

# Professional Practice Guidelines

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*DIVISION OF EDUCATIONAL AND  
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Incorporated by Royal Charter  
Registered Charity No 229642



January 2002

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# Introduction

These Guidelines for Professional Practice in Educational Psychology are supplementary to The Society's Code of Conduct, Ethical Principles and Guidelines which sets a minimum standard below which behaviour should not fall.

Breaches of the Society's Code are identified and are subject to disciplinary procedures. The guidelines set out below, seek to identify what educational psychologists are expected to do in pursuit of best practice and should be viewed as the minimum acceptable standard.

These Division guidelines now incorporate the previous Division Code of Conduct and constitute a working document in line with DECP Quality Standards and which will be reviewed and updated from time to time in light of changes both within the discipline and in the context of professional practice. The current Framework for Assessment is attached as an appendix.

The guidelines offer general principles and their implementation is intended to assist and clarify the judgements of individual practitioners subject to their particular circumstances. Actions and practices which are contrary to the recommendations warrant serious and careful consideration in consultation with supervisors. Mention or lack of mention in the guidelines of a particular act or omission shall not be taken as conclusive on any question of professional conduct. It is the responsibility of educational psychologists to be familiar with Society publications on matters of ethics and conduct.

Suggestions and comments from members are warmly welcomed and these should be directed to The Division Committee, Division of Educational and Child Psychology.

# I. The focus of educational psychologists' work

- 1.1 Professional educational psychologists are concerned to support and promote the proper development of young people. In doing so, they work not just directly with young people, but also with their parents and families and with the other adults who teach and care for them. There are, of course, other professionals who support young people and their teachers and parents, and educational psychologists link with them as part of the 'welfare network'. Professional educational psychologists also work more broadly to support organisations which make provision for young people (e.g. schools, local authorities, voluntary organisations) and in many cases are employed directly by them. It is the duty of members to promote the welfare of their clients. This duty will reflect an awareness of how factors such as disability, race, religion, nationality, gender, social standing, sexual preference and political belief can affect access to education and educational experience. It will be demonstrated by members through an explicit commitment to promote equal opportunities.
- 1.2 While educational psychologists will vary in the extent to which they work directly with individuals, their primary focus should always be on achieving positive outcomes for young people. This primary focus on the well-being and needs of young people may bring educational psychologists into conflict at times with interests of other parties (parents, teachers, or other professionals) with whom they work. Professional educational psychologists should adhere to the principles expressed in the Children Act (1989) which encourages the provision of support to those responsible for the welfare of children (i.e. parents and other adults) while attending primarily to the rights and well-being of the child.
- 1.3 Educational psychologists are aware that not all young people have the same needs. These differ not just in respect of quality but also degree. Educational psychologists have a responsibility for the proper development of all young people, not just those with whom they are specifically involved. In attending to the needs of particular individuals, educational psychologists should be aware that some are more vulnerable than others and therefore have a particular need for their interests to be safeguarded.

## 2. Relationships between client and professional power issues

Educational psychologists need to attend to the potential power imbalances that arise in their work. Much of their work is problem-centred and on many occasions psychologists may be entrusted with private information which may be essential to assist their understanding of a problem. Entrusting information of this nature almost inevitably puts clients in a position of vulnerability as they have less direct control over the use of this information. Educational psychologists have a responsibility to clients to reduce this kind of power imbalance by attending to issues such as confidentiality.

For some clients, vulnerability may not simply result from voluntarily entrusting a professional with information. Most young people and some parents are vulnerable in their dealings with professionals because of relative lack of professional knowledge and, in some cases, lack of skills and resources. Educational psychologists in this context have a responsibility to make particular efforts to ensure that clients understand fully the services available and their rights in respect of these. They also have a responsibility to redress the potential power imbalance by involving clients fully in decision-making. In particular, professional educational psychologists should endeavour to make sure that they obtain informed consent and establish a climate of open communication.

### 2.1 Informed consent

- 2.1.1 The concept of 'informed consent' relates to the client's right to choose whether to receive psychological services, and to make this choice on the best information available. Educational psychologists should give particular attention to providing the opportunity for informed consent to those with the least power and those who are potentially most vulnerable. Thus, particular attention should be paid to clarifying this issue with parents and young people themselves.
- 2.1.2 In the usual course of events, educational psychologists should seek the consent of the young person's parents or legal guardian before becoming professionally involved on an individual basis. They should ensure that this is 'informed consent' as far as possible by explaining the purpose and likely form of their involvement.
- 2.1.3 There are a number of situations where the educational psychologist may not be working directly with a young person but is advising other professionals (e.g. teachers). In these circumstances, educational psychologists should establish that informed consent has been obtained from the parents/carers. If informed consent is being obtained indirectly educational psychologists should endeavour to ensure that parents are given adequate information about the psychological services available.

