

# Expression of interest

# Title: Research into the Educational Psychology Workforce in England

**Project reference: DFERPPU 2018/019**

**Deadline for expressions of interest: 5pm, Wednesday 9th May 2018**

## Summary

Expressions of interest are sought for a research project to examine reported shortages in the Local Authority educational psychologist workforce in England. The findings from this research will inform the Department for Education’s consideration of potential future reforms to the educational psychology training provider commissioning model.

## Background

Educational Psychologists (EPs) work with children and young people (0-25 years) who have a Special Educational Need or Disability (SEND) or Learning Difficulty or Disability (LDD), as well as with other vulnerable groups. Their role is to support children and young people to achieve their full potential through assessment, monitoring and evaluation in schools and other settings; the input of an EP is a statutory requirement of the Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan assessment process.[[1]](#footnote-1)

To become a qualified EP, trainees are required to undertake a 3-year doctorate training course. The first year is university based, with the second and third years spent on practice placement in a Local Authority (LA) or other organisation working alongside a senior EP. When qualified, most EPs go on to employment within the public sector: the majority will work in LAs, while others may be employed directly by schools or by Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). A small but increasing number of EPs are also self-employed or working in private practice.[[2]](#footnote-2)

The Department for Education (DfE) aims to ensure a steady supply of EPs to the LA workforce in England to fulfil their statutory role in relation to EHC plans through the commissioning and funding of providers to deliver the EP training course. At present, the department funds 160 EPFT (EP Funded Training) places per annual intake, distributed across 13 universities[[3]](#footnote-3). Recruitment for EP training courses is consistently high[[4]](#footnote-4) and attrition consistently low[[5]](#footnote-5), yet we know that many LAs experience difficulties recruiting sufficient EPs to meet demand for their services. Based on anecdotal evidence, one possible driver of this is a lack of trainee EPs undertaking practice placements at these LAs, with trainees citing long travel times and possible relocation costs as barriers to taking up placements far from their university.

Responding to these concerns, DfE is considering the possibility of moving to a regional commissioning model for EP training providers. The current distribution of training provider places does not correspond to the distribution of LAs in England: a regional model, meanwhile, would see places redistributed so that they broadly correspond to the number of LAs in each region. The department have already done some work to scope the implementation and financial implications of this model. This project will enable the Department to take an evidence based approach to reported EP shortages.

## Evaluation aims

In order to inform the Department’s decision about whether to shift to a regional commissioning model or move to an alternative solution, the evaluation will aim to:

* Map the current distribution and demographic profile of the LA educational psychologist workforce in England
* Where possible, map the current distribution and demographic profile of the non-LA educational psychologist workforce in England
* Provide evidence on factors driving shortages of trainee and qualified EPs in certain LAs
* Support an evidence-based decision on whether to implement a regional commissioning model or an alternative solution based on the factors above

Key research questions

***Mapping the EP workforce:***

* Where do newly qualified EPs enter employment upon course completion? Including
  + Type of setting
  + Geographical location
* How many qualified EPs are currently working in LAs in England? Including:
* EPs with full-time contracts with LAs in England
* EPs with part-time contracts with LAs in England
* EPs with temporary contracts with LAs in England
* EPs working with an LA in England while also undertaking EP work elsewhere
* How is the LA EP workforce distributed across LAs in England?
* What is the demographic profile of the LA EP workforce in England?
* What can existing data tell us about the distribution and demographics of the non-LA EP workforce in England? Including:
  + EPs employed directly with schools
  + EPs employed in private or charitable companies
  + Self-employed or consultant EPs
* How many trainee EPs are currently on placement in each LA in England?

***Understanding EP shortages at the LA level***

* Are there currently any LAs experiencing a shortage of qualified EPs?
* Are there currently any LAs experiencing difficulties recruiting trainee EPs for practice placements?
* Is it possible to identify patterns / common factors behind shortages of qualified EPs or trainee EPs at certain LAs?
* Are there any major changes in the regional demand for LA EPs expected over the next five years? Taking into account:
  + Current workforce demographics
  + Budgetary restraints
  + Any anticipated changes in demand for services (by principal LAs and other key stakeholders)
  + Recent and upcoming changes to the SEND policy landscape (e.g. ‘steady-state’ system post-SEND reforms from April 2018)

***Drivers of EP shortages***

* What are the factors affecting trainee EPs’ choice of practice placement?
* What are the factors affecting the employment destinations of newly qualified EPs?
  + After course completion, how many trainees are employed by the LA with which they had their training placement? How long does this employment last?
  + What are the factors that make (certain) LA posts an attractive option for EPs seeking employment?
  + What are the factors driving trainee/qualified EPs to take up employment outside of LAs?
* Are there any examples of LA EP services that have put in place innovative solutions to the challenge of recruiting to full EP capacity?

## Methodology

Contractors are invited to propose the most suitable study design: however, it is suggested that this uses a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods and includes the following:

**METHODOLOGY**

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1. **Analysis of existing data**

As a first stage in this project, we suggest that contractors scope and analyse currently available EP workforce data from a range of sources, including (but not limited to):

* EP training providers
* The Association of Educational Psychologists (AEP)
* The British Psychological Society (BPS)
* The National Association of Principal Educational Psychologists (NAPEP)
* The Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC)

This stage should provide evidence on the current EP workforce in England, including the demographic profile of the workforce and information about the settings in which they are employed.

