

Educational Psychology Service Schools Satisfaction Survey

Research report

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1 Executive Summary

This research was carried out to measure the performance of the Lancashire Educational Psychology Service (EPS) and in particular the effectiveness of its service level guarantee. The questionnaire was sent to 600 primary and secondary schools in Lancashire. 107 schools responded, which equates to a response rate of 18%. The schools responded either by completing an online or postal questionnaire.

1.1 Key findings

- The majority of respondents (75) were satisfied with the service provided by the EPS overall.
- When asked how useful the service provided by the EPS was the majority (91) said that they found the service useful.
- Thinking about the service over the last 12 months, almost half of the respondents (53) felt the service had stayed the same. More respondents thought that the service had got better than those who thought it had got worse.
- From a range of statements on the service, respondents were most likely to disagree that there was a sufficient amount of time given to discuss the schools' views on the children.
- In general there appears to be a greater demand for the EPS service than is currently being delivered, with schools suggesting a need for more hours of service than they receive.
- Those using the EPS during a critical incident were overall satisfied with the service with around half being very satisfied.
- A significant minority disagreed that contacting their EP was easy and that they have the opportunity to meet and plan future work with the EP.
- The vast majority of respondents (87) were aware of the EPS service level guarantee. More than half of respondents agree that the EPS had delivered on its side of the agreement.
- There is a wide spread of opinion on whether to support the proposal to delegate some EPS funding to schools, with 41 schools supporting and 25 opposing.

1.2 Recommendations

- Consider ways to satisfy the greater demand for the service, both in terms of hours and numbers of staff. Give schools more opportunity to meet with their EP, and explore ways of helping schools to make more efficient use of the time allocated to them.
- Reconsider the methods of contacting EP's to make this easier.
- Despite a majority agreeing, there was lowest agreement with the statement "the range of services offered by the EPS is suitable for my school's needs", compared to other statements about the service. Explore with schools what these needs are and how they can be met.
- Take further discussion on the proposal to delegate some EPS funding to schools. Give the schools more information on which to base their decision during the consultation process.

2 Background

The Lancashire Educational Psychology Service (EPS) aims to promote the five outcomes for children, given in the Every Child Matters – Change for Children, through the application of psychology. The service provides educational psychologists to schools - specialists on how children and young people develop and learn. They offer assessment, advice and support to parents and teachers, where there is a concern about the development, learning or behaviour of children and young people. The service works with:

- individuals and groups of children;
- teachers and other adults in schools;
- families; and
- all those who work with children and young people in wider agencies and communities.

The service has recently introduced a service level guarantee that provides a:

- named educational psychologist for each school, with contact details;
- clear outline of different levels of service available to schools;
- clear specification of the time available to schools and how that might be used;
- range of work which can be delivered to schools by one or more educational psychologists; and
- clarification of expectations from educational psychologists and from schools.

3 Introduction

The EPS wanted to undertake a research project to assess its current performance on delivering its services to schools, and to gain an understanding of any service improvements required.

The research was carried out to measure the performance of the service and in particular the effectiveness of the service level guarantee. The EPS wanted an independent measure of the service to build upon the research that has been previously conducted from within the service itself.

4 Research objectives

The research objectives were to:

- measure how satisfied schools are with the EPS;
- measure how satisfied schools are with educational psychologists;
- identify opportunities to improve the service provided to schools;
and
- assess the effectiveness of the service level guarantee.

5 Limitations

The questionnaire was sent to 600 primary and secondary schools in Lancashire. 107 schools responded, which equates to a response rate of 18%. Whilst in absolute terms the number of responses is low, it should be taken as statistically representative of the overall school population.

6 Methodology

All schools in Lancashire were invited to take part in the survey. An e-mail was sent to each school's head teacher with a link to the questionnaire. The questionnaire was hosted on the county council's website and will use the ClickQuestionnaire software. Respondents were asked to include the name of their school to aid analysis.