## 2. Relationships between client and professional power issues (*continued*)

- 2.1.4 There may be exceptional reasons for not seeking consent, particularly if the young person's best interests would be significantly impaired by the educational psychologist's failure to act. If this is thought to be the case, educational psychologists should discuss the matter with a colleague within the profession, preferably one who is in a supervisory relationship with them.
- 2.1.5 There are some circumstances in which a young person seeks help directly without parental consent. It is now recognised that as a child becomes increasingly independent with age, parental authority diminishes correspondingly. It is lawful, therefore, for an educational psychologist to see young people under the age of 16 without parental consent provided that she/he is satisfied that the young person is of sufficient understanding (awareness and state of mind) to make an informed decision. However, in such instances, the educational psychologist should always encourage the young person to discuss the matter with his/her parents before any active involvement takes place.
- 2.1.6 Educational psychologists should gain the informed agreement of the young person, wherever possible, before commencing involvement. They should explain, in terms that the young person can understand, what is to happen at each stage of their involvement. This is likely to reduce anxiety levels and gain more trusting participation. Educational psychologists should take into account the fact that level of understanding is not solely dependent on age.
- 2.1.7 In order to make consent as 'informed' as possible educational psychologists should endeavour to ensure that parents (and young people where appropriate) have information on:
- The particular role and function of educational psychologists (e.g. within an LEA), including qualifications and areas of expertise where relevant.
  - The extent of educational psychologists' powers and responsibilities.
  - The activities which the educational psychologist might undertake with respect to the young person (e.g. gathering information directly or indirectly from third parties. report writing, etc.).
  - The confidentiality with which information will be treated, along with the limits to this.

- The nature and location of any records which will be kept by the educational psychologist and rights of access to these.
- What the *Code of Conduct, Ethical Principles and Guidelines* of The British Psychological Society entitles them to as clients.

2.1.8 Informed consent should be obtained from young people, parents (and others, as relevant) if video, audio tape or one-way screens are to be used.

2.1.9 Educational psychologists should respect the right of the young person or his/her parents/guardians to withdraw consent at any stage, yet endeavour to continue involvement if this can be demonstrated to be in the best interests of the young person concerned.

2.1.10 Professional educational psychologists should ensure that research participants take part in research voluntarily. They should also ensure that they provide sufficient information about the purposes of the research and the methods to be used, for the participants to make an informed decision. In circumstances where participants do not have the capacity to make informed decisions themselves (e.g. in the case of very young children or people with significant learning difficulties), educational psychologists should seek a view from someone able to represent them (this may be a parent or a representative otherwise identified). In all cases when young people participate in research, educational psychologists should ensure that consent is also obtained from their parents/legal guardians.

Some research may involve children or adults only indirectly as individuals (e.g. classroom observation, or analysis of anonymous written records). In such cases, educational psychologists may feel that consent is not necessary. In these instances, they should consider carefully whether their research or its outcomes might have direct effects on participants at an individual level.

## 2.2 Open communication

2.2.1 Educational psychologists should ensure that the verbal and written information conveyed to parents, guardians or to young people will be conducive to the well-being of the young person.

## 2. Relationships between client and professional power issues (*continued*)

2.2.2 Educational psychologists should make every effort to ensure that all communications between them and clients are open and easily understood. Professional reports should be written with parents/carers in mind: the language used should be as plain and clear as possible.

For some families, English will not be their first language or the language of the home. Every effort should be made to ensure that written and verbal communications are made accessible through their preferred language.

2.2.3 Educational psychologists should inform parents at their first meeting of the probable forms of written communication which they are likely to produce. They should negotiate those documents of which parents would wish to receive copies, and be prepared to discuss the content further where necessary.

2.2.4 Educational psychologists should allow parents/carers reasonable access to all written records concerning a young person. They should also extend access to the young person if she/he is capable of understanding the material and if access is unlikely to cause significant harm or distress.

2.2.5 Educational psychologists have a responsibility to provide feedback wherever possible to those who have participated in research.

### 2.3 Confidentiality

2.3.1 While open communication is desirable, educational psychologists should be aware that their practice is subject to the law of the land. At times, they will be presented with information which clients require to be confidential. A commitment to confidentiality implies that such information will not be divulged to third parties without the consent of the information provider. The duty to preserve confidentiality extends to a commitment not to pass on information where confidentiality has clearly already been broken.

2.3.2 As a general principle, educational psychologists should only divulge to a third party, information that is relevant and necessary in promoting the best interests of the young person. Where a report is requested by anyone not personally known to the member, it will be the responsibility of that member to verify the bona fides of the person making the request.



