

## Educational Psychology Recruitment and Retention Plan: Employment of Trainee Educational Psychologists

Date: March 2023

Report of: Educational Psychology Team

Report to: Director of Children & Families

Will the decision be open for call in?  Yes  No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?  Yes  No

### Brief summary

There is a national shortage of Educational Psychologists. Recruitment and retention of local authority EPs in Leeds is impacted by this. A lack of EPs means that the local authority is not able to meet its statutory duties, relies on the use of locum/associates and is significantly limited in its ability to meet other core duties.

The most successful approach to recruitment date is a 'grow your own' model. This includes encouraging routes into the profession for a more diverse population and retaining trainees once they qualify. Recruitment of paid trainee EPs is part of Leeds' recruitment and retention plan for this statutory service and one that is mirrored in other West Yorkshire authorities.

This approach is part of a long term vision i.e. to meet the statutory duties and core responsibilities of the LA, meeting the needs of the increasing number of children and young people with SEND across the city.

### Recommendations

This report recommends:

- a. Creating an additional three LCC employed Trainee Educational Psychologist posts on the structure, on top of the existing three vacant trainee posts already on the structure.
- b. The current six Trainee Educational Psychologists would move from being paid a bursary to being offered a contract of employment as a Trainee Educational Psychologist.

This will allow Leeds to compete with surrounding local authorities who have employed arrangements for trainees in place already, reduce the use of costly agency staff and ensure a service to meet the needs of the city.

## What is this report about?

### Background

1. There is a significant national and regional shortage of EPs and the workforce marketplace is highly competitive in West Yorkshire. According to the most recent workforce survey, Yorkshire and Humber have the second lowest number of EPs as a percentage of total share and the highest ratio of children to EP across England and Wales (D of E 2019). Regional benchmarking in 2019 identified Leeds having the second highest ratio of EP to pupils (1 EP: 11023 CYP, the Warnock original recommended range was 1 EP: 3000 – 5000 pupils).
2. The Leeds EP team have a regular turnover of staff. We have not successfully recruited to our current vacancies for the past 7 years. This has been at a time of increased statutory pressures shown in Fig 1.

Fig 1: The number of EHCPs maintained by Leeds at January SEN2 survey | 2016- August 2022

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Aug-22
Number EHCPs	2287	2873	3353	3886	4339	4689	5005	5031
In year percent change		25.6	16.7	15.9	11.7	8.1	6.7	
Cumulative percent change		25.6	46.6	69.9	89.7	105.0	118.8	

3. The national expected rise in statutory requests is between 7% – 14%.
4. The EP team is not able with current staffing numbers to meet its statutory duties for new assessments within legal timeframes set out in the Children and Families Act (2014) and SEND Code of Practice (2015). Fig 2 highlights the decrease in qualified EPs in Leeds since 2016 at a time of unprecedented increasing demand. This brings significant reputational risk to the Local authority, a risk of increase in complaints and tribunals and possible external costly placements due to a lack of intervention with the most complex cases.

Fig 2

Date	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Main grade EP	17.9	17.8	15.6	12.3	14.7	10.8	10.8	9.9
Main grade Senior Practitioner EP	3.6	4.1	2.5	3.5	4.1	4.1	4	3
<b>Total Main Grade EPs</b>	<b>21.5</b>	<b>21.9</b>	<b>18.1</b>	<b>15.8</b>	<b>18.9</b>	<b>14.9</b>	<b>14.8</b>	<b>12.9</b>
Senior EP	2.81	2.51	4.1	4.2	4.3	3.9	3.3	4.4
Deputy Principal EP	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>24.31</b>	<b>24.41</b>	<b>22.2</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>23.1</b>	<b>19.8</b>	<b>19.1</b>	<b>18.3</b>

5. There is an increased reliance on locums and associates to fulfil the LA statutory duties, an increased pressure on workloads for the substantive team, impacting staff wellbeing and ultimately staff retention.
6. There is limited capacity to engage in core and other statutory work. This includes work with children attending Out of Authority Placements, tribunals, reassessments and work with children at risk of permanent exclusion. This work is at an earlier level and can prevent escalation to statutory services.
7. Commitment to the Trainee EP workforce is a key priority of a 'grow your own' recruitment plan. The lack of a recruitment strategy for trainees will increase the need for associates, reduce capacity to support core work and not allow the team to meet income generation targets for the traded offer.

