

## Educational Psychology Consultation

Educational Psychologists in Barnet use a 'consultation' approach working with schools and families to:

- develop insight into challenging situations, bringing an applied psychology perspective
- find creative and effective solutions to school-based concerns
- agree clear outcomes and evidence based approaches to bring about change
- review progress and adapt strategies to ensure effectiveness

The Educational Psychologist's (EP) role is to facilitate the process, encouraging everyone to share their views and help plan next steps. EPs contribute from their psychological knowledge, to help all involved have a deeper understanding and come up with a realistic action plan which participants will implement and later review with the EP.

Evidence shows that EP consultation leads to better outcomes for children/young people and for participants and that holding a review meeting to look at progress and plan next steps increases the impact of the approach and embeds quality assurance and evidence of 'Assess Plan Do Review'.

### What does the Consultation process look like?

Joint working with staff and parents/carers to collaboratively explore concerns in a way that helps participants to have a better and sometimes different understanding of the issues. In this way, it is possible for thinking to shift towards a wider range of possibilities for change.

Consultation can be used to explore issues at three inter-related levels within education settings, e.g. individual, group and whole setting level. Where a consultation concerns a young person, the EP will typically carry out an observation prior to the consultation meeting.

A consultation meeting usually takes around 60-90 minutes and participants include the people who are most concerned and motivated to bring about change. For example, SENCo, teacher and parents/carers, if the concern is regarding an individual pupil. The review meeting usually takes around 45 minutes.

### What sorts of concerns are raised?

- **Individual**, e.g. limited progress in literacy; difficulties making friends etc.
- **Group**, e.g. concerns around classroom behaviour; groups experiencing anxiety around exams etc.
- **Organisation/Setting**, e.g. support to review behaviour policy; planning how to make best use of Teaching Assistants etc.

### What sort of ideas do we explore?

- The young person's views, wishes, strengths and needs
- The young person's view of self as a learner and other's views and expectations of the pupil
- Patterns of concern and the exceptions to the concern
- Skills, strengths, resources and interests
- What gets in the way of learning, i.e. the barriers – information from observations and assessment can also feed into the process
- How systems, that the individual or group are part of, can affect and support them
- Beliefs, constructs and narratives around behaviour and learning that are held by the participants as well as the individual or group being considered

## What sort of questions do we ask?

- When is it happening and when does it **not** happen?
- What's already helping?
- When are they at their best as a learner/friend?
- What might be helping to maintain this pattern of behaviour?
- What might this behaviour be communicating to us?
- How can we involve the young person in our plans to improve the situation?

## What sort of psychology do we use?

EPs apply a variety of psychological approaches, according to what seems most appropriate:

- **Cognitive psychology** – using their understanding of children's cognition and learning and evidence-based approaches that support progress
- **Systemic thinking** – recognising the complexity of the systems in which the child is functioning and making sense of the concerns within the inter-relating systems of school and home
- **Interactionist** – recognising that 'Behaviour is a function of the person **and** the situation'. Hence the issues and the solutions are not simply located '**within-child**'
- **Solution Focused** – using positive psychology to build on the resourcefulness of the child, family, teachers and staff and develop solutions from what is already working
- **Narrative** – recognising that 'stories' or accounts that individuals tell about a situation may contribute to the problems, or be used to develop more constructive alternatives.

## What sort of outcomes can you expect from a Consultation?

Consultation gives participants:

- A rich picture and understanding of the concerns and what is contributing to the concerns.
- A wide range of strategies, approaches and evidence based interventions to draw on
- Increased awareness of educational and psychological research
- A clear, realistic and collaborative action plan to help improve a challenging situation
- Recorded actions that are jointly reviewed at a later date
- Increased feelings of competence, confidence and skills development that help participants to manage similar situations in the future
- A written record of the Consultation within 4 weeks

*A Consultation approach supports the **SEND Code of Practice, Assess, Plan, Do, Review** process. Schools also find this way of working to be a creative, effective and economical way to use their EP time.*