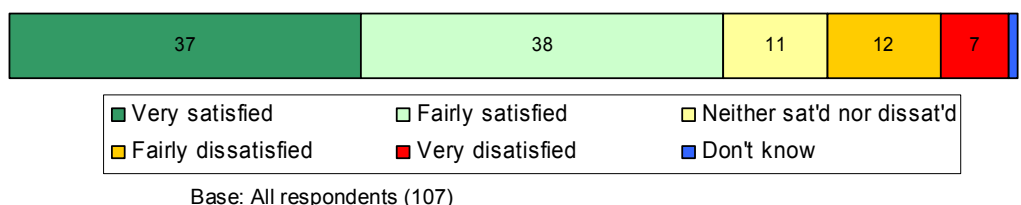
Early in the fieldwork it was obvious that some schools had problems accessing the online questionnaire. For this reason a hard-copy questionnaire was also produced containing identical questions to the online version. It was distributed to schools via the EPS team.

7 Main Research Findings

7.1 Overall satisfaction with the Educational Psychology Service

The first section of the questionnaire asked respondents about their overall views of the Educational Psychology Service (EPS). Initially they were asked to give an overall satisfaction rating for the service.

Chart 1 - Overall how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the services provided by the EPS?

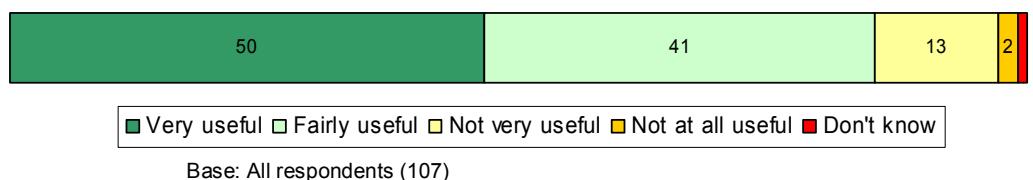


The majority of respondents (75) were, overall, satisfied with the service provided by the EPS. However, at least as many respondents were only fairly satisfied as were very satisfied, meaning there are opportunities to further improve the service. Additionally, 19 respondents were dissatisfied to some degree with the service provided, 7 were very dissatisfied.

Respondents were asked why they rated the EPS in that way. Forty-seven respondents stated that they were satisfied with the service. However significant minorities reported problems with the amount of time they had been allocated (16), difficulties keeping in contact with their EP (15), or other problems (14).

When asked how useful the service provided by the EPS was the majority (91) said that they found the service useful. 13 respondents found the service not very useful. Again there is the potential to shift people from saying the service is fairly useful to finding it very useful by making improvements to the service, as well as further investigation as to why people held those views.

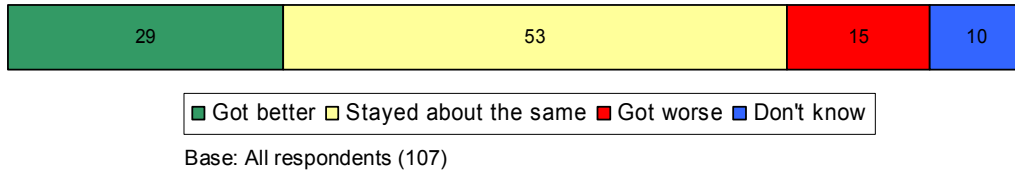
Chart 2 - And overall how useful do you find the services provided by the EPS?



Respondents were asked if they thought the service provided by the EPS had changed over the last 12 months. Almost half of the respondents (53) felt the service had stayed the same. More

respondents thought that the service had got better than those who thought it had got worse.