### **Proposal**

8. We plan to address the workforce challenges in two ways: employing trainees and retaining these individuals once they qualify.
9. The first element of the proposal is to offer paid employment for students as Trainee Educational Psychologists, rather than the current system of providing bursaries. This will ensure we remain competitive with other local authorities and can attract trainees, who are then more likely to remain with the council once they qualify.
10. We will continue to advertise three trainee posts each year, for a two-year duration. The six existing trainees currently in receipt of a bursary will be offered contracts of employment as Trainee Educational Psychologists. The job description for this role already exists and there are already three vacant trainee posts on the structure. We therefore need to add a further three posts to the structure to make six in total.
11. Trainees will be paid at the Trainee Soulbury SCP 1-6 (£24,970 - £34,107) during their two-year training period. This is more expensive than paying a bursary, which is expected to be £19,960 in 2023/24. However this will help to attract trainees, and with a more stable workforce we should be able to reduce the use of locums and increase traded income, which will cover the additional cost.
12. The second element of this proposal relates to employing trainees once they qualify. Under the current bursary system, trainees cease their role with the council after two years when they qualify. While they could apply for permanent roles in Leeds, they often gain employment in other LAs. To avoid this, we are proposing that once qualified they move into an Educational Psychologist role and are paid accordingly (at the Educational Psychologist Soulbury scale A, SCP 2-7, £40,838 - £50,584). Trainees will need to have successfully completed the Doctorate programme and registered with the HCPC within two years of study before they can progress to an Educational Psychologist role.
13. This proposal will help retain qualified staff, which should reduce reliance on locums and increase the ability to generate traded income. There are currently five vacant Educational

Psychologist posts on the structure we can use for this and we expect this will be sufficient due to turnover.

### What impact will this proposal have?

14. Leeds City Council will continue to increase their ability to meet statutory responsibilities regarding EHC needs assessment requests. It will reduce expenditure on associate EPs. Each trainee EP completes at least 12 EHC assessments alongside other core, statutory and or traded work.
15. The retention of workforce meets our statutory responsibilities and enables the team to work with children with complex needs. It will positively impact on staff wellbeing and retention. The EPT within the region will be attractive to trainees and newly qualified EPs in a route to recruitment approach.
16. It will reduce risk of not being able to recruit to TEP placements in the region in the future and therefore reducing pool of future recruits to Leeds from the profession.
17. Failure to have a long-term recruitment strategy for trainees will increase the need to employ costly associates, reduce capacity to support core work and reduce ability to engage in income generation opportunities. It is anticipated that implementation of the proposals set out in this report, will reduce future pressures on the service, which in turn will contribute to staff retention and improved wellbeing.

### How does this proposal impact the three pillars of the Best City Ambition?

- Health and Wellbeing       Inclusive Growth       Zero Carbon

### What consultation and engagement has taken place?

1. *Trade Union colleagues have been consulted on the proposals contained within the report. Feedback on queries have been shared with the AEP representative.*
2. *The report has been shared with C&FSLT who are supportive of the proposals.*

Wards affected: this is city wide

Have ward members been consulted?       Yes       No

### What are the resource implications?

18. The proposals should reduce the projected overspend against the 2023/24 budget by reducing the use of locums and increasing traded income. Without these proposals we expect to overspend by £245k against the budget, assuming no further recruitment. However the proposals should reduce the overspend to £171k, an improvement of £74k. The table below shows how the budget compares to projections based on the current people in post, with and without the new trainees. For completeness the table shows the full

structure and current numbers in post, but no changes are proposed to the structure other than adding the Trainee Educational Psychologist posts.

