



**Building a sustainable system of  
entry training for educational  
psychologists**

**Consultation final report**

**July 2008**

# **Building a sustainable system of entry training for educational psychologists**

## **1. Introduction**

The Children's Workforce Development Council consultation, *Building a sustainable system of entry training for educational psychologists*, was open between 4th April and 30th May 2008. During that period, the consultation was advertised on the CWDC website, in a number of major industry publications and newsletters, as well as being circulated directly to key contacts and National Forum members for wider distribution. In addition, CWDC staff attended a range of regional meetings and the National Association of Principal Educational Psychologists (NAPEP) national conference to gather feedback and to encourage submissions. CWDC wishes to thank all those who contributed to the consultation.

In total, there were 64 discrete responses to the consultation. Those who submitted feedback included the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS), the Association of Educational Psychologists (AEP), the Division of Education and Child Psychology (DECP) of the British Psychological Society (BPS), NAPEP and the Officers' Side of the Soulbury Committee as well as a number of course directors from current training providers, educational psychologists and trainees.

It has been necessary to proceed with the consultation in parallel with interim arrangements for September 2008 in order to ensure that there is no gap in training provision. The findings of this consultation will primarily inform planning for the medium and long term. Where appropriate, findings from the consultation will be acted on in the short term. These are set out in the Next Steps section at the end of this report.

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## 2. Educational Psychology entry training - background

In autumn 2006, CWDC was invited by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) to bring together the key stakeholders involved in delivering Educational Psychology entry training, thereby forming the Educational Psychology Future Implementation Group (EPFIG). This group of key stakeholders, chaired by Jane Haywood, Chief Executive of CWDC, met on a regular basis throughout 2007 to discuss the options and to identify a realistic and viable way forward. The conclusion of these discussions was set out as a number of next steps for CWDC to take.

The main issues discussed by EPFIG were the mode of funding, the implications for this upon the status of trainees during their training, and the mechanisms by which the training can effectively be delivered over all 3 years of the course. EPFIG discussions were cognisant of the two challenges facing the delivery of professional training; the need for:

- a short term arrangement to ensure training continued in September 2008, and
- a more sustainable and embedded solution for the medium to longer term, which incorporates understanding of the changing role of educational psychologists within children's services

Following these discussions, CWDC met with the Local Government Association (LGA), and the DCSF in order to set in motion the process for reinstating the top-slice from the Revenue Support Grant, which had previously ring-fenced funding for Educational Psychology training. This route proved incompatible with the LGA allocation process, as well as with the overall policy direction of central government in relation to the devolution of decision-making. As a consequence it was agreed with the DCSF to continue a modified version of the Local Authority subscription scheme that had been in place for the two previous years. The modifications were designed to ensure that the total cost of fees for all three course years is incorporated and that it is transparent and straightforward.

Recently there has been significant change to the training scheme and the way it is funded, which are currently being funded and delivered via interim arrangements. CWDC is keen to utilise this period of transition as an opportunity to evolve the system for delivering Educational Psychology entry training to ensure that it is meeting the needs of employers, is responsive to the changing children's services environment and forms an integral part of educational psychology delivery. In achieving this, there will be a continued period of adjustment as the new system embeds. CWDC aims to encourage the continued involvement of the profession and all those connected with Educational Psychology to ensure that the final outcome is a profession that provides the best possible service for children and young people.

CWDC's remit is England only, although we look forward to working closely with colleagues elsewhere in the UK to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of Educational Psychology entry training. As CWDC's role is to administer funding for training places, unfunded trainees fall outside its direct responsibility, although reasonable consideration will be given to their needs.

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## 3. Findings

The 64 submissions come from a range of respondents varying from individuals through to professional bodies. The detail offered in the submissions varied considerably. Where possible, some quantifying of data has been done by the author, however, this consultation was driven by the complexity of the issues in hand, and quantitative data should be understood in this context.

