

Title of Report: Primary Fair Access Educational Psychologist

Report of: Helen Fergusson, Strategic Director, Children's Social Care and Lifelong Learning

Purpose of the Report

1. To bring to Schools Forum the request for de-delegated funding from maintained primary schools to continue to fund the post for the fair access panel (FAP) educational psychologist (EP)

Background

2. Every local authority is required to have in place a Fair Access Protocol (Schools Admissions Code 2012 article 3.9), developed in partnership and agreed with the majority of its schools, in which all schools (including Academies) must participate since it is binding on all schools.
3. The purpose of Fair Access Protocols is to ensure that, outside the normal admissions round, unplaced children/young people, especially the most vulnerable, are found and offered a place as quickly as possible to minimise the time they are kept out of school.
4. A significant proportion of children who come through the PFAP have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The Primary Head Teacher Cluster Representatives felt strongly that schools who agree to admit these pupils should have as much support as possible. As such, in April 2015 all Primary Head Teachers agreed to de-delegate funds for a full time Educational Psychologist (EP) to work into the Primary Fair Access Panel (PFAP) to address the need for assessment, training and support when individual children are being placed in schools.
5. The workload and responsibilities relating to the PFAP EP post have been distributed across the Psychological Service so that all EPs have taken on work coming through from PFAP. This distribution of the PFAP EP workload across the service enables us to offer quicker response times when pupils are referred and also allows the breadth of knowledge and skill held across the service to be brought to the PFAP EP role. The workload and responsibilities of the PFAP EP include:
 - Representing the Psychological Service at the Primary Fair Access Panel. This includes reading panel papers, contributing to discussions, assessing requests for PFAP EP time, coordinating agreed requests for

PFAP EP time (including EP allocation and liaison with schools), preparing monthly update documents detailing the PFAP EPs work to be distributed with the minutes of each panel meeting, and monitoring the use of PFAP EP time (including case and training data) which is then summarised within the monthly update documents and an annual report.

- Coordinating the PFAP EP on call rota to ensure frequent EP availability for preliminary involvement/visits at short notice and then undertaking this work as it arises. On call involvement/visits aim to explore the needs of individual pupils whose initial presentation suggests a significant level of SEND (including those at potential risk of permanent exclusion) prior to them coming to PFAP for discussion and placement.
- Individual casework. This can include direct assessment work with pupils, consultations with teachers/parents/carers, bespoke training, problem solving discussions, group work with pupils, therapeutic interventions with pupils, attending case meetings, report writing, etc.
- The development, coordination and delivery of an annual training programme for school staff relevant to the needs of the pupils who are placed via PFAP.
- Frequent liaison with colleagues from the Education Support Service and within the Psychological Service regarding PFAP EP work, including monitoring and evaluation.

Preliminary Involvement/Visits

6. This year there was one child with a seemingly significant level of undocumented need which required further information to be gathered prior to placement discussions. The PFAP EP completed a home visit with an Education Support Officer (ESO) to observe the child in their home setting and gather details about their developmental history and presenting needs from parents. The PFAP EP and ESO then they collaboratively mapped this information onto the SEND Thresholds to offer an approximation of the child's reported needs. This offered the panel additional information to consider when placing the child and gave the receiving school a sense of how to begin to understand and meet this child's needs upon arrival.

Individual Pupil Referrals: Accepted Referral Data

7. When pupils with additional or complex needs are discussed at PFAP meetings, it is often acknowledged that they may benefit from requesting PFAP EP time once they have settled into their new school placement. To date, the PFAP EP has accepted **189** individual pupil referrals overall. During academic year 2023-2024, **14** cases were still ongoing from academic year 2022-2023 and **22** new referrals were initiated, totalling **36** active cases with the PFAP EP this academic year.

Table 1: Year group of the 22 pupils referred to PFAP EP this academic year.

Year Group*	Number of Pupils
Reception	2
Year 1	2
Year 2	4
Year 3	3
Year 4	5
Year 5	4
Year 6	2

** Not all pupils were placed within their chronological year group upon entering their new school.*

The primary needs of these pupils have been loosely categorised in Table 2. However, please note that it is difficult to categorise very complex pupils into one category of need only and particularly as some are still undergoing assessment with a view to identifying and meeting their needs.

Table 2: Primary area of need for the 22 pupils referred to PFAP EP this academic year.

