

What is consultation?

A consultation is a problem-solving discussion between the educational psychologist and teacher (or a group of teachers), sometimes involving parents and other staff working in school, for example teaching assistants or other professionals. A consultation can be held to discuss the needs of an individual pupil, but it can also be used to discuss and explore wider group or whole school issues.

Consultation is a conversation with a purpose, where everyone involved has an equal opportunity to openly share their knowledge / expertise alongside their concerns and views.

The Educational Psychologists (EPs) role is to support the adults involved to develop solutions and to collaboratively create an action plan to help move the situation forward. Some of the principles of consultation are as follows:

- No individual in the meeting has greater power than the other
- Everyone has an active role to play
- It is confidential unless there is information shared that needs to be followed up under safeguarding procedures
- Actions / interventions are more likely to be successful if they are generated / agreed by those who will be putting them in place
- Consultees have the right to accept or reject suggestions

What does a consultation around an individual pupil involve?

Schools can submit the 'Request for EP Involvement' form after an initial discussion about a named pupil and agreement with their link EP. The form is designed to help teachers and parents/carers to prepare for a consultation with the EP, by gathering the information required for the consultation. School staff record their current concerns and hoped-for outcomes on the form and gain written parental consent.

Consultations can also be held without naming the individual; in these circumstances, parental consent is not required. If direct work between the individual and the EP is agreed as an outcome of the consultation this cannot happen without gaining parental consent. At the consultation meeting, all parties are invited to share their views. The child's strengths and also their areas of need are identified. The discussion then identifies actions that can be taken to help support these needs. Solution focused questions can be particularly useful within a consultation framework to help build on

existing strengths. Consultations can lead to interventions focusing on the individual, a group of pupils or on whole-school issues depending on the issues raised. Notes and actions are recorded to form a summary of the consultation.

Where possible (SLA dependent), consultations are followed up at a further school visit, where progress can be reviewed and any additional action required agreed.

How to prepare

- Take time to understand the consultation process. Parents/Carers can talk to the school's SENCo for support.
- Think about what you want to gain from the consultation. What would you like to happen following the consultation? What form of recording would be most useful to school (and family if about named child)
- Parents/Carers are encouraged to complete any forms the school or EP has requested prior to the meeting. Knowledge and experience of the child/young person is essential to a thorough consultation.

What are the benefits?

- The participation of parents/carers is promoted, and they feel listened to. This can help build a positive working relationship between home and school.
- It helps to promote early intervention.
- It is also a way in which educational psychologists can work with school staff, parents and professionals before and at all stages of the SEND process, and particularly when extra help is needed.
- School staff problem-solving skills are enhanced and their confidence in effecting change increases, so they are equipped for future challenges.
- It can maximise the use of SLA time by allowing reflections on what has been helpful in similar scenarios in the past. These can then be considered as starting points for the current situation. In this way, consultation can have a wider reach for the school community.