This section is structured according to the headings of the original document, while sub-headings have been added to organise the main themes of the responses. It details the range of opinions and background information provided in the responses, as well as additional information relating to these that offers further insight into CWDC's plans. Each section begins with key messages from the responses, and ends with actions to be taken, which will form the next steps.

### 3.1 Consultation introduction

- **Respondents welcome the opportunity to participate**

The opportunity to comment on the proposals was welcomed by many of the respondents. Feedback on the issues raised in the introduction focused on three main areas: the regional and national infrastructure, workforce planning and the relationship between employers and training providers. This is set out in more detail below.

#### 3.1.1 Regional and national infrastructure

- **Support for workforce planning and national oversight**
- **Mixed response to regional network proposal**

All of the respondents that commented on the establishment of a workforce planning scheme were supportive of it, including ADCS, AEP, NAPEP and the DECP, recognising the benefits of having a system responsive to employer need. Of those who commented, all supported a national element of the workforce planning. However, feedback on the regional element was divided. Of those who commented, 61% expressed support, while 39% raised concerns. 36% of respondents did not comment. Concerns related primarily to the potential burden of collecting data at a regional level, and the additional bureaucracy that this might involve, while support for the regional element recognised the benefit of being more regionally responsive to need. The AEP drew on its understanding that there is great variety in Local Authority employment and planning arrangements and consequently points out the need for a workforce planning system that is responsive to this variety; this view was also supported by the ADCS.

The submissions contain much anecdotal evidence to suggest that there is greater demand for educational psychology services, for example from schools and specific multi-agency projects than is currently provided. In addition, several respondents suggested that there are a number of employers and commissioners who are not explicitly considered in the proposals, such as voluntary and independent organisations and private consultancies. Awareness of this is potentially something that can be considered in the long term, although where appropriate this may develop at a faster pace at a regional or local level.

A number of concerns, for example relating to the perceived rigidity of the regional relationship between training providers and employers indicate that further clarification is required from CWDC on the proposed structure. The model is underpinned by the understanding that there are already active regional networks of employers and training providers, including those of the ADCS and NAPEP. CWDC's proposal identifies the NAPEP regional groups as essential to establishing a planning system that builds on these relationships to ensure that there is sufficient capacity to support trainees through all three years of their training. CWDC has already begun to work with these regional networks. Training providers successfully awarded contracts for the 2009 – 2011 cohorts will further develop and grow this infrastructure.

The problematic nature of LA planning processes in relation to workforce planning for Educational Psychology training was highlighted in several of the responses, including NAPEP and ADCS. While the introduction of a programme of workforce planning is new, the shift towards longer term planning parallels the direction in which LAs are moving, and workforce planning of the kind proposed fits appropriately with this longer term agenda. CWDC recognises that additional support will be needed in this period of transition and is committed to providing it.

The National Forum will be the location of discussions about overall trainee placements for England and regional employer representatives on the National Forum are invited to provide a short report at each meeting. This will include both placement capacity and workforce demand as part of an annual cycle of training delivery.

- **Alter the emphasis of the workforce planning system to ensure clear national oversight**

### **3.1.2 Workforce planning – predicting demand**

- **Suggested factors to be considered in workforce planning**
- **Concerns about practical application by employers**

A number of suggestions were put forward as methods for predicting demand, most of which involved levels of vacancies, retirement rates, potential and recent promotion profiles, as well as factoring in sickness and maternity leave. Additional suggestions included calculating where possible project based or additionally funded places; those which are specialist and multi-agency. One of the challenges raised by several respondents was the difficulties LA employers have with planning three years in advance, something that will need to be considered when implementing the annual cycle. Any model of workforce planning in relation to training delivery must consider not only demand for new graduates, but Local Authority ability support trainees.