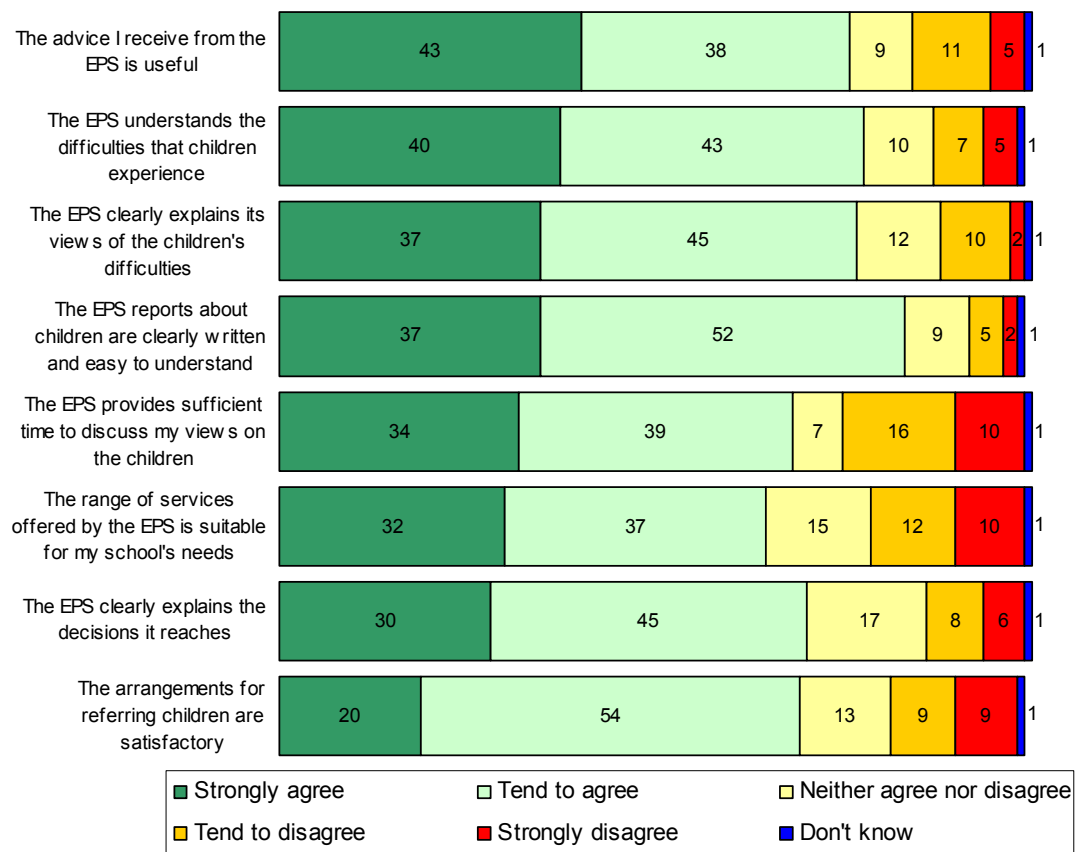
Chart 3 - Over the past 12 months do you think the service provided by the EPS has got better, got worse or is it about the same?



7.2 Overall satisfaction with the Educational Psychology Service

Respondents were asked to agree or disagree with a number of statements about the EPS. Chart 4 shows the responses given.

Chart 4 - How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about the EPS...?



The majority of respondents agree with the statements, which given that all the statements are positive about the EPS is a desirable result. Again, as earlier there is the potential in the future to make more people strongly agree rather than just tend to agree.

Respondents are most likely to strongly agree that the advice they receive from the EPS is useful. This supports the earlier finding. A similar number thought that the service understood their needs and clearly explained its views on children's difficulties. There was strong agreement and very little disagreement that the reports the EPS writes about the children are clearly written and easy to understand.

Respondents were most likely to disagree with the statement that there was a sufficient amount of time given to discuss the schools' views on the children. Twenty-six respondents felt this way, with 10 respondents strongly disagreeing. There was also the lowest agreement with the statement "the range of services offered by the EPS is suitable for my school's needs". This may need to be explored further with schools.

Respondents were least likely to strongly agree that the EPS clearly explains the decisions it reaches and that the arrangements for referring children are satisfactory. Although there were a high proportion of respondents who tended to agree with these two statements, they are maybe areas where the service could improve.

