

EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY SERVICE

Policy Statement: Service Delivery through Solution Focused Consultation.

Definition:

'Consultation is about working with the staff of a school or setting to help them think through the issue, clarify the problem and then develop solutions to the problem. Ownership of the problem remains with the key person raising the concern. The educational psychologist works with that person to equip him or her with the skills and knowledge they need to be part of the solution.' (DfEE 'Future Directions Report 2000')

Within this consultation model there is an implicit move away from emphasising the importance of 'within child' factors as the key to finding solutions. The psychologist's role is to help significant adults solve, or reframe, the problems that they experience in helping children and young people to learn, communicate and manage their behaviour. It is these conversations that we have with teachers and other adults that are the most powerful agents for bringing about change. Moreover it is psychologically important that Educational Psychologists (EPs) help staff and colleagues to find their own solutions. These will be more durable and carry more commitment than solutions offered as advice that they are expected to adopt.

Because the process of consultation engages staff in creating their own solutions in their own schools/classrooms, this model of service delivery is inherently biased towards inclusion and intrinsically fosters school improvement. It also fits in well with a social model of disability.

To help adults solve their problems, or reframe the situation causing concern, it logically follows that EPs need to spend quality time with the adults who are dealing with the matter at hand. This does not however preclude the importance of working directly with the child as part of the process of consultation if required. This might be to gather essential information, which cannot be found more efficiently by other means, to assess need, or to engage the child's help with the solution. The decision to engage in direct work with the child should always be based on an explicit purpose that has been defined from prior consultation. It should never be a routine expectation.

This is not to say that there is no place for direct individual work within a solution focused consultation model. In some circumstances it may be appropriate for the EP to work with the child so that the child can start to engage with the change process in the direction of his or her preferred future.

Individual work is always costly in use of time and carries the significant potential drawback of reinforcing the view that the problem lies within the child and that we will find the solution if we scrutinise the child thoroughly enough. In many cases a solution-focused approach can go directly to conversations about solutions.

Assessment remains an important component of our remit within a consultation model but will emphasise an interactive and dynamic perspective rather than traditional psychometrics. It is not necessarily the role of the EP to collect the initial screening data used in assessment. Our role is to organise and interpret information in ways that are helpful for constructing solutions. EPs are looking for ways to reduce barriers to learning with the educational environment or scaffold learning effectively.

Lengthy traditional reports are not in themselves effective agents of change and are also very time consuming. They should not therefore be a routine part of our practice. Reports should

only be provided when there is an explicit and justifiable purpose. There should however be clear, consistent records of work. These will normally be provided through the Discussion Records and Consultation Summaries as an integral part of the assess-plan-do-review cycle, often as part of the My Support Plan (MSP) process.

Key Aims:

- To promote child development and learning through the application of psychology working with individual and groups of children, staff and other adults in educational settings, families, LA officers, health and social services and other professionals.
- To enhance our capacity to be powerful agents of change for children and young people through a solution focused consultation approach.
- To develop a model of service delivery which uses available time and resources in the most effective and efficient way possible.
- To ensure that there is consistency of approach to service delivery from all members of the EP team.
- To provide a model of practice which supports the principles and process of inclusion.
- To ensure that our practice is informed by the application of psychological frameworks to complex circumstances and interactions in ways that are helpful for constructing solutions.

Monitoring and Review:

We will monitor our performance through:

- Regular sharing of practice development in EP team meetings and through supervision.
- Informal feedback from schools and colleges as part of the service planning cycle
- formal feedback through biennial surveys of parents/cares and staff in educational settings

See related documents:

- Service Level Arrangements with schools (updated annually)
- DfEE report 2000 'Educational Psychology Services: Current Role, Good Practice and Future Directions
- SEND Code of Practice 2015
- EPS Leaflets (2023)