Several respondents referred to the concept of an Educational Psychologist to child ratio for 0-19 year olds to inform workforce planning. One submission cited the Warnock report<sup>1</sup>, which indicated that a ratio of 1:5,000 was appropriate. According to the latest statistics published by the DCSF, the average Educational Psychologist:child ratio within the Local

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<sup>1</sup> Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Education of Handicapped Children and Young People. London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office. 1978

Authorities is 1:5,483<sup>2</sup>, while the average number of fte Educational Psychologists employed by LAs is 15, although vigorous debate about this continues.

- **Explore further the concept of a child: Educational Psychologist ratio for all children aged 0-19 years**
- **Build on suggestions put forward to develop workforce planning model**

### **3.1.3 Relationship between employers and Training Providers**

- **Existing relationships between training providers and Local Authorities should be developed by key partners**
- **Flexibility of trainee placements is valued by employers**

It is clear from the submissions that Local Authorities are often already involved in close relationships with certain training providers, although there are variations in structure and formality. Some are active in the selection of trainees, some contribute to establishing criteria for candidate selection through, for example, a locally agreed person specification, and many are involved with training forums. CWDC envisages that these relationships will be strengthened and formalised as part of the development of the workforce planning infrastructure.

Several respondents recognised the benefits of the current flexibility which allows trainees to work in a range of LAs and facilitates the sharing of psychological approaches and experiences. The training provision model set out by CWDC for the academic year 2009/10 onwards seeks to encourage partnerships between regional training providers who can work together to maintain this flexibility, whilst ensuring there is sufficient second and third year placement capacity.

A few submissions raised the possibility of reinstating or extending the previous LGE “host” Local Authority arrangements, whereby a trainee was nominally employed by a Local Authority for the duration of their training. This arrangement was challenged by the HMRC, and a ruling made that means that this is not an option for Educational Psychology training. For more information, please see HMRC ruling EIM61200<sup>3</sup>

- **CWDC to encourage relationships between training providers in different regions to facilitate flexibility of trainee placements**

## **3.2 Local Authority Subscription**

- **No consensus on preferred funding mechanism**
- **The subscription scheme needs modifying to improve performance**
- **There are employers other than Local Authorities**

30% of submissions included reference to the benefits of a centrally funded system, while 16% identified a reinstatement of the revenue support grant as the preferred means of funding the training. The majority of responses did not comment on this directly. As set out

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<sup>2</sup> These figures are taken from this website: <http://www.theyworkforyou.com/wrans/?id=2008-04-28d.200520.h&s=educational+psychology>

<sup>3</sup> For further information about this ruling, please see the relevant HMRC web page <http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/manuals/eimanual/EIM61200.htm>

in Section 2 of this document, the possibility of re-instating the top slice was explored by CWDC and the DCSF, and has proved to be a dead end. Having ascertained this, the DCSF has clearly indicated that its preferred method of funding Educational Psychology entry training is through employer subscription.

Concern was expressed that subscription will not succeed in providing sustainable funding. Of those who commented, 68% of responses opposed the subscription scheme and 32% of responses supported it, although a number outlined certain modifications. 61% of respondents did not comment on the subscription scheme.

CWDC is not currently in a position to make subscription compulsory. Instead, it seeks to grow long-term commitment to the scheme through increased communication with strategic decision-makers in the Local Authority, such as the Directors of Children's Services. In addition, the timing of the communication in relation to annual budgeting was identified as needing improvement. In parallel with this and explicitly supported by 39% of respondents, CWDC has set out its plan for examining how Educational Psychologists work in Local Authorities. This is intended to boost the profile of the profession within Local Authorities and among other commissioners.

The question of what penalties exist for not subscribing has been raised with CWDC via a number of different channels. There are no direct financial penalties, however, CWDC is keen that Educational Psychology employers perceive the subscription scheme as part of an on-going relationship that ensures the stability of Educational Psychology entry training. CWDC is keen to ensure that, where possible, the needs of employers are considered in the delivery of Educational Psychology entry training.

