



ASSOCIATION OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGISTS

Employment of Assistant Educational Psychologists (AsEPs)

AEP Policy

Agreed by: AEP National Executive Committee
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Employment of AsEPs

Background

Assistant Educational Psychologist (AsEP) is a post defined within the scope of the Soulbury Committee Report (2019) as a step towards training to become an Educational Psychologist.

The role of AsEP is intended to complement the work of Educational Psychologists within Educational Psychology Services in delivering high quality services to children and young people. As a group of professionals who can access membership, the AEP has a role in defining how and where they are employed, including appropriate job descriptions, as well as pay and conditions.

What is an Assistant EP (AsEP)?

AsEPs and training to be an EP An AsEP is a psychology graduate who is employed to assist the work of an Educational Psychologist (EP) and Educational Psychology Services while gaining relevant experience, prior to applying for a place on a recognised Doctorate EP training course. They will normally also have had experience in working with children and/or young people. An AsEP can be occupied in a variety of ways to complete a variety of duties, with appropriate supervision and support. The nature of those duties will depend upon the requirements of the service and the strengths and previous qualifications and experience of the AsEP.

Whilst an AsEP is a psychology graduate and is employed to apply psychology within a service, the Soulbury Report 2019 [4.12] is clear that: 'Assistant Educational Psychologists are not qualified to carry out the full range of duties and responsibilities of fully qualified officers on Scale A....'

Neither AsEPs, nor other unqualified psychologists, should be employed to replace or cover for HCPC registered Educational Psychologists, but to supplement or complement the work carried out by EPs. AsEPs cannot fulfil the duties and responsibilities of a fully qualified EP. Therefore, it would not, for example, be appropriate for AsEPs to carry out a statutory assessment, but they could gather and collate basic information, pertinent to the writing of such an assessment, such as a structured observation in setting, using a checklist and clarifying current arrangements. As a general rule, AsEPs can be involved in gathering information towards an assessment, but the interpretation of this information should be carried out by a qualified EP.

The kinds of tasks that an AsEP could be involved in include:

- supporting the delivery of defined projects;
- assisting the work of an EP on individual pieces of casework (e.g. by gathering data through structured observation; completing structured and/or standardised assessments with individuals; gathering specific information from parents or teachers);
- support work where there are ethnically and/or culturally sensitive aspects, where they have relevant experience;

- delivering training, mentoring and coaching, using recognised courses;
- completing administrative tasks, relevant to the EP service;
- completing research tasks, guided by an EP;
- supporting the delivery of specific interventions, for which they have been trained.

It should be noted that the role of 'Psychology Assistant' is different in Scotland.

AsEPs and training to be an Educational Psychologist

The Soulbury Report 2019 highlights that (section 4.13) 'Those local authorities who employ Assistant Educational Psychologists should take positive action to ensure that these employees achieve qualified status as soon as possible.' As a consequence, it is the aim that no officer should remain on the Assistant Educational Psychologists' scale for more than 4 years. Employers should seek guidance from a Human Resources specialist in writing contracts of employment.

The temporary nature of any contract should be made clear to the employee. Some Assistant EPs may wish to continue in the role as a career option, bearing in mind the very low bursaries for Trainees. It is the decision of the employer, should they choose to maintain the employee in their employ, beyond the standard four years AsEPs period and their prerogative in determining the nature of the employee's role. Individuals might continue to secure a place on an EP initial training programme to qualify as an Educational Psychologist by gaining further experience in a different role.

A Service choosing to adopt the use of AsEPs should do so on the basis that the role supports:

- a training route potentially leading to postgraduate professional training as an EP;
- development of a relationship with future potential applicants to qualified posts;
- effective delivery of service outcomes.

This would require employers to have a clear plan for the employment of AsEPs that is consistent with the principles outlined in this paper. The employment of AsEPs does not prevent employers from creating alternative roles that support the delivery of a psychology service. In such circumstances, fully qualified EPs should be clear about their own responsibilities and duty to clients working alongside individuals in these support roles.

Educational Psychologists directing the work of other support staff should in all circumstances not validate the outcomes of their findings without careful consideration of their qualifications, experience and the level of supervision they receive.

'Positive action' that employers could take to support AsEPs gaining entry to the training course includes but is not limited to:

- ✓ Ensuring that an AsEP can take part in a range of duties, in a range of contexts;
- ✓ Providing appropriate supervisory support for the AsEP (see below);
- ✓ Providing support for the AsEP to contribute to educational needs assessments;
- ✓ Providing appropriate CPD opportunities;
- ✓ Providing opportunities for AsEPs to shadow EPs.

The local University training provider would be a useful source of advice to support AsEPs' progression onto an accredited training course. You may also wish to consult the [BPS Guidance on Accreditation for the initial training of EPs](#), which includes the expected competencies for a newly trained EP at Programme Standard 2.

Helpful information is also provided within a range of publications from the HCPC, e.g. <https://www.hcpc-uk.org/standards/standards-of-proficiency/practitioner-psychologists/>

Supervision and Support

AsEPs should be appropriately supervised and supported by a qualified and experienced EP or Senior EP. The S/EP supervising the AsEP must be confident in the skills and abilities of the AsEP in carrying out their duties. The HCPC Standards of *Performance, Conduct and Ethics* states that:

'4.1 You must only delegate work to someone who has the knowledge, skills and experience needed to carry it out safely and effectively' and '4.2 You must continue to provide appropriate supervision and support to those you delegate work to.'

It would not be appropriate for a Trainee EP to commission or supervise the work of an AsEP.

It is recommended that AsEPs receive a level of supervision that is commensurate with that of a Trainee EP (a minimum of 30 minutes per working day, i.e. 2.5 hours per week for a full time AsEP). Supervision can take many forms, including peer supervision, but where there is a 1:1 meeting between AsEP and the supervising EP, there should be a written record of the meeting.

Professional boundaries should be maintained in this working relationship and colleagues should be aware of possible power differentials between supervisor and assistant levels within the team.

All records and reports produced by an AsEP should be countersigned by the supervising EP. Supervising EPs should, as always, remain mindful of all the [HCPC 'Standards of Performance, Conduct and Ethics'](#) in endorsing the work of others.