Each school receives a number of hours from the EPS as part of their service level guarantee. The mean number of hours that schools responding say they were allocated was 25 hours, but from the responses given this ranges from 2 to 63 hours. At the time of the fieldwork schools had received 18 hours of EPS support, with a range between no hours and 62 hours. For the school that have outstanding hours 33 respondents expect to use their hours by the end of the school year, whilst 38 say they will not. Additionally, three schools had bought in extra hours during the current school year.

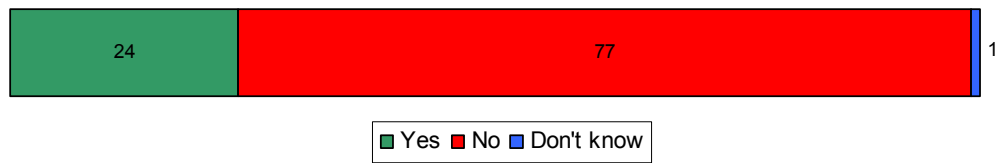
Schools were asked how many hours they thought they should have received. The mean given was 30 hours with a range between 3 and 80 hours. Therefore, both the mean and the top end of the range are above that currently provided to schools. Hence in general there appears to be a greater demand for the EPS service than is currently being delivered.

7.3 Training from the Educational Psychology Service

The EPS provides a number of training courses for schools and contributes to others. A significant number (77) of respondents said their staff had not attended any training provided by the EPS.

Chart 5 - Have any of your staff attended any training provided by the EPS?

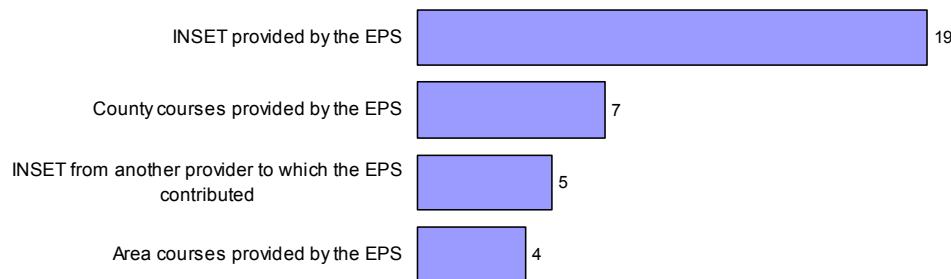
Have any of your staff attended any training provided by the EPS?



Base: All respondents (107)

Those whose staff had attended training provided by EPS were asked which courses they had gone to. Only 24 respondents, who had attended any training provided by the EPS, answered this question. The INSET provided by the EPS was the most common training attended.

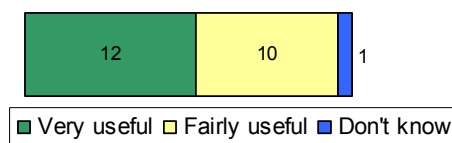
Chart 6 - Which of the following training courses have your staff attended?



Base: All respondents whose staff have attended EPS courses (24)

When asked how useful respondents found the training almost all (22) found the training useful, though around half of them said it was only fairly useful.

Chart 7 - And how useful was this training?



Base: All respondents whose staff have attended EPS courses (24)

There is an opportunity to increase the amount of training given to schools. The research does not make it clear whether it is a lack of demand from schools or whether the EPS can not support the demand, but increasing the training done with schools could increase awareness of the service, explaining how the service operates and why decisions are or are not taken.

7.4 The Educational Psychology Service telephone helpline

The EPS provides a telephone helpline. Within the last 12 months most (76) had not used this facility, but 21 respondents had.

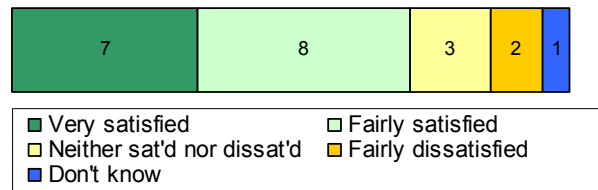
Chart 8 - Has your school used the EPS telephone helpline within the last 12 months?



Base: All respondents (107)

Those using the EPS telephone helpline were asked how satisfied or dissatisfied with the outcome of using the service. Responses were mixed, but the bulk of the small numbers of respondents were satisfied with using the service.

