

Developing a 'local offer': A new Trainee Educational Psychologist model

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THE Coalition Government carried out an extensive review of the initial training arrangements for educational psychologists (EPs) (DfE, 2011). Recently, there have been considerable changes in local authority (LA) EP services and the delivery of training for the next generation of EPs. In addition, a potential shortfall in funding called into question the sustainability of the existing training arrangements.

The review emphasised that EPs have a key role in improving the opportunities for all children and young people, not only in terms of LA statutory responsibilities but also through more universal early intervention and preventative support offered by the public and private sectors, voluntary and community groups and social enterprises. The initial training of EPs must meet the requirements for all these roles. The review also confirmed the appropriateness of TEP placements by stating that 'EPs are moving to a more varied pattern of employment' (DfE, 2011, p.6) and that 'All employers will have the potential to offer bursarial placements' (ibid., p.12). Direct links between training providers and placements, other than LA EP services, have been a novel departure, which reflect the expected change in the profession of fewer EPs being directly employed by LAs and more EP services being commissioned by LAs, individual and clusters of schools and community based organisations.

Developing the 'local offer'

After previously supporting trainee EPs (TEPs) on placements at Priestnall School, and currently supporting training programmes for postgraduates following initial teacher training, social work and speech and language therapy courses, negotiations were undertaken with the University of Manchester about the possibility of developing a school-based model. The bases of the developing model were to work in partnership with some of our feeder primary schools, supporting existing statutory provision and enhancing availability of support to a wider school population through:

- assessment;
- consultation with parents/carers and school staff;
- therapeutic work with children;
- group work with children;
- advice regarding interventions and implementation of interventions;
- helping schools provision map;
- helping schools identify whole school development needs and plans to address these
- research;
- support work with parents/carers; and
- deliver training.

In addition, we were keen to support primary schools with early intervention and support and to explore more creative opportunities, especially in relation to information from the Sutton Trust report into the Pupil Premium, specifically the low-cost – high-impact

provision. For example, this report states that the following are the most-effective measures at the lowest cost (Higgins et al., 2011):

- metacognition and self-regulation strategies;
- peer tutoring and peer-assisted learning; and
- effective feedback

There are several associated benefits from the partnership arrangements, namely developing work with Year 6 students in preparation for transition and supporting primary development with regard to supporting students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

Practical arrangements

Arranging a second year TEP placement in a school was something new. Contracting the bursary arrangements with the University of Manchester through Priestnall School, in partnership with six feeder primary schools, afforded a unique opportunity to develop provision. Finding creative and flexible solutions is becoming increasingly important and receiving one full day of TEP time per month throughout the year for each primary school that 'bought-in' was extremely well received. This was also seen as an extremely appropriate use of Pupil Premium funding (Ofsted, 2012). It was made clear to primary colleagues that they may target different cohorts of their school population, and would retain autonomy with regard to the use of the provision. The autonomous use of TEP time by each school has led to a very varied and interesting placement. The placement is complemented by weekly sessions and support for the TEP at the University of Manchester, which enable the TEP to incorporate and develop new skills and ensure that schools are benefiting from current knowledge and evidence-based practice.

Initially, supervision was provided by the local authority EPS to support the developing provision and to ensure an appropriate balance of TEP and EP provision. After the initial term, the LA EPS retained an overview of practical arrangements, whilst formal supervision was outsourced to provide additional support and ensure that all the work undertaken by the TEP is done under the supervision of a qualified Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) registered educational psychologist. Separate request for involvement and consent forms were developed for TEP work, in addition to a parent/carer leaflet identifying specifically the additionality of provision. This clearly sets out what the TEP is able to undertake and established with parents/carers:

- Consent to work with their child.
- Consent to discuss their child with other professionals and to request access to existing information and share relevant information if necessary.
- Consent for the TEP to discuss their child during supervision.

In addition to the practical, direct work undertaken with teachers, parents/carers and young people, a doctoral research project will be undertaken, for which the TEP has one allocated day a week. This allows for further evidence-based work within the partnership arrangements. The TEP has consulted with representatives from each school to ensure that the research is relevant and useful and that each term the headteachers, or their representatives, meet with the authors to discuss progress and provision.

Initial outcomes

After the first term of provision (to December 2012), reports for all stakeholders have been extremely positive. Work undertaken in primary settings has included:

- Direct work with students for learning and academic needs – standardised cognitive assessment, curriculum based assessment and dynamic assessment.
- Direct work with students for social, emotional and behavioural needs – therapeutic approaches, assessment of self-esteem, social skills and behaviour.
- Eliciting the voice of the child.
- Early transition work – developing student passports.
- Observation of students and classes.
- Consultation with SENCOs, teachers and other school staff.
- Consultation with parents/carers.
- Individual, tailored support and guidance for a new Learning Support Assistant.
- Review meetings – formal and informal.
- Administration – including preparation for direct work, scoring assessments and report writing.
- Multiagency meetings and liaison.
- Training and development.

Impact measures for the direct work of the TEP are provided for each partner primary school, as well as an individual breakdown of allocations. Longer term impact will be measured as students move into Year 7 and developing interventions are measured and evaluated. Initial anecdotal feedback from the primary headteachers include:

'Going very well, has had a big impact on students and the results are obvious.'

'Great; we have been able to train staff and work with students.'

'Some of the work with a Year 4 student has been really powerful.'

'It is going very, very well; everyone is impressed with [the] TEP's knowledge.'

'Parents/carers are really pleased.'

'It has been great as we can respond to need – we are really pleased.'

The future

Although this partnership is still relatively young, the development of local partnerships as a new way of working, specifically when linked directly to TEP provision and Pupil Premium funding, seems timely. The practical impact is already showing significant gains and, over time, we expect to be able to report more direct positive results for the young people educated across our partnership.

References

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