

# **NAPEP PARENT SURVEY**

## **EXPLANATION AND GUIDANCE**

**2013**

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## Background

A survey for NAPEP (2010), looking at what evaluation work is undertaken by Local Authority EP services within the UK, found that approximately half regularly surveyed the views of parents and many others were conscious of the need to do so. A recommendation that followed was to develop a common parent<sup>1</sup> feedback questionnaire capable of being used across services in the UK. This became the focus of a workshop in London in July 2011 and the questionnaire that evolved from this was first used by 16 services<sup>2</sup> during the academic year 2011-12. The report relating to this exercise (NAPEP, 2012) documented the feedback made by 775 parents. The questionnaire was further refined during a meeting in London in October 2012. Amendments were based on services' experience in using the arrangements and feedback on the questionnaire from the parents involved. This meeting identified the need to clarify and standardise arrangements for the questionnaire's usage and this guidance constitutes an attempt to address this issue.

### *Why survey the views of parents?*

There has been a growing move for services to seek feedback from parents whose children have been the focus of EP involvement. The need to do so has also been endorsed by a number of national reports on EP activity (DfEE, 2000; Scottish Executive, 2002 and DfES, 2006). The DfES (2006) report, for instance, specifically recommended that services have a framework of evaluation which takes into account the views of parents. Monitoring parent's experience of the service they receive does not necessarily imply any changes to service delivery arrangements will necessarily follow. However, the responsibility parents have (particularly the emotional commitment and the 24-hour per day concern for their children) place them in a unique position from which to offer insights into any service provided to their child. Consequently it seems appropriate that they are given a voice, which might influence change. A number of articles have also suggested that parental involvement in service evaluations is not only politically appropriate, but can constructively contribute to service developments (Anthon, 2000; Cuckle & Bamford, 2000; Squires et al, 2007).

### *Why adopt a common approach?*

Accepting the need to seek parental feedback does not make the case for using a shared approach. However potential advantages that have been discussed include the following:

- Services not having to “*re-invent the wheel*” by devising their own questionnaire.
- Having data against which services can make comparisons. By way of illustration whilst a service may know from their own evaluation arrangements that 85% of parents perceived the EP involvement as helpful, the question remains as to whether this outcome is good, bad or mediocre. There is no mechanism for making any sense of this, beyond the figure being both positive and relatively

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<sup>1</sup> The term 'parent' has been used for reasons of simplicity to encompass both parents, carers or anyone else fulfilling a parental function.

<sup>2</sup> Barnet, City of York, Derbyshire, Durham, Essex, Hampshire, Hertfordshire, Kent, Kingston-upon-Thames, Powys, Slough, Solihull, Southwark, Walsall, Wokingham, & Worcestershire

high. Following the 2011-12 exercise, however, it became possible for services to compare their returns to the national average, as illustrated below.

| Actions agreed were relevant, useful and able to be done. | <i>Disagree</i> | <i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i> | <i>Agree</i> |
|---|-----------------|-----------------------------------|--------------|
| National average  | 6%              | 11%                               | 84%          |
| Local response  | 2%              | 7%                                | 91%          |

- The questionnaire, being agreed between services, militates against local charges that the questions may have been deliberately selected to bias the outcome. If a bias exists it is at a national level. Whilst it is never possible to ensure that no bias is unwittingly introduced, the questions used in this questionnaire arise from the research evidence, as issues that have been raised by parents (see literature review in NAPEP, 2012). In addition parents were invited to comment on the questionnaire during the 2011-2012 exercise. As well as asking for general feedback on the questionnaire it also invited parents to identify other issues they thought should be included. This seemed the most appropriate method of consulting with parents about this type of enquiry.

It perhaps needs to be clarified that having a common core of questions does not preclude services from adding questions that reflect their particular context or relate to local priorities. It just implies that these responses would be managed locally and would not be included in the general returns.

### **Aim of the questionnaire**

There are many reasons why a service might wish to consult with parents. However the focus of this questionnaire is solely to obtain feedback from parents about the quality of the service they received, with the view that it may lead to changes in the way a service operates. It is not, for instance, intended to be a tool by which managers appraise the performance of EPs. Hence the intention is to keep the questionnaire anonymous. It is possible that parents may have an on-going relationship with an EP service and feel inhibited in compromising this relationship by risking adverse comments. Whilst this is likely to be unfounded making the survey anonymous seems the best way of securing an honest and open response.

### **Contents of the questionnaire**

One difficulty encountered in developing the questionnaire was that EP services currently operate within a variety of different Local Authority structures and may offer different types of services. However, what is common was described by the Scottish Executive (1999) as a need to communicate and work effectively with parents. From the literature review the following general questions were identified:

- Was information about what EPs do being made available to parents?
- Did parents know why the EP was involved with their child?
- Was the EP able to put the parents at their ease during their contact?

- Did the EP