Chart 9 - How satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the outcome of using the EPS telephone helpline?



Base: All respondents who have used the EPS helpline in the last 12 months (21)

7.5 Critical incident support

Schools were asked if they had used the EPS in relation to a critical incident during the school year. 18 schools had received support during the 2006/7 school year.

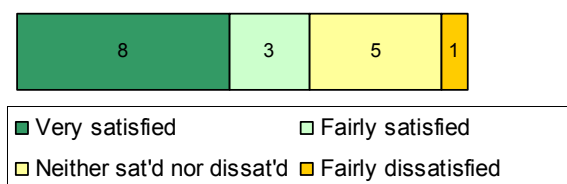
Chart 10 - Has your school received any support from the EPS in relation to a critical incident in this school year?



Base: All respondents (107)

Those using the EPS during a critical incident were overall satisfied with the service with around half being very satisfied. This result is based on a very small sample, although this is possibly reflective of the number of critical incidence occurrences.

Chart 11 - How satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the support from the EPS in relation to the critical incident?

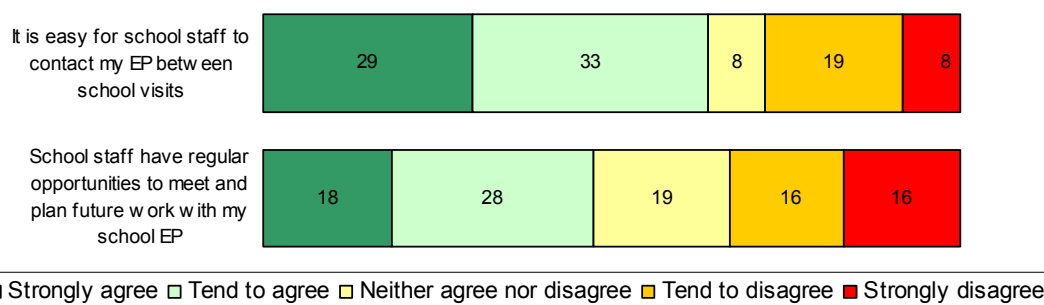


Base: All respondents having visited the website before (126) (Top 6 answers)

7.6 Educational psychologists

The next section of the questionnaire asked about the feeling of the school towards their educational psychologist (EP).

Chart 12 - Now thinking about your educational psychologist (EP), how much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about your EP...?



Base: All respondents (107)

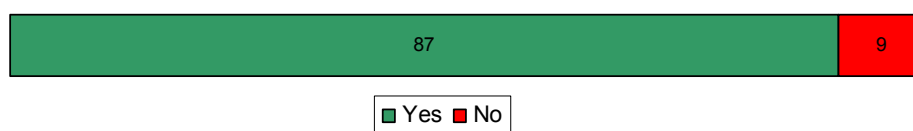
Over half (64) of those responding agreed that it was easy for school staff to contact their EP between school visits. However, there were a significant minority (27) who disagreed that contacting their EP was easy. When asked about having the opportunity to meet and plan future work with the EP, less respondents agreed (46) and more respondents disagreed (32) than with the first statement.

It would appear that either the opportunities do not exist or that they are not regularly enough to be of use to some of the schools. This suggests that the availability of the EPs should be increased and that they should have a closer working relationship with schools.

7.7 EPS service level guarantee and funding

The EPS has recently introduced a service level guarantee. Schools were asked if they were aware of the guarantee and their views on it. The vast majority of respondents (87) were aware of the EPS service level guarantee. The nine respondents that are not aware could be because of the person completing the questionnaire, or due to a lack of communication.

