

Classification: Open	Decision Type: Key
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Report to:	Cabinet	Date: 01 June 2022
Subject:	Educational Psychology Service – Establishment of a joint Recently Qualified Educational Psychology Training Academy with Salford Council	
Report of	Cabinet Member for Children and Young People	

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 The Council requires access to the services of Educational Psychologists in order to support children and young people who are in need of additional support, and specifically where those children are subject to assessment of additional educational needs, and the potential requirement for an Education, Health and Care Plan to set out how those needs will be met.
- 1.2 The number of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) issued, as a proportion of the 0-25 population has increased over time, with a resultant increase in the overall rate of EHCPs being maintained. Further, the number of requests for statutory assessment continues to increase. This is placing significant additional demands on the services that support children and young people, and on those statutory services that the Council must provide in relation to SEND.
- 1.3 The Council has previously maintained an Educational Psychology Team, headed by a Principal Educational Psychologist. However, difficulties in recruiting suitably qualified staff has resulted in difficulties in sustaining this arrangement.
- 1.4 Challenges in the recruitment and retention of Educational Psychologists is a national issue, and Bury is not alone in facing these challenges.
- 1.5 Bury has attempted to recruit to a Principal Educational Psychologist post in a number of different ways and has been unsuccessful. At the same time, existing EP post-holders have left to take up posts elsewhere.
- 1.6 In response, in 2020, the Council entered into an arrangement with Salford Council to provide oversight of the Educational Psychology activity, utilising the role of Salford's Principal EP, and accessing some limited additional capacity from Salford's Team.
- 1.7 However, this has meant that Bury has largely been limited to the delivery of its core functions, that includes the Council's statutory role in respect of EHCP assessments, and critical incident support, but children and families have not been able to access the service at an individualised level in a preventative way.
- 1.8 Properly resourced, Education Psychology should be able to work with children and young people who are experiencing barriers to their successful learning and participation in settings, schools, colleges and other activities. These barriers can include a range of emotional and social issues or learning difficulties or other special educational needs/disabilities.

- 1.9 Education Psychology should have the capacity to work with parents, carers, teachers, social workers, GP's and other agencies in a child's education in a variety of ways, including observations, interviews and assessments of the child. Education Psychology can then offer a range of appropriate interventions, such as learning programmes and collaborative work with teachers or parents.
- 1.10 The Council has been exploring different models by which it can assure that EP support is available, both to meet its core, statutory duties, but also provide the wider support that is so important for children and young people and their families.
- 1.11 The purpose of this report is to seek approval to a change of approach for recruitment to the Educational Psychology Service. It builds on the successful partnership developed with Salford Council, but seeks to extend that arrangement more formally to enable Salford to recruit additional staff to meet the needs of both Council's. Given, the national challenges with recruitment, it is proposed that, through this arrangement, Salford will put in place specific initiatives to support recruitment and retention, in the form of a 'recently qualified EP Academy'.
- 1.12 The proposal is to enter into a shared service approach and to use Salford Council as the employer and recruit sufficient capacity to meet each Council's requirements through this arrangement. In addition, it is the intention to joint fund an attractive induction offer in the form of a Recently Qualified EP Academy.
- 1.13 Through this EP Academy arrangement, we will see:
- A structured and elongated induction for new recruits over a 3-month period
 - Access to a series of placements in services and schools across Children's Services and health, so as to promote an in depth understanding of the organisations and the infrastructures which influence SEND strategy and activity/forecasts
 - Access to enhanced 'internal' training – EPS, Social Care, Youth Justice, Education Welfare, SALT, CAMHS, EMTAS, LSS, SEN
 - Access to input from these services with a view to understanding the changing needs of the Salford & Bury populations
 - Opportunity to present to the EP service their learning as they move through the programme
 - Access to structured support to grow into any gaps in experiences due to the pandemic e.g. face-to-face direct work with children and the use of physical rather than digital assessment materials
 - Ongoing competency monitoring with the support of the senior EP.
 - External training provided by the very best subject specialists e.g. dynamic assessments; providing solution focused consultations; mental health - anxiety and attachments (VIG/ VERP – video enhanced reflective practice)
- 1.14 The cost of delivering the Academy programme, including the salary costs of those staff recruited through this process will be split equally between the two Councils. In addition, the cost of a senior EP to manage the programme will also be shared.

- 1.15 The cost will reduce over time, as the initial recruitment costs, and associated package of support and training for new recruits is stepped down. Over the first three years, the cost profile is as follows:
- Year one £250,000 – Bury Contribution £125,000
 - Year two £148,000 £74,000
 - Year three £90,000 £45,000
- 1.16 In addition, the Council will continue to fund a service level agreement with Salford for the Principal Educational Psychologist to provide oversight.
- 1.17 The 2021/22 budget for the service was £363,300, against which expenditure of £380,740 was incurred. This included £286,500 on agency staff.
- 1.18 Whilst initial investment is required to appoint to substantive posts, once this is done, it enables the controlled reduction in the reliance of agency staff, and by the end of year three, for the cost of the service to be met from within the current budget.
- 1.19 The 2022/23 budget is £383,900 on Project Code EY58000. Any additional cost will be met from full year effect of staff savings, project Safety Valve capacity transformation funds, and then from the reduction in agency costs
- 1.20 Cabinet is asked to give its support to the proposed ongoing partnership arrangements with Salford City Council.