- 2.3.3 The requirement for confidentiality will be explicit in some cases. In others, educational psychologists will need to make a judgement about the status of the information provided. If in any doubt about this, the educational psychologist should consult the person who provided the information, directly.
- 2.3.4 Confidentiality may be broken in exceptional cases where failure to share information more widely would not be in the best interests of the young person, or would contravene the law. In such complex cases, educational psychologists should seek advice and support from other relevant professionals (e.g. educational psychologist colleagues, legal advisers, etc.).
- 2.3.5 At an early stage in their involvement with young people, parents, teachers and others, educational psychologists should discuss their commitment to preserving confidentiality, but also make clear the limits of this.
- 2.3.6 Educational psychologists should ensure that the storage of written information (in files, etc.) is adequately secure. Information should only be preserved in a personally identifiable form for as long as is strictly necessary.
- 2.3.7 When carrying out research, educational psychologists should endeavour, wherever possible, to store data in a non-personalised form, in order that the identity of the individual is protected. Where it is necessary to store information in an identifiable form, participants should be informed that this is the case and told who, apart from the researcher, may have access to it. Consent should be obtained from participants in the light of this information and access restricted to those originally specified. Even in such cases, educational psychologists should endeavour not to preserve data in a personalised form for a longer time than is strictly necessary.
- 2.3.8 It is the responsibility of the educational psychologist to ensure that any person working for him/her is aware of the strictures of them regarding confidentiality (e.g. administrative and domestic staff).

## **2.4 Other power issues.**

Potential power imbalances are not always in one particular direction. Professional educational psychologists need to be aware of the extent to which those with more power seek to determine their actions and they should be prepared to maintain their

## 2. Relationships between client and professional power issues (*continued*)

professional perspective. This applies particularly to the provision of psychological services to employers and to paying clients. However, it also applies to clients who may be particularly assertive and demanding where there is no paying relationship between the client and the professional.

The power brought to educational psychologists by their professional knowledge and experience can be used in a positive way, provided it is acknowledged and not abused. Power is entrusted to professionals on the understanding that they will use it responsibly and reasonably. An important further expectation is that professionals are competent in the areas of service which they claim to provide.

# 3. Professional behaviour

## 3.1 Conduct

3.1.1 Educational psychologists, in dealing with young people, their parents/guardians, teachers and others, should always conduct themselves in a manner which is conducive to the good reputation of the profession and which does not undermine public confidence in the services it offers.

This responsibility extends to avoiding any action that might lead the profession into disrepute or diminish the trust and confidence of the public.

3.1.2 Educational psychologists should be aware of and adhere to the Society's *Code of Conduct, Ethical Principles and Guidelines*. In addition, they should be particularly sensitive to the potential risks that may be incurred in their work with young people, parents and others. For example, in addition to educational psychologists not using their position of power over a child in any way that might be construed as abusive, they should be aware of situations where accusations of this nature might arise (e.g. work with adolescents in residential establishments) and take appropriate action to avoid the possibility of the situation arising.

3.1.3 If members employed by an organisation find themselves involved in an activity of the organisation which they consider detrimental to the well-being of children, young persons or their families, they will take every step to inform the organisation of their opinions, and, if the activity continues, they will consult the Division.

3.1.4 If members are members of a professional body or learned society, they will make use of this fact only within the limits set out by the rules of that professional body or learned society.

## 3.2 Honesty about services

3.2.1 Educational psychologists should be aware that those experiencing problems are in a vulnerable position. In this respect, expectations of what educational psychologists can offer may be inaccurate. Educational psychologists should attempt to ensure that clients or potential clients do not have exaggerated expectations of the efficacy of the services offered. They should also attempt to correct unduly limited expectations of the work carried out by the profession.

# 3. Professional behaviour *(continued)*

3.2.2 This is particularly the case when educational psychologists are in a marketing relationship with clients (parents and others). In these cases, they should be aware of and follow *The Society's Guidelines on Advertising*.

3.2.3 In all cases, educational psychologists should ensure that they do not exploit their relationship with clients for personal or financial gain. When members are associated with a team or institution conducted mainly by members of other professions, it will be their responsibility to ensure that their names are not used in any way such as to suggest that they endorse any activity of the team or institution that is not within their professional capacity.

3.2.4 Members who are salaried workers in a public service will not accept fees for private consultation from persons who are entitled to their services as members of the public, without first informing them of this fact. In particular, they will not suggest to them that by paying them a fee they will obtain priority or a better standard of service.

A member, whether for consideration or not, will only recommend a psychological text or other material in a strictly professional and factual way.

3.2.5 If an educational psychologist is in a situation where she/he might have a vested interest, this should be openly declared at the start of any professional exchange. For example, Educational psychologists should declare any financial or other arrangements they may have with institutions/organisations, which they are recommending to clients.