Several submissions suggested that the proposals were currently too focused on Local Authorities as employers of Educational Psychologists. They put forward private consultancies and voluntary and independent organisations as other employers with the potential to provide placement experience for trainees. The scheme currently focuses on Local Authorities as the employers of the vast majority of Educational Psychologists.

- **Annual subscription request to be made in time with Local Authority budgeting**
- **On-going contact with strategic decision-makers to encourage commitment to the scheme**
- **Explore involvement of engaging with other employers**

### **3.3 Trainee conditions**

- **No consensus on whether trainees should be employed or receive bursaries**

There was a mixed response in terms of whether to offer bursaries or wages for the three years of training. 39% of submissions recognised the benefits of bursaries, while 22% recognised the benefits of employment. In addition, 13% of responses opposed bursaries, while 6% opposed employment. Arguments in favour of bursaries refer to their affordability from a Local Authority perspective and the potential for variety in terms of placement experience. Supporters of employment emphasise the target profile of applicants that will be attracted by employment and the benefits in terms of employment and pension rights. Another group of respondents supported the current mixture of full time training and employment. A further group of respondents was concerned by the stress that uncertain arrangements cause trainees and was therefore most interested in a clear, consistent

training route. Whilst CWDC is not in a position to significantly change the composition of the courses on offer, it has sought to encourage creative delivery through the procurement process.

A few submissions identified a potential clash between 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> year trainees looking for placements and new graduates seeking employment when the graduate gap caused by the change in course length ends in 2009. This was cited as further evidence for establishing a clear and universally recognised route for trainees.

Of significant concern to a number of respondents was the profile of the profession, which may be affected by the terms of the training on offer. As a means of addressing this various suggestions were put forward relating to alternative routes of training for example a fast track route for those with specific qualifications or experience; and part time or "in service" training provision. It is not within CWDC's remit to establish alternative routes of training. This is currently the responsibility of the British Psychological Society through its accreditation capacity. Any changes of this nature would need to be made by the BPS in association with the training providers following thorough consultation and in line with current standards.

- **CWDC to monitor applicant data**
- **CWDC to work with training providers to ensure equity of experience for trainees**

### **3.4 Standardising Experience**

- **Further co-ordination requested for end of year points and placement experience**

CWDC recognises that professional standards for qualifications and course accreditation are currently set by the British Psychological Society. Responsibility for this is likely to transfer to the Health Professionals Council during 2009. CWDC is working with these organisations to ensure that during the current period of transition standards are maintained.

However, some respondents including employers and trainees did identify the need for further investigation of standardisation in terms of learning by the end of year one and during long placements. This is particularly relevant where Local Authorities are employing trainees from more than one training provider or where trainees have a mixture of bursaries and salaries.

Currently the experience of trainees is influenced by a variety of factors, including how the Educational Psychology Service is structured in each Local Authority and where the money for the Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP) has come from. Several Local Authorities expect actual capacity from their TEPs, while in others they are supernumerary.

The consequence of the variety of experiences within LAs is that several trainees submitted responses that cited an extremely heavy placement workload that did not allow sufficient time to meet the additional requirements of the course, such as research and dissertation.

- **CWDC to explore the possibility of agreement on second and third year experience with employers and training providers**



### **3.5 The role of the Educational Psychologist in the children's workforce**

- **Educational psychologists are working in an environment of evolving commissioners and settings**

A number of respondents referred to the changing role of Educational Psychologists within Children's Services. The range of work that Educational Psychologists are being approached to undertake is wide and varied. Responses to the consultation indicate that settings and services that have requested Educational Psychologists' time include:

- Children's Centres
- Social Care staff (including residential care workers, social workers, foster carers and pre-adoptive parents)
- Respite care teams
- Parent groups
- CAMHS
- Looked after Children's Services
- Academy schools
- Sure Start

The types of projects that are being proposed include:

- longer term therapeutic intervention with children
- training courses for other professionals
- parenting programmes
- drop in advice services

Of those who commented, 66% of respondents supported exploring ways in which Clinical and Educational Psychology training can be shared, and 34% of respondents opposed this proposal. 55% of respondents did not comment. There was concern to ensure the unique elements of the Educational Psychologist's role are not lost, nor the different ways of working. The elements of Educational Psychology work that were cited as most specific to the profession included the systematic and strategic work with organisations, such as schools and the fact that Educational Psychologists work in settings with children and young people, rather than in clinics.