Area of Need	Number of Pupils
Communication and interaction (including Autism & EAL)	11
Social, emotional and mental health	5
Cognition and learning	4
Sensory, physical and/or medical	2

The outcomes of each case referred this academic year are summarised in Table 3, although several cases are still ongoing and so their overall outcome is yet to be established.

Table 3: Outcomes of each case referred to the PFAP EP this academic year.

Outcome	Number of Pupils
Pupil's needs identified and being met in mainstream school at SEN support level	3
Pupil's needs identified and being met in mainstream school with an Education, Health and Care Plan	2
Pupil's needs identified and now being met in special school with an Education, Health and Care Plan	0
Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment planned/underway and outcome of this is yet to be determined	10
Assessment in early stages and ongoing	7

Details of how the PFAP EP has responded to each individual referral can be found in the monthly PFAP Summary of EP Involvement documents attached to the minutes of every PFAP meeting.

Annual Training Programme: Data

8. In January 2016 the panel agreed to roll out an annual PFAP EP training programme in key areas identified as relevant to pupils placed via the PFAP. This was developed in recognition of the fact that all mainstream primary schools contribute funding to the PFAP EP post but pupils coming through the panel tend to be clustered within certain geographical areas and so not all schools access PFAP EP time for individual casework.
9. To date, **102** live training courses have been offered across the authority with **over 2,000** attendees. However, the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in the training programme for academic year 2021-2022 moving online via the Services for Schools platform. At the request of Head Teacher Cluster Representatives, the training programme has continued to be delivered online since as this enables school staff to access the training at their convenience rather than arranging to release staff for training courses delivered at specific times. Since 2021-2022, Services for Schools has logged 465 online views/bookings of the FAP EP training courses, representing a **minimum of 465 staff** receiving training as this could be viewed individually, in groups or as full school staff teams.
10. This academic year the training topics selected as pertinent to the ongoing issues in schools, especially in relation to the pupils placed with them via PFAP, were:
 - Anxiety: Early identification and effective intervention.
 - Trauma Informed Practice.
 - Managing Strong Emotions.
11. This training was again available via Services for Schools, now utilising their eLearning Portal, with individual staff accounts being used to sign up and gain initial access to the courses. The number of individual accounts which made a 'booking' to gain access to course content is summarised in Table 4.

Table 4: Number of bookings made to gain access to each training course.

Training Course	Number of Bookings*
Anxiety: Early identification and effective intervention.	17
Trauma Informed Practice.	12
Managing Strong Emotions.	17
Total: 46	

* Each booking can be viewed individually, in groups or as whole staff training events.

12. The total number of bookings for this academic year is **46**. However, as previously discussed, it is not possible to state exactly how many staff accessed the training courses as they can be viewed by individuals, groups or

whole schools once booked and can also be revisited several times. As such, this number likely represents a **minimum number of attendees**.

13. A more detailed breakdown of the work of the Primary Fair Access EP can be found in the annual report dated July 2024.
14. Overall, schools continue to value the PFAP EP role, with the individual casework and training undertaken by the PFAP EP being evaluated as high quality and leading to increased identification of the needs of pupils and the support they require to ultimately improve their outcomes. The PFAP EP working at both the individual and systemic level also supports our mainstream primary schools to better understand and meet the needs of their complex pupils in general, not just those placed via the Primary Fair Access Panel.

De-Delegation

15. De-delegation is the agreed top slicing of funding from mainstream maintained schools. Services funded via de-delegation must be offered to academies on the same basis as mainstream maintained schools.
16. The calculation for de-delegation for the FAP EP has been calculated on the basis that all mainstream primary schools in Gateshead buy into this service including academies. The de-delegation has been calculated on the basis that primary academies will also buy into this service at the level of £5.75 per pupil.
17. These levels of de-delegation have been calculated on the basis that all primary schools both maintained, and academy schools buy into this service.

Proposal

18. It is proposed that Schools Forum de-delegate funding for 2025/26.

Proposed de-delegation values are: -

- Fair Access Educational Psychologist £5.75 per pupil (primary only) (2023/24 and 2024/25 £5.50).

Recommendations

19. That School Forum approves the de-delegation of funds for the Primary Fair Access Educational Psychologist

For the following reasons: -

20. To ensure that all children and young people in Gateshead receive an education that is suitable and appropriate to their needs and abilities.

To enable schools to receive the support to accurately identify the needs of children and young people and implement support strategies as/when appropriate.