## 3.3 **Research and Publication Precautions**

3.3.1 If a brochure is published for circulation to colleagues, members of other professions, schools, colleges, or other similar institutions, the information given should be factual. On no account should testimonials be included, and evaluative statements should be avoided. Where services are to be given by several psychologists, the names and qualifications of each should be given together with the names and qualifications of members of other professions associated with the team. The scale of fees, where appropriate, should be clearly indicated.

A member will not attempt to solicit any testimonial or personal recommendation from a client.

### **3.4 Clarity about roles**

- 3.4.1 Professional educational psychologists have a number of different roles. They should distinguish clearly between these roles and make clear to those with whom they become involved which role they are fulfilling. For example, if they desire or are asked while carrying out research to take on a different professional role (e.g. counsellor), they should make it clear to participants that they are doing so. In adopting a different role, they should ensure that they have the competence to fulfil it as well as adhering to the ethical guidelines that are relevant to that particular activity.
- 3.4.2 Where educational psychologists working for Local Education Authorities are asked to take on officer duties which go beyond their specific professional role (e.g. coordinating statutory assessment procedures under the 1996 Education Act; assuming delegated responsibility on behalf of the LEA for negotiating possible educational arrangements with parents), they should make this clear. They should endeavour to distinguish to parents and others when they are fulfilling these different roles.
- 3.4.3 Where a close relationship exists between an educational psychologist and a potential client, careful consideration should be given to whether the work can still be undertaken. Particular attention should be paid to possible conflicts of interest and other ethical issues for which the educational psychologist might be held accountable.

### **3.5 Competence**

- 3.5.1 Educational psychologists should make no claim to any degree or professional qualification which they do not possess, nor to membership of any learned/professional body of which they are not a member.
- 3.5.2 Educational psychologists should make known the limitations of their professional competence and skills and offer only those skills, services or techniques that meet professional standards. They should inform parents or other professionals when they are not competent to address the problem presented.

# 3. Professional behaviour *(continued)*

- 3.5.3 In the event of suggesting other professionals who might be able to help, educational psychologists should stress that it is up to the client to decide whether or not the other professional can offer what they want. They should give the names of other professionals only if they have a definite knowledge and understanding of the competences of that person or if they clearly indicate that they are unable to comment on that person's competences.
  - 3.5.4 Educational psychologists should report other psychologists or professional colleagues whose work and conduct do not reach acceptable professional standards. Before such reporting and if appropriate an educational psychologist should take steps to resolve matters informally (subject to the Law). If appropriate, the individual about whom a report or complaint is being made should be informed of this fact and made privy to the contents of the report or complaint.
  - 3.5.5 The science and practice of educational psychology is constantly developing at great pace, with consequent requirements for change by practitioners if they are to maintain their competence. There is, therefore, a duty on all educational psychologists to update their professional knowledge and skills continuously post-qualification. This individual responsibility is in addition to any in-house or other training arrangements provided by a service or employer.
- 3.6 Relationships with other professionals**
- 3.6.1 In attending to the needs and interests of their primary clients (young people) educational psychologists should endeavour not to cause harm to others involved with them (e.g. parents, teachers etc). Although there may on occasions be conflicts between the needs of young people and others, educational psychologists have a responsibility to extend their work to include consideration of ways in which such conflicts can be resolved.
  - 3.6.2 When working with other professionals, educational psychologists should therefore endeavour to:
    - observe and respect the professional standing of other colleagues and make no comments or criticism of their conduct, competence or character unless or until they have attempted to resolve matters informally in accordance with the terms of 3.5.4.

- be sensitive to the effects of offering contradictory advice and work towards a co-ordinated view where possible.
- make clear what other professional colleagues can expect from them as a minimal response to a request for collaborative work.
- establish arrangements for working jointly with other professionals. making clear the conditions of the association and the point at which work will be terminated.

# 4. Professional practice

## 4.1 Access to educational psychologists

4.1.1 Within the limits of the law, parents should have a right of direct access to the services of an educational psychologist. Educational psychologists should endeavour to provide information about services they offer. This should be publicly available and educational psychologists in private practice should include information about the availability of services which are free at the point of delivery.

## 4.2 Information gathering

4.2.1 When working with young people, educational psychologists should base assessment, intervention and advice offered on the fullest and most accurate information that is available. They should consult as widely as possible with other people who know the young person concerned within their limits with regard to confidentiality and consent.

4.2.2 In assessment, educational psychologists should endeavour to use the means of communication which is the most accessible to the young person concerned, given his/her cultural background, preferred language and level of understanding.

4.2.3 Educational psychologists should make assessment as objective as possible. They should also make clear the sources on which the assessment is based and make known the limitations of any assessment, for example:

- (i) If assessment is carried out outside the young person's familiar surroundings (e.g. in a office or a clinic) or in a restricted sample of settings, generalisations should not be made from such observations to current or future learning and behaviour in school or in the home.
- (ii) generalisations should also be restricted if assessment is not carried out in the young person's first language or via a third party such as an interpreter.