In terms of a change of job title there was a very mixed response. Respondents put different emphasis on the education, community and child elements of the work. It was indicated by specific respondents that research has already been conducted into this issue which offered evidence of the lack of consensus within the profession. There were advocates among the submissions for a shift both towards and away from the idea of the title changing to Child Psychologist or to Community Psychologist.

- **Build on existing understanding of the Educational Psychologist's job role**

## **4. Additional factors**

- **There are concerns about the workforce profile of the profession**

There were a number of other issues that were raised in the submissions. One of the most common was the workforce profile of the profession. The potential for a high level of retirements in the near future was cited as evidence for the urgent need for further stability of the training course, while the need to address the increasing proportion of women qualifying was also noted. It was also suggested that the changes to the training arrangements will impact on the profile, in particular encouraging younger applicants.

Other submissions commented on the changing working patterns within the profession, with increasing numbers of Educational Psychologists working part time. The difficulty of securing locum or fixed term cover was also commented on.

A number of respondents identified specific existing workforce tools that could be utilised to contribute to the overall goal of promoting Educational Psychologists and increasing employer commitment to them. These included more explicit reference to Educational Psychology in national strategies such as the Inclusion Development Programme and Narrowing the Gap. In addition, other sectors, such as Early Years could be made more aware of the potential for working with Educational Psychologists.

- **CWDC to continue monitoring workforce profile**

## **5. Conclusions**

The responses reflect the wide variety of views that exist among key stakeholders. There is little consensus on any of the key issues. CWDC's remit is as a leader of workforce reform, focussed on the needs of employers, keen to listen and respond where possible and to lead where appropriate.

The national forum will provide stakeholders with the opportunity to offer CWDC expert insight into the processes in place and feed into the direction of travel. This in turn will be informed by the discussions taking place at a regional level. CWDC will listen to and consider this feedback, while maintaining a long term vision that locates educational psychology in the wider context of the children's workforce. CWDC's priority is that the training produces Educational Psychologists that meet the needs of employers and deliver the best possible outcomes for children and young people.

## 6. Next Steps

The next steps for CWDC are collected here from the preceding report. They are grouped below according to the time scales in which they could be achieved.

### Short term

- **alter the emphasis of the workforce planning system to ensure clear national oversight**
- **annual subscription request to be made in time with Local Authority budgeting**
- **explore further the concept of a child: Educational Psychologist ratio for all children aged 0-19 years**
- **build on suggestions put forward to develop workforce planning model**

### Medium term

- **encourage relationships between training providers in different regions to facilitate flexibility of trainee placements**
- **explore involvement of other employers within the scheme**
- **work with training providers to ensure equity of experience for trainees**
- **explore the possibility of agreement on second and third year experience with employers and training providers**
- **build on existing understanding of the Educational Psychologist's job role**

### Long term

- **On-going contact with strategic decision-makers to encourage commitment to the scheme**
- **continue monitoring of workforce profile**
- **monitor applicant data**

## 7. Contacting CWDC

To download this report, please visit [www.cwdcouncil.org.uk/educational-psychology](http://www.cwdcouncil.org.uk/educational-psychology) and follow the links to the consultation.

Hard copies and large print are available from CWDC on request.

For more information, please email [edpsychs@cwdcouncil.org.uk](mailto:edpsychs@cwdcouncil.org.uk) or phone 0113 390 7767.