyspraxia etc.

Some GPs tell parents to request EP assessment for specific learning difficulties. Schools should have good processes in place using the SEN Code of Practice for identification, assessment and action to meet children's needs. Involvement of the Cognition and Learning team, the schools specialist teacher or EPS should be considered if a child's progress is significant and persistent.

To confirm other diagnoses, ADHD, Asperger Syndrome etc.

The school's SENCo should discuss concerns raised by parents or other agencies with their EP at next EP contact as parents often have important information to share.



Parental Access to EPS

BCC EPs offers an open consultation model. Parents can contact the EPS to request consultation. Further information is available on our website.

www.buckscc.gov.uk/schools/eps

Useful addresses

To check if an EP is on the HPC Register for Educational Psychologists or to register a complaint about a psychologist, you can phone the HPC www.hpc-uk.org or phone Monday to Friday 8 am – 6pm 0845 300 4472

Alternatively you can check the BPS website and register of chartered psychologists phone 0116 254 9568 or consult the website

www.bps.org.uk

The Association of Educational Psychologists is the Trade Union for the profession to which many LEA EPs belong and who will act on their behalf with respect to negligence claims.

www.aep.org.uk

The table below seeks to summarise some of the similarities and differences between BCC EPs and private psychologist practice. Items in italics indicate similarities.



Table to show similarities and differences between BCC EPs in Private EPs

ISSUE	BCC EP	PRIVATE EP
<p>Nature of concerns and reasons for referral</p>	<p>Requests for involvement relate to concerns about developmental, learning and emotional difficulties leading to underachievement or disruptive behaviour at school brought by the school's special educational needs co-ordinator with parental consent.</p> <p>EPs will seek parent's views and those of the child. Involvement with an individual child may lead to the EP working with a group of children or the class teacher or other adults in education.</p>	<p>Individual referrals from parents may relate to school or home issues.</p> <p>The private psychologist is often reliant on information from the parent.</p> <p>It is less likely that group work will result from involvement.</p> <p>Psychologists may be instructed by solicitor on behalf of the Court or Tribunal as an expert witness</p>
<p>Consent and confidentiality</p>	<p>EP must seek consent from the person with parental responsibility for the child.</p> <p>If EP is working with a group of children, parental consent is needed for all children.</p>	<p>Psychologist must seek consent from the person with parental responsibility for the child.</p> <p>Psychologist must be clear about boundaries of confidentiality and sharing of information. The EP will only seek information from others with parents' consent.</p> <p>The psychologist may use information from other services</p>



ISSUE	BCC EP	PRIVATE EP
	<p>The EP may use information from other services or agencies, with permission. Such information and its source must be acknowledged.</p> <p>The EP is likely to share information with relevant people and other agencies with parental agreement.</p> <p>EP is bound to pass on any disclosure indicating suspected child abuse (Children Act 89)</p> <p><i>Where 2 EPs or other psychologists are involved with an individual, they should communicate as some assessments cannot be repeated within a given time frame</i></p>	<p>or agencies, with permission. Such information and its source must be acknowledged.</p> <p>Parents may not wish to share information with other agencies.</p> <p>EP is bound to pass on any disclosure indicating suspected child abuse (Children Act 89)</p> <p><i>Where 2 EPs or other psychologists are involved with an individual, they should communicate as some assessments cannot be repeated within a given time frame</i></p>
Assessment and intervention	Assessment will be purposeful and related to the	<i>Assessment will be purposeful and related to the nature of the concerns.</i>



ISSUE	BCC EP	PRIVATE EP
	<p>nature of the concerns.</p> <p><i>Assessment should be based on full and accurate information based on consultation with other people concerned within limits and with regard to confidentiality and consent.</i></p> <p><i>Assessment should be objective and unbiased.</i></p> <p>Assessment is usually contextual and school/home based. Information is often available from other LEA services and other agencies.</p> <p>Assessment and intervention is possible over time during regular school visits.</p>	<p><i>Assessment should be based on full and accurate information based on consultation with other people concerned within limits and with regard to confidentiality and consent.</i></p> <p><i>Assessment should be objective and unbiased.</i></p> <p>Assessment is often more restricted, home or office/clinic based. EP is more reliant on reports provided by parents.</p> <p>Assessment is often based on a set of psychometric and standardised tests on a single occasion</p>



Monitoring and follow-up arrangements	<p>EP has regular consultation with school personnel.</p> <p>Monitoring can also be done by school staff and through other services</p>	<p>Follow-up involves extra payment and will depend on the initial contract of engagement.</p>
Reporting and recording	<p>EP consultation records report actions agreed and summarise main points.</p> <p>Reports for statutory assessment must follow required format.</p> <p>EPs will often copy reports to other relevant professionals as well as to parents</p>	<p>Reports tend to be lengthy with individual standardised test results.</p> <p>Reports for the Court or Tribunal may have a required format.</p> <p>The report belongs to the person who paid for it</p>
Recommendation and implementation	<p>EP recommendations relate to the school context and implementation can be monitored through regular contact with school</p>	<p>Recommendations from reports may lead to further action. Implementation not often monitored as further assessment involves further fees..</p>
Statutory Assessment under 1996 Education Act	<p>BCC has to ensure that suitably qualified EPs are employed to provide psychological advice under 1996 Education Act</p>	<p>Any reports need to be taken into consideration by LA if submitted by a parent in request for a statutory assessment.</p>
Fees	<p>Free at point of delivery</p>	<p>There is usually a fee to be paid for agreed work.</p>
Accountability	<p>EP is responsible for professional practice.</p> <p>Individual EPs are covered by LEA insurance liability.</p>	<p>EP is responsible for professional practice.</p> <p>EP usually covered by private liability insurance</p>



	<p><i>BCC EPs must register with HPC</i></p> <p>EPs are encouraged to be members of BPS, DECP and to maintain Chartered Status</p> <p>Many EPs belong to the Association of Educational Psychologists.</p>	<p><i>EPs must register with HPC</i></p> <p>Some EPs are members of BPS and/or DECP</p>
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Advice for Parents

Buckinghamshire County Council (BCC) provides an Educational Psychology Service (EPS) for all children and young people aged 0-19 years old with special, complex and persistent educational needs. EPs have a statutory duty under 1996 Education Act to contribute to assessment of Special Educational Needs.

Parents may have to wait for BCC EP involvement and can raise their concerns with the school SENCo, who should then discuss them with their EP. Parents can also contact the EPS directly for consultation, which may lead to EP involvement or signposting to other agencies or services as appropriate.

Private psychologists charge a fee and may not have the same background or training or links with other local services. They may be able to see children more quickly than BCC EPs. Priorities for BCC EP involvement can be found on the EPS website.

“Chartered Psychologist” and “Educational Psychologist” are legally protected titles and offer some quality assurance. Misuse of these titles should be reported to the HPC or BPS. Other titles, e.g. Consulting/Consultant Psychologist are not protected or regulated.

All psychologists must be registered with the Health Professions Council.

www.bps.org.uk

www.hpc-uk.org

www.buckscc.gov.uk/schools/eps

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