

Educational Psychology Consultation: Enhancing Support for Children with SEND

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Version control

Date	Details	Updated by
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Aims of this document.

- This document aims to inform stakeholders about the benefits and process of consultation as an alternative approach to casework and how it aligns with the goals of the Torbay SEND strategy to improve support for children and young people with SEND.

Background and Context

Torbay SEND strategy.

- Torbay has developed a SEND strategy to create a child-friendly environment, enable all children and young people with SEND to reach their full potential, and align resources to achieve sustained improvement. The strategy focuses on co-design and co-production principles.
- The strategy for improving support for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) has five priority areas: embedding values and reforming the workforce, identifying and acting on children's needs early, understanding the needs of families and making the best use of resources, promoting inclusivity in early years and mainstream education, and improving transition planning for young people entering adulthood. The strategy's success depends on cultural change and all parties' commitment. The strategy aims to provide high-quality services for children and young people with SEND and their families.

Educational Psychology Service: Aligning with SEND Strategy and Enhancing Support to Schools

- Torbay Educational Psychology Service recognises that to address the aims and priorities outlined in the SEND strategy, the EP service must also change its way of working. There is a need to focus on the graduated response, work systemically in schools and deliver project work for Torbay Schools.
- The service has traded with schools since 2009. Demand for traded services has increased yearly since then, and last year the service could not meet all the school requests for traded time. The service is typically asked to see children complete individual casework and write reports, often used to support a Request for Statutory Assessment (RSA).

The consequences of using the casework model to deliver educational psychology services.

- The service believes casework is not the best use of resources and does not promote inclusion. It is a time-intensive way of working. The EP typically sees one child in a visit which takes a day of the school's traded time. Report writing is the main component and inevitably leads to backlogs in seeing children or drafting reports. This has made it difficult for the service to prioritise Torbay's SEND strategy, as it is overwhelmed with casework. As a result, there is a higher demand for statutory assessments.



A different way of working: consultation.

- These challenges are not unique to Torbay; many services have found casework inefficient in delivering psychological services. Over the past 20 years, many other services across the UK have found that using a consultation model is a more effective way of delivering EP services.

What is a consultation?

- Consultation is a process based on a plan-do-review framework. It works at the individual, group and whole school levels. It is a solution focussed process which aims for agreed actions. It is collaborative and is inclusive of teachers, parents and pupils.

What are the benefits?

- **Enhanced Collaboration:** Consultation fosters collaboration among SENCOs, teachers, parents, and other professionals. It allows everyone to share their perspectives, insights, and expertise, leading to a more comprehensive understanding of the child's needs and the development of shared solutions. Collaboration helps create a supportive network where individuals can work together effectively.
- **Shared Solutions:** Consultation allows concerns and challenges to be openly discussed, enabling all parties to contribute to finding solutions. By pooling their knowledge and experiences, SENCOs, teachers, parents, and professionals can develop strategies and interventions tailored to the child's needs. This shared problem-solving approach promotes a sense of ownership and collective responsibility for the child's well-being and success.
- **Increased Preventative Work:** When staff members engage in consultation and work together to improve children's learning, development, and achievement, there is a shift towards proactive and preventative measures. By addressing concerns early on, identifying potential barriers, and implementing targeted interventions, the need for more intensive and reactive support can be reduced. This proactive approach promotes positive outcomes and minimises the likelihood of difficulties escalating.
- **Reduced Bureaucracy:** Consultation can help streamline processes and reduce bureaucratic burdens. Professionals and stakeholders can share information efficiently and make informed decisions when communicating effectively and collaborating. This can lead to a more streamlined and coordinated approach to supporting the child, minimising unnecessary paperwork, duplication of efforts, and administrative tasks that can impede progress.
- **Improved Understanding and Empathy:** Through consultation, SENCOs, teachers, parents, and professionals gain a deeper understanding of the child's strengths, challenges, and circumstances. This increased understanding fosters empathy and helps build positive relationships among all involved. By acknowledging and valuing each participant's diverse perspectives and expertise, a more holistic and person-centred approach to support can be developed.
- **Enhanced Professional Development:** Consultation provides a platform for ongoing professional development and learning. Through collaboration and sharing of ideas, professionals can expand their knowledge base, learn from each other's experiences, and develop new skills and strategies. This continuous learning process contributes to the professional growth and effectiveness of individuals involved in the consultation process.
- **Strengthened Parental Engagement:** Consultation involving parents promotes their active involvement in their child's education and well-being. By engaging parents in meaningful discussions, seeking their input, and valuing their expertise as primary caregivers, consultation helps build a strong partnership between home and school. This collaboration enhances parental confidence, trust, and participation, leading to improved outcomes for the child.
- **Holistic and Individualised Support:** Consultation provides a comprehensive approach to supporting children's learning, development, and achievement. By considering multiple perspectives, incorporating diverse strategies, and tailoring interventions to the unique needs of each child, consultation promotes personalised support that addresses the whole child, including their academic, social, emotional, and behavioural aspects.