1. **Focus groups with training providers, LAs and EP professional bodies**

In order to inform the decision of whether to move to a regional supply model for the EP training provider contracts, we suggest a number of focus group interviews with a range of key stakeholders. These should provide evidence on capacity and recruitment issues in the EP workforce, current training arrangements and possible implications of a new commissioning model.

Relevant stakeholders may include (but are not limited to):

* Training providers
* Course trainee representatives
* The Association of Directors of Children’s Services
* Principle EPs (LA / private practice / charitable sector)
* EP professional body representatives
* Wider stakeholders

1. **Survey of LA EP services to understand EP shortages at the LA level**

In order to understand service supply and demand at the LA level, we would expect the contractor to design and issue a survey to the principal EP in each of England’s 152 LAs. We suggest that the design of the survey should draw heavily on previous similar surveys such as the DfE EP Workforce Survey (2013) in order to provide robust data about the changing EP workforce over time [[6]](#footnote-6).

This previous survey included sections on workforce demographics, recruitment, commissioning and funding, service delivery and service demand, and it is likely that many of the questions in these sections will be replicated to allow the gathering of comparable data: however, we will also work with the contractor to develop new questions which address issues that have arisen following the SEND Reforms and the changes to EP services which they have entailed. The mapping of existing data (part 1) proposed focus groups detailed in part (2) may also help to shape any additional questions to be included.

1. **Survey of trainee EPs to understand drivers of shortages**

The LA survey in part (3) will help to build a national picture of the distribution and demographic characteristics of the EP workforce in England, but will not capture the factors affecting EP trainees’ choice of placement / employment destinations. In order to explore these factors, we propose conducting an online survey of trainee EPs. This survey would include questions on individuals’ choice of training provider and placement organisation, experiences of employment at an LA EP service, and factors influencing future decisions regarding location and type of employment as an EP (e.g. salary, type of work, travel distance).

The target population for this survey should be all trainees currently studying on the EP training course. The contractor will not be expected to carry out robust statistical analysis on data collected via the survey, which will instead provide qualitative and indicative evidence on factors affecting EPs’ career choices. Tenders should include strategies for maximising response rates for this survey.

**We expect applicants who are invited to submit a full tender to include advice on the most appropriate and cost-effective methodologies.**

## Timing

We plan use the findings of this research to inform our thinking for how we commission the future delivery of training for EPs from 2019 onwards, ahead of an open tender for the 2020, 2021 and 2022 EP cohorts. As such, we expect a final report for this project to be complete by **October 2018**.

The tendering process will follow the timetable below:

* Deadline for return of EOIs to the Department – 5pm, 9th May 2018
* Invitations to Tender issued – 14 May 2018
* Deadline for bids to be submitted to the Department – 29 May 2018 (12 days)
* Contract signed – by 15 June 2018

## Assessment criteria

Expressions of interest will be assessed against the following criteria:

* Knowledge and understanding of the relevant policy areas and of the DfE’s requirement for this work
* Capacity to develop an appropriate methodology and to conduct the necessary fieldwork, analysis and reporting to the timelines indicated
* Evidence of relevant methodological expertise and a successful track record in project management and delivering to tight timescales
* Evidence of experience in delivering a clear report with real practical applications
* Evidence of ability to provide good value for money for this project

| **Closing date for EOIs: 5pm, Wednesday 9th May 2018**  **Send your EOI form to:** [**kelly.walker@education.gov.uk**](mailto:kelly.walker@education.gov.uk) |
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## How to submit an expression of interest

You must submit an expression of interest (EOI) in order to be considered to be invited to tender. To do so, please complete the NEW EOI Form which can be found under attachments. A submission of an EOI does not guarantee an invitation to tender and the Department does not routinely advise organisations that they have not been successful in being invited to tender. Feedback is however available on request.

All contracts are let on the basis of the [Department’s Terms and Conditions](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/eoi-guide). You are encouraged to check these before submitting your expression of interest, as these form part of your contractual obligations.

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1. [SEND Code of Practice (2015)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/398815/SEND_Code_of_Practice_January_2015.pdf) – Advice and Information for EHC Needs Assessments, pp155 - 156 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Association of Educational Psychologists website - <http://www.aep.org.uk/careers/> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. 150 of these places are provided by 12 universities, split into 2 consortia: SEEL covers London and the South East and has 70 trainee placements, while NORMID-SW cover the North and South West and have 80 trainee placements. DfE has also recently awarded a new contract to the University of East Anglia (UEA) for 10 trainee placements: their first cohort will begin training in 2019. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The demand for educational psychology funded place training is high, with an average of six applicants per available place ([Review of clinical and educational psychology training arrangements](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-clinical-and-educational-psychology-training-arrangements-report), p25) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. In 2014 – 15, the national attrition rate for educational psychology training was 0.99% ([Review of clinical and educational psychology training arrangements](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-clinical-and-educational-psychology-training-arrangements-report), p26) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Workforce survey 2013: <https://educationgovuk.sharepoint.com/:b:/s/taep/ESkMMiLBfqtJn8g9zorQ3v0BTmkhMigLyxKrX0iipSjQ3Q> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)