2.0 Recommendation(s)

Approve the Council entering into a formal partnership arrangement with Salford City Council to recruit, employ and train Educational Psychologists to work across both local authority areas.

To approve the additional costs of establishing the formal partnership on the basis of shared costs across the two Councils, with those costs being met from the permanent Education Psychology service budget (EY58000), plus additional capacity from the partnership charged initially to Project Safety Valve (EG10021) and in future covered from the core Education Psychology budget through reduction of Agency spend.

2.1 Reasons for recommendation(s)

To enable the Council to put in place appropriate arrangements to recruit suitably qualified educational psychologists in order to fulfil its duties in respect of statutory assessments for Education, health and care plans for those children with Special educational Needs.

2.2 Alternative options considered and rejected

Bury could provide this service directly however these posts have been difficult to recruit to and has led to a reliance on the use of agency staff. This option has been rejected by officers.

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3.0 Background

3.1 The Children and Families Act 2014 includes clauses to reform the SEND system, including the requirement for a local authority to ensure that it identifies:

- all the children and young people in its area who have or may have special educational needs, and
- all the children and young people in its area who have a disability.

3.2 The SEND Code of Practice 0 – 25 and regulations are statutory guidance that sits alongside the Act, setting out the expectation of how the SEND reforms will be delivered in practice. The SEND reforms were implemented from September 2014 and local authorities had to put arrangements in place to seek advice and support regarding the assessment of special educational needs.

Link to the SEND Code of Practice May 2015:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25>

3.3 The aim is to provide an Educational Psychology Service to enable the Council to fulfil its statutory duties under the Children and Families Act 2014, the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970, 22(3A) of the Children Act 1989 and meet the requirements of associated guidance in the assessment and meeting of needs of our children and young people including those in the care of Bury.

3.4 An effective Educational Psychology is essential to support improvement in both identification, assessment and in upskilling the wider workforces to ensure improving experience and outcomes for our children and young people with SEND.

3.5 There are significant national challenges in recruiting Educational Psychologists and Bury has been unable to sustain its own directly delivered Educational Psychology Service for some time.

3.6 In order to ensure that the Council meets its statutory duty and provide appropriate and effective support for children and young people, particularly those with Special Educational Needs, it has entered into an arrangement with Salford City Council to access specialist support.

3.7 Whilst this current arrangement provides access to specialist provision, it does not address the challenge that both Bury and Salford face in recruiting and retaining high quality staff.

3.8 The recommended proposal in this paper seeks to respond to this challenge by formalising the partnership arrangement between Bury Council and the City of Salford Council, and thereby enabling a more structured approach to the recruitment and retention of staff.

Links with the Corporate Priorities:

The proposals set out in this report seek to support three key priorities contained in the Let's Do It strategy:

- Improved quality of life
- Improved early years development
- Improved educational attainment

It will do this by ensuring that children, young people, and their families of access to high quality professional support when it is needed, also ensuring that the Council meets its statutory duties in relation to the assessment of those children and young people with Special Educational Needs, through the development of a locally based service that is able to recruit and retain high quality staff.

Equality Impact and Considerations:

Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:

- a. A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
- b. eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act.
- c. advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- d. foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations and demonstrate that we are paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services

An equality impact assessment has been undertaken and identified no areas of negative impact in relation to protected characteristics

Environmental Impact and Considerations:

There are no environmental impacts for this decision

Assessment and Mitigation of Risk:

Risk / opportunity	Mitigation
Without this proposal there is a risk that the Council will not be able to recruit and/or retain high quality staff, impacting on the Council's ability to	The recommended option in this report is designed to enable the Council to put in

meet its statutory duties, and adversely impacting on the service and support available to children and young people	place appropriate arrangements for the recruitment and retention of high quality staff
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Legal Implications:

The report clearly sets out the Council statutory duties regarding the provision of this service. The proposals for a shared service arrangement do not present any cause for concern regarding procurement rules. A Memorandum of Understanding or similar arrangement setting out details as to the service provision and costs will be required in due course. Legal advice and support should be sought during that process.

Financial Implications:

There is funding available for this service through the core budget and the project safety valve capacity transformation funds for the first 3 years at which point reduced costs and savings on agency costs will mean that it can be fully funded from core budgets.

Background papers:

Regular reports to Children and Young People's scrutiny Committee provide updates on the improvement of Special Educational Needs and Disability Services (SEND) and the embedding of the code of practice across the Local SEND Area.

A detailed Annual Report on Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) was submitted at the Children and Young Persons' Scrutiny Committee meeting on the 7th September 2021

<https://councildecisions.bury.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=328&MIId=2958&Ver=4> .

<https://councildecisions.bury.gov.uk/documents/s30541/Final%20Report%20on%20SEND%20March%202022%20V6.pdf>

Please include a glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used in this report.

Term	Meaning
SEND	Special Educational Needs and disability
EHCP	Education, Health & Care Plan