

Press release: Multi-million pound fund to train more educational psychologists in schools

Thousands of children across England will benefit from mental health and special needs support, as funding worth £31.6 million is announced to train more Educational Psychologists.

The Department for Education has today (20 March) outlined plans to support more young people with additional educational needs by launching a procurement exercise for experts to come forward and kickstart specialist training for more Educational Psychologists. The multi-million pound fund will see over 600 Educational Psychologist trainees receive free tuition and grants.

It follows the Education Secretary's [announcement](#) in December last year to expand funding to increase the cohort of Education Psychologists from 160 to 206 each year. At the same time he announced an additional £350 million for high needs.

[Research published today](#) shows that over two-thirds of councils surveyed in 2018 faced difficulties recruiting to fill vacant Educational Psychologist posts. In response to pressures faced by schools and councils, increasing the number of free places to train as an Educational Psychologist will ensure a steady flow of new entrants to the workforce and vary the geographical spread of training availability.

Children and Families Minister Nadhim Zahawi said:

Every child deserves to be happy, healthy and have the best chance of fulfilling their potential. Educational Psychologists play an important role in making sure that this is no different for children with additional needs, by providing tailored support and helping families and teachers when there are challenges to overcome.

We said that we would train more Educational Psychologists to help meet increasing demand for their services – and today we are confirming funding over £30 million to make this happen. We are launching three new training rounds from 2020 which will see over 600 psychologists trained.

New research published today tells us that too many local authorities have struggled to fill vacancies for Educational Psychologists. This new funding for additional psychologists will mean many more children, their schools and their parents feel well supported to tackle what can often be complex difficulties.

To make sure every child is able to learn in the most effective way, Educational Psychologists are critical in identifying special educational needs and are required to contribute to a young person's Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). They also provide tailored support and outreach to teachers and families, through new support strategies when the complex needs of a child are not being met.

Schools and teachers are supported by the specialist advice and practical interventions Educational Psychologists bring to create a conducive learning environment for children who are otherwise likely to fall behind. Aside from the operation costs for the training provider, the funding will contribute towards university tuition for Education Psychologist trainees with an additional bursary grant for their first year of study.

Kate Fallon, General Secretary of the AEP said:

It is great to see this funding come forward to train more Educational Psychologists, which will have a big impact on our profession. The new research backs up what we've been hearing from our members. We know that there is an ever-growing demand for our services, including contributing to an increasing number of Education, Health and Care Plans as well as providing specialist support for a wide range of children and young people with SEND and advice on mental health and wellbeing. A recent survey of our members indicated that over 85% of respondents had seen their workload increase significantly over the past 5 years.

As a profession, our capacity to meet this demand is limited, especially taking into account our pivotal role in the new mental health support teams. We were delighted when the Education Secretary announced last year that the number of training places would be increased, something we have campaigned for over a number of years. This announcement will make a significant difference to our ability as a profession to meet the needs of children and their families in the future.

Increasing recruitment forms part of wider efforts to promote children's mental wellbeing, as Educational Psychologists play a pivotal role in mental health provision in schools and will play a key role in supporting the new mental health support teams being introduced in 25 trailblazer areas.

Claire Murdoch, NHS England's National Director for Mental Health said:

This is a welcome step in the right direction – building on the enormous amount of work already under way to support children and young people's health and wellbeing from an early age.

We know that people will need additional support from time to time and so rightly the NHS Long Term plan is investing in earlier support, through the introduction of mental health support teams,

school nurses and now with this announcement more educational psychologists ensuring people get the everyday support needed to really thrive.