4.2.4 Educational psychologists should only use those forms of assessment in which they are competent (unless they are receiving appropriate supervision) and only when these are judged to be in the young person's best interests.



4.2.5 The educational psychologist should present as full and objective an account as possible of information gathered. Others involved (e.g. parents) should be assisted in putting forward their own views. If these views differ from the views of the educational psychologist, the nature of any differences should be made clear. However, the educational psychologist should not seek to impose his/her own views. In any reporting of differences to a third party, the educational psychologist should make every effort to articulate these in an unbiased manner.

### **4.3 Interpretation of data**

4.3.1 Educational psychologists should distinguish clearly between reporting data or information and offering possible interpretations. They should be careful in generalising from the particular set of circumstances, which they have sampled. They should not allow their personal views, opinions, or biases to obscure the possibility of alternative interpretation. Nor should they allow the interests or requirements of their employers, 'sponsors' or paying clients to determine or restrict the interpretations that they offer.

4.3.2 Educational psychologists should convey information about the results of tests and assessments in a way which guards against misinterpretation and also assists with interpretation. They should take care in the presentation of written information to ensure that people reading any form of report have the best possible chance of gaining an accurate picture. Limitations of tests and other assessments should be made clear. Written reports about young people, schools etc. should be based on facts which can be substantiated. Where opinions are being expressed, they should be clearly identified as such.

### **4.4 Intervention**

Educational psychologists should encourage the young person to participate in processes and decision-making as far as possible. The informed agreement of the young person should be obtained before proceeding with an intervention (if it is possible to convey the information in terms she/he can understand). An exception to this would be those situations in which failure to intervene would result in harm or danger to the young person concerned.

Educational psychologists should consider thoroughly the most easily reversible and least intrusive interventions before embarking on less easily reversible and more intrusive courses of action.

## 4. Professional practice *(continued)*

Educational psychologists should rigorously evaluate their involvement with young people, schools and families in order to review and modify intervention strategies.

- 4.4.1 Members will not administer or cause to be administered any scheduled drug except under the supervision of a registered medical practitioner.

### 4.5 Research and publication precautions

Members employed in a research capacity by any organisation will make every effort to ensure that their findings are published in an unbiased manner. If they consider that this stipulation has not been met, they will attempt to rectify the matter with the organisation concerned, or, if they cannot obtain satisfaction, report the matter to the Division.

Research will be carried out with due regard for the safety and well-being of the subject. The first duty of investigators will be to ensure to the limits of their competence that no harm will come to any subject through their conduct of the investigation.

Normally, children will not be used as subjects of an investigation unless the permission of their parents or guardians has been obtained. However:

- (a) parental permission may not be necessary where investigations of a survey nature are planned; that is to say, investigations that aim to collect information and do not aim directly to modify the behaviour or personality of the subject. An example would be an attempt to identify a relationship between educational attainment and some personality characteristic.
- (b) Parental permission may not be necessary where the independent variable is a legitimate modification of the normal function of a school or institution. An example would be a study of the effects on attainment of the introduction of a new teaching method.

All publication of research must contain proper and accurate acknowledgement of the work of others involved either directly or indirectly.

# 5. Promoting good professional conduct and practice

## 5.1 Initial professional training

- 5.1.1 Training course tutors should work within DECP Training Committee guidelines, including those relating to the curriculum, organisation, staffing, recruitment, evaluation and review of courses.
- 5.1.2 Course tutors should be familiar with and operate within DECP and Society guidelines on sexual harassment and demonstrate sensitivity to issues of equal opportunities.
- 5.1.3 Course tutors should ensure that all trainee educational psychologists are fully informed about course regulations and assessment procedures.
- 5.1.4 Where it is considered that any aspect of a trainee's work is unsatisfactory, his/her attention should be drawn to it at an early stage and appropriate measures negotiated with the trainee.
- 5.1.5 While the main focus of training is on the learning and development of the trainee, tutors and fieldwork supervisors need to ensure that training activities and experiences do not infringe the interests, welfare and integrity of young people or their families.
- 5.1.6 Tutors have a particular responsibility to ensure that trainees understand and operate within the framework of the Society's Code of Conduct, ethical principles and guidelines during their work with clients. During trainee placements, this responsibility is shared with the fieldwork supervisor.

## 5.2 Supervision and support

- 5.2.1 Supervision should be an entitlement for all educational psychologists working with clients. The opportunity to explore and learn from the practical, experiential and theoretical elements of professional practice is an essential component of the psychologist's continuing development.
- 5.2.2 Supervision also provides the forum whereby the individual psychologists professional work and judgement is open to inspection by his/her professional peers. It is the responsibility of the psychologist to ensure that potentially controversial issues, or those with uncertain ethical connotations, are presented for supervision.