What does the consultation process look like?

- The 'PLAN' stage involves:
 - Consultation with teachers, parents and pupils to identify and gain a shared understanding of the main concerns and identify initial actions to address those concerns.
- The 'DO' stage involves : Putting in place strategies agreed upon in the consultation, which may include:
 - School staff gathering assessment information, e.g., observation, completing questionnaires, academic assessments and so on.
 - EP carried out observation, assessment, or gathering information from staff through questionnaires.
 - Referrals to other agencies.
- The 'REVIEW' stage involves:
 - A joint consultation with EP, parents and teachers, at least six weeks later, to review progress towards the actions set at the initial consultation.

What does the process look like?

- At the beginning of the school year or term, the school organises a Planning and Review Meeting with their Link educational psychologist to identify young people who may require additional support. When it is deemed appropriate for an educational psychologist to be involved with an individual child or young person, a referral form is completed. This process remains consistent with current practices.
- Upon receiving the referral form, the educational psychologist will coordinate with the school to schedule a consultation meeting. Typically, this meeting involves the educational psychologist, the child's parent or caregiver, the child's teacher, and the school SENCo (Special Educational Needs Coordinator). Depending on the circumstances, other adults may also be invited to participate. If relevant, the young person may be included for a portion of the meeting, considering their age and stage of development.
- This consultation meeting aims to facilitate collaboration and information sharing among the involved parties. It provides an opportunity to discuss the child's needs, challenges, strengths, and any relevant background information. A comprehensive understanding of the child's situation can be achieved by having all stakeholders present, including parents, teachers, SENCo, and the educational psychologist.
- The consultation meeting allows collective problem-solving and developing strategies and interventions tailored to the child's needs. It is a platform for open communication where everyone's perspectives and expertise are valued. Through this collaborative process, shared solutions can be generated, and a plan of action can be established to support the child's learning, development, and achievement.
- They usually last between 1 to 1.5 hours.
- The Consultation meeting will end with a Review date scheduled for at least 6 weeks to examine the success of the strategies and think about the next steps.

What will the EP write?

- During the consultation, the EP will write notes summarising concerns and recording actions and next steps. The EP will provide you with a record of the consultation notes, but you are encouraged to make a note of any actions you need to take yourself. This will be summarised if the EP assesses the 'do' stage. A formal report must be negotiated with the EP if required.
- An example of a consultation record (blank) is appended to this document. This is an example of what an Educational Psychologist would fill in during a consultation meeting.

What is helpful for the SENCo to do as part of the process?

- Arrange for the relevant staff to be released for 1-1.5 hours for the consultations.
- Where possible, attend the meeting together with the teacher. SENCos have a wealth of knowledge and can often bring new solutions.
- Ensure a private room is available for the meeting.
- Liaise with parents to ensure their attendance at the meeting.

- Collate assessment information for the meeting.

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