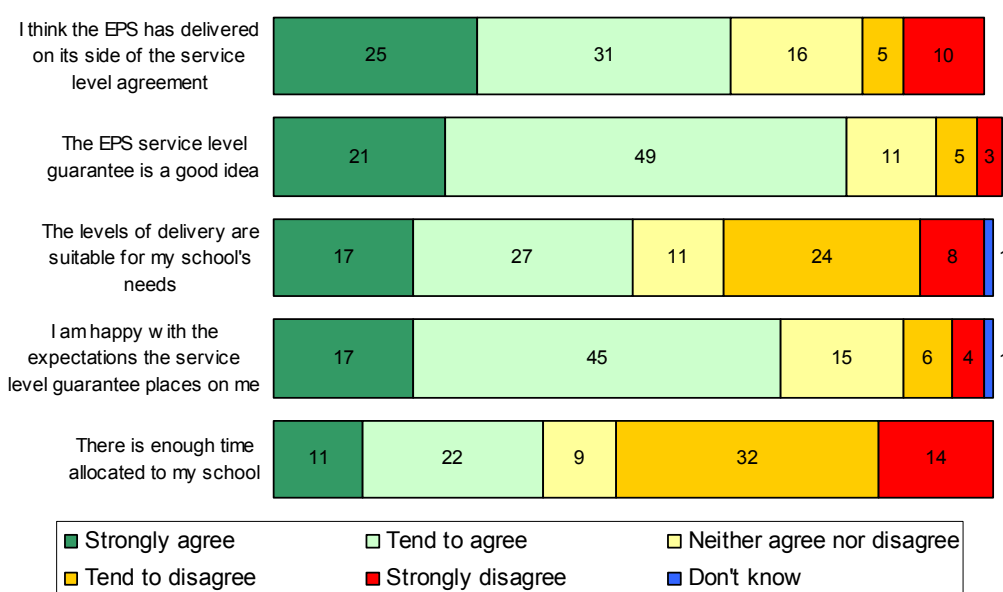
Chart 13 - Are you aware of the EPS service level guarantee?



Base: All respondents (107)

Respondents were then asked to either agree or disagree with a number of statements made about the EPS service level guarantee. The results are shown in chart 14.

Chart 14 - How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about the EPS service level guarantee...?



Base: All respondents (107)

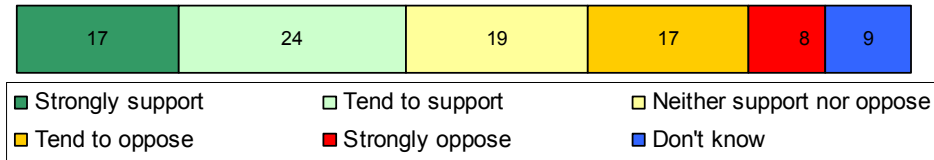
Most respondents (70) feel that the service level guarantee is a good idea, showing support for the initiative. There also tends to be agreement that the EPS has delivered on its side of the agreement (56 respondents agree), which is a particularly positive result. Schools too are inclined to say that are happy with the expectations that guarantee places on them (62 respondents agree).

There are, however, some negative reactions to the guarantee. When asked if they agree that the levels of service delivery are suitable for their school's needs, only 44 respondents agreed and 32 respondents disagreed. Moreover, when asked to say if there was enough time given to their school only 33 respondents agreed there was, but 46 respondents disagreed. Therefore, the time allocated is an issue for schools. This is backed-up by results outlined earlier.

Respondents were asked how much they supported or opposed the delegation of some of the funding from EPS to schools. There was a mixed response to this question from respondents. 41 respondents

supported it, whilst 25 opposed the change. Nine respondents did not know. It is recommended that further discussion takes place on this proposal, and that schools should be given more information on which to base their decision during the consultation process.

Chart 15 - Consideration is being given to delegating some of the funding of the EPS to schools. Do you support or oppose this proposal?



Base: All respondents (107)

7.8 Improving the Educational Psychology Service

The final section of the questionnaire asked schools how they thought the EPS could be improved.

Grouped by theme, the number of responses is shown in the table below.

Suggestion to improve service	Number
Easier contact with EP / Closer working	18
More hours for the school / more EPs	14
Service is satisfactory	22
Improve reporting	3
Other suggestions	22

Many of the respondents gave very full answers and suggestions, which should be illuminative to the team.