# 5. Promoting good professional conduct and practice *(continued)*

- 5.2.3 An essential underpinning for supervision is equality of respect between supervisor and supervisee. This does not imply equality of experience or power or knowledge but, rather, recognises how any imbalances in these areas could jeopardise equality of respect and prejudice the process of negotiation through which mutual respect is maintained. Equality of respect does not remove the supervisor's responsibility for taking the lead and giving the supervisory process a sense of direction, but sets the framework in which supervision is conducted. It also recognises the responsibility that belongs to the supervisee for the achievement of successful supervision.
- 5.2.4 The imbalance of power inherent in supervision needs to be recognised, particularly when it is carried out by course tutors and line managers. In all circumstances, supervisors need to be particularly sensitive to ways in which race, culture or gender influences may affect the supervisory process
- 5.2.5 In those instances where supervision incorporates the use of video, audio tapes or one way screens, the expressed agreement of the supervisee and the client(s) should be obtained. This agreement should be written rather than verbal, and should relate to the fact of the recording, its subsequent use and arrangements for erasing it. Where one-way screens or recording techniques are being used, there is the same need for reassurance that the observer(s) are equally committed to respect for confidentiality as the supervisor.
- 5.2.6 Each service should provide opportunities for supervision from suitably experienced supervisors who will preferably have specific training in supervision. Educational psychologists working alone, or in the absence of service based supervision, should seek supervision from appropriately qualified and experienced personnel. Educational psychologists working in isolated settings in particular should attempt to develop a supportive professional network in order to minimise the stressful effects of isolation, and to provide mutual support when working on complex cases.

## 5.3 Management of people

- 5.3.1 Educational psychologists working in senior positions involving the management of other people should acquaint themselves with the legal and ethical considerations implicit in this role. Within their teams, they should work towards establishing a culture that is supportive of staff while recognising their managerial accountability for the provision of an effective and professional service.

5.3.2 Educational psychologists in such roles should try to ensure that the positive achievements of staff are recognised and encouraged, and that any significant problems are identified early. Managers should ensure that staff are given adequate support in responding to these. All staff should be provided with a regular opportunity to review their individual performance. Managers should try to ensure that this is a positive experience which highlights personal development and identifies future objectives.

5.3.3 In selection and recruitment, qualifications should be examined to ensure they fit the minimum requirements for the post, particularly if the qualifications held are not those standard for this country. In devising the relevant criteria for the vacant post, the educational psychologist should consider how to select, using 'equal opportunities', in the broadest sense (gender, race, creed, age, physical build, physical handicap). No appointment should be offered unless the applicant has full knowledge of all the criteria for the fulfilment of the post. If any of this criteria have been suppressed, or accidentally omitted, then the managing educational psychologist should accept the responsibility for fully addressing the issue at the earliest opportunity.

In selection, educational psychologists should not allow inducements or personal favours to affect their judgement about the suitability of an applicant.

5.3.4 Discipline should be fair and unbiased. An educational psychologist in a management or supervisory position should suspend judgement whilst listening to the facts presented by the employee and other interested parties. She/he would be using power positively by allowing 'space' for separate parties to consider their positions. If a disciplinary procedure is necessary under the codes of conduct or terms of employment, she/he should be well acquainted with the relevant criteria.

5.3.5 Educational psychologists, both managers and those managed, should be aware of issues relating to 'unethical intimacy'. In particular, they should be aware of how intimacy may affect and be affected by the managerial power relationship. The possibility of bias or favour in this respect make it advisable for direct managerial links to be avoided in situations where intimate relationships exist.

5.3.6 Educational psychologists in managerial positions should not engage in any form of harassment of employees, physical, sexual or other. They should have regard for the welfare of employees/subordinates by ensuring that they listen to, verify and respond to any claims of personal harassment.

# 5. Promoting good professional conduct and practice *(continued)*

They should not ignore allegations of malpractice in colleagues or subordinates but should investigate these in a factual, calm and unbiased manner.

- 5.3.7 Educational psychologists in managerial positions should listen to and support subordinates who may feel that ethical principles are under threat from an employer, particularly if this would require employees to break the Codes of Conduct of the profession.
- 5.3.8 When an educational psychologist is both line manager and in a supervisory relationship with another educational psychologist, she/he should keep clear the distinction between these different professional, managerial and disciplinary roles.
- 5.3.9 Educational psychologists in managerial positions should make use of courses or opportunities in order to enhance their own personal and professional development, increase their knowledge of human resource topics and build up a network of other professionals in the same position.

# Appendix I: A Framework for psychological assessment and intervention

## Introduction

The Framework has been drafted by the Division of Education and Child Psychology and incorporates comments from clinical psychologists who work with children and young people.

The Framework is particularly timely given the challenging assumptions about educational psychologists' practice in the media and education, and the need for greater accountability. Its purpose is to recognise that, although psychological assessment is a highly individualised, complex and creative process, there are some fundamental under-pinning principles relevant to all educational psychologists.

The Framework is intended to guide assessments by educational psychologists which are undertaken at any stage of the Special Education Needs Code of Practice (2001). It emphasises the direct link between assessment and intervention and assumes a number of activities within the process of assessment: the assessment activity, the intervention and the written recording and reporting.

## Psychological Assessment

Psychological assessment of children and young people has moved beyond the positivist and reductionist frameworks that, for many years, dominated psychological thinking. Current models of assessment need to reflect the body of psychological knowledge, which emphasises the dynamic, interactive nature of children's learning and social behaviours with the environments in which they develop.

A psychological assessment involves the use of a variety of tools, techniques and approaches that draw on relevant psychological theory and research. The purpose of the assessment is to generate understanding of what is happening, who is concerned, why there is a problem and what can be done to make a difference to the situation.

Assessment of children and young people seeks to provide information on the processes of learning, the young person's cognition, social and emotional development and the impact of the context on those areas.

A useful summary of the purpose of psychological assessment was composed by Frederickson *et al.* in 1991:

# Appendix I: A Framework for psychological assessment and intervention (*continued*)

*'We believe that psychological assessments should involve a creative investigation of a broad range of hypotheses that builds on research from all areas of psychology.'*

## **Principles of educational psychological assessment**

1. Assessment techniques and models are based on an understanding of current psychological theories and research.
2. Assessment techniques and materials are selected on the basis of:
  - relevance to the presenting problem and to the purpose of the assessment (for example, to address concerns about a child's or young person's learning or behaviour, to monitor progress, for purposes of accountability, etc.);
  - sensitivity to ethnic, linguistic, and cultural background as well as the emotional and developmental levels of the child or young person;
  - when psychometric or standardised measures are used, these should be used with reference to their reliability, validity and possible bias. Any references made should be based on an appreciation of the statistical properties of the instrument and detail how these have been derived from the data;
  - positive steps will be taken to avoid bias in the process of assessment.
3. Assessment acknowledges that children and young people develop as a result of an interaction between themselves and their environment. Assessment will, therefore:
  - be conducted over time and in relation to different contexts;
  - be formative and provide the necessary results to inform any required intervention;
  - involve parents and/or carers as essential contributors to the process;
  - consider the young person's strengths and difficulties, and generate a number of hypotheses that consider the range of issues having a possible impact on learning, social or emotional development;



- incorporate the child's understanding of his or her world;
  - draw, where appropriate, on the views of other professionals.
4. Educational and child psychologists will be aware of the impact of their own belief systems and attitudes on assessment practice. These should be based on sound psychological principles and focused upon solutions rather than problems.
  5. Educational and child psychologists will be aware of and acknowledge the impact of assessment processes and activities on:
    - the child or young person, e.g. self esteem, self perception, motivation;
    - the family, e.g. expectations of the child;
    - the school system, e.g. curriculum, teaching and learning, and expectations.
  6. The reporting of assessment outcomes and data should be sensitively presented and relate to the purpose of the assessment.
  7. Assessment practice is informed by continuing professional development.
  8. Assessment practice will conform to The British Psychological Society *Code of Conduct, Ethical Principles and Guidelines*.

## Readings

Division of Educational and Child Psychology (1993). *Guidelines for the Practice of Professional Educational Psychologists*.

Department for Education and Employment (1994). *Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs*. London: HMSO.

Frederickson, N., Webster, A. & Wright, A. (1991). Psychological assessment: A change of emphasis. *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 7(1), 20–29.

Gipps, C. (1994). *Beyond testing: Towards a theory of educational assessment*. London: Falmer. Press.

# Appendix I: A Framework for psychological assessment and intervention (*continued*)

Lunt, I. (1993). *The Practice of assessment*. In H. Daniels, *Charting the Agenda*. London: Routledge.

Shah, T.A. Hall, W., Nelms, S., Parkes, J. & Richards, A. (1997). W(h)their professionalism in assessment? *DECP Newsletter*, 79, June.

Roberts, B., Stratford, R., Thompson, D. & Wolfendale, S. (1986). Assessment in response to Individual Referrals. *School Psychology International*, 7, 195–198.