	Budget 23-24		Projection 23-24 – current staffing		Projection 23-24 – with new trainees	
	FTE	£	FTE	£	FTE	£
<b>Staffing</b>						
Deputy Pr Educational Psychologist	1.0	86,000	1.0	83,850	1.0	83,850
Senior Educational Psychologist	4.3	314,000	4.4	337,270	4.4	337,270
Senior Practitioner – Educational Psych	4.1	281,000	3.0	221,631	3.0	221,631
Educational Psychologist	15.7	962,000	13.8	780,402	13.8	780,402
Assistant Educational Psychologist	4.0	103,000	4.0	161,043	4.0	161,043
Trainee Educational Psychologist	2.0	132,000	3.0	106,410	6.0	168,480
Vacancy Factor		-122,000	0.0	-122,000	0.0	-122,000
<b>Total staffing</b>	<b>31.1</b>	<b>1,756,000</b>	<b>26.2</b>	<b>1,568,606</b>	<b>29.2</b>	<b>1,630,676</b>
<b>Other costs</b>						
Course costs for Trainees		0		5,000		10,000
Locums		0		125,000		75,000
Bursary		30,000		60,000		19,000
<b>Total other costs</b>		<b>30,000</b>		<b>190,000</b>		<b>104,000</b>
<b>Income</b>		<b>-282,000</b>		<b>-10,000</b>		<b>-60,000</b>
<b>Net cost</b>	<b>31.1</b>	<b>1,504,000</b>	<b>26.2</b>	<b>1,748,606</b>	<b>29.2</b>	<b>1,674,676</b>
<b>Overspend against budget</b>				<b>244,606</b>		<b>170,606</b>

19. Although the table shows the financial position should improve, there will still be a £171k overspend compared to the budget. In particular there will still be pressures on locum costs and traded income due to capacity within the team. The longer-term impact of retaining trainees should help mitigate some of this, although the increasing number of EHC assessments could still create capacity issues. In light of this we will be reviewing the qualified staffing structure and traded income plans for the next few years and will report back separately with further proposals on these.

### What are the key risks and how are they being managed?

20. A significant focus on the statutory offer leads to very little work being offered for those CYP who have additional vulnerabilities e.g. those with social care involvement, and for those with higher levels of need e.g. children with SEMH needs and funding but with no EHCP.
21. The lack of resources at the SEND support level drives requests for EHC needs assessment.
22. The SEND Code of Practice recognises the role of Educational Psychologist in supporting settings and assessing children's needs to support understanding and planning and during

statutory processes. The SEND green Paper maintains the significant role of Educational psychologist within Local Authorities. This staffing suggestion allows for flexibility going forward on publication of the SEND white paper.

23. There is a risk the Trainee EP does not qualify within two years and will not be able to be appointed to the role of Educational Psychologist as this qualification is an essential requirement of the role (as reflected in the job description). Failure to qualify within two years, may result in the cessation of the employment contract. This will be managed in line with existing employment policies.
24. If there is no turnover within qualified staff there is a risk the budgeted number of Educational Psychologist posts could eventually be exceeded. However this risk is considered small due to the national shortage of Educational Psychologists. If this risk did materialise, we could either pause trainee recruitment or use the extra staff to deliver traded work so we could manage within the approved budget at that time.

### **What are the legal implications?**

We will not be able to meet our statutory responsibilities as a local authority without an increase in the workforce and the continued use of associates.

### **Options, timescales and measuring success**

What other options were considered?

1. **Continue to offer bursary places to the university** - Leeds EPT cannot guarantee that we would receive three trainees each year. Having bursary placements, we will not be aligned to neighbouring authorities who employ and possibly lose trainees to neighbouring authorities employment.
2. **Employ trainee EPs on a fixed term two year contract** – We would require the same number of trainees either permanently employed or fixed term in order to fill vacancies. This would be an equivalent cost to the local authority, but would risk TEPs being recruited to other local authorities if posts become available prior to Leeds advertising.
3. **Develop a regional training route – This is a viable long term option.** We are working with West Yorkshire colleagues across LAs and universities to consider this option. This is a viable long-term option. This would not address the current issue. We are engaging local solutions to collaborate with neighbours to support regional recruitment and timings of adverts. So that through our own recruitment we can have TEPs who are skilled and are invested in the local area.

### **How will success be measured?**

Success will be measured by reduction in vacancies by March 2024, improvement in statutory assessment key performance indicators and a significant reduction in the use of associates.

### **What is the timetable and who will be responsible for implementation?**

Implementation as soon as possible after March 1<sup>st</sup> 2023. EPT leadership with HR and recruitment fulfilling their roles.

## **Appendices**

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**Background papers**

None