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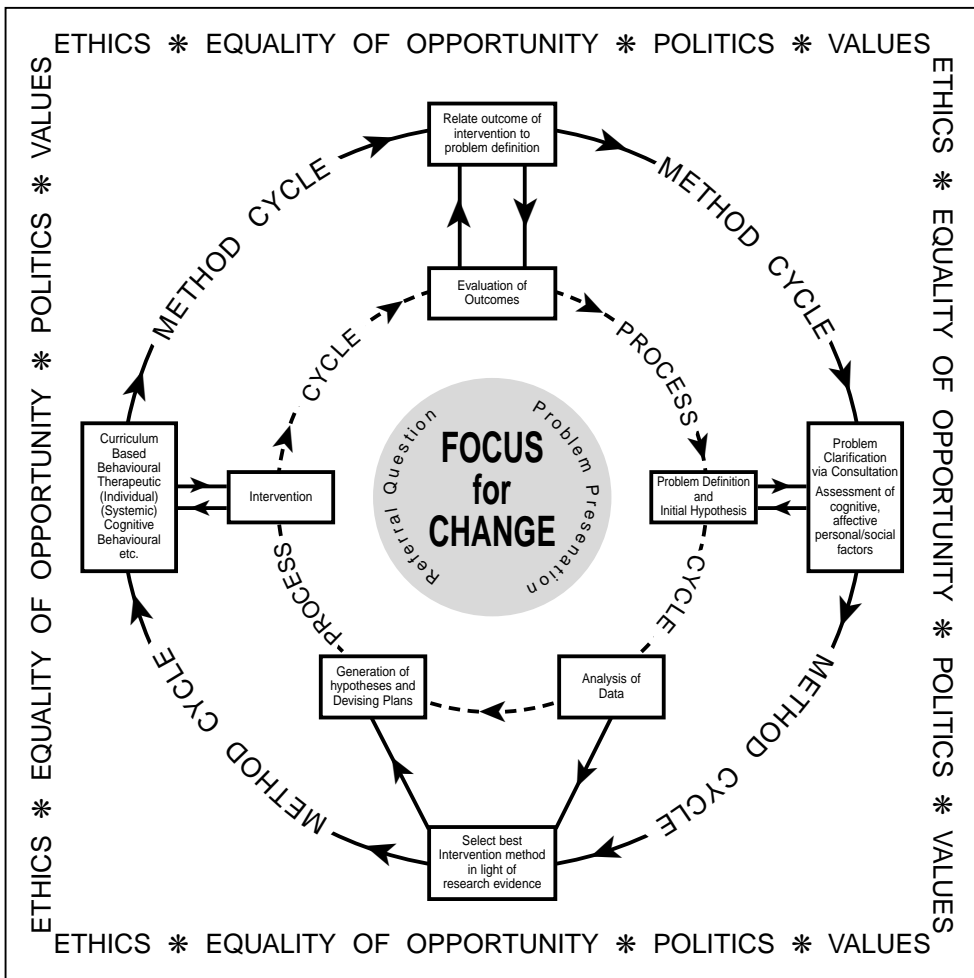
## **The Model**

The model has been constructed to illustrate the practice described in the text; a framework for the psychological assessment of children that can, with elaboration, describe assessment in a range of settings.

Psychological assessment is embedded in a context and takes place in a climate sensitive to ethical practice, equality of opportunity, politics and values.

Psychological assessment is in itself an intervention and is inextricably linked to any subsequent formal intervention.

## The Model



The British Psychological Society was founded in 1901 and incorporated by Royal Charter in 1965.

**Its principal objects are to:**

- promote the advancement and diffusion of a knowledge of psychology pure and applied;
- promote the efficiency and usefulness of Members of the Society by setting up a high standard of professional education and knowledge;
- maintain a Code of Conduct for the guidance of Members;
- compel the observation of strict rules of professional conduct;
- maintain a Register of Chartered Psychologists.

**The Society has more than 34,000 members and:**

- has branches in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales;
- accredits nearly 700 undergraduate degrees;
- accredits nearly 100 postgraduate professional training courses;
- confers Fellowships for distinguished achievements;
- confers Chartered Status for professionally qualified psychologists;
- awards grants to support research and scholarship;
- publishes 10 scientific journals;
- publishes books, CD-ROMS, videos and other educational resources;
- publishes *The Psychologist* each month;
- publishes newsletters for its constituent groups;

- maintains a web site ([www.bps.org.uk](http://www.bps.org.uk));
- has international links with psychological societies and associations throughout the world;
- provides an information service for the news media and the public;
- has an Ethics Committee;
- provides service to the Disciplinary Board;
- maintains a Register of more than 9500 Chartered Psychologists;
- prepares policy statements on matters of social policy;
- holds conferences, workshops, continuing professional development and training events;
- recognises distinguished contributions to psychological science and practice through individual awards and honours.

**The Society continues to work to enhance:**

- recruitment – the target is 50,000 members by 2006;
- services – the Society now has offices in the major constituent parts of the United Kingdom;
- public understanding of psychology – addressed by regular media activity and outreach events;
- influence on public policy – a Parliamentary Officer was appointed in 2001;
- membership activities – to fully utilise the strengths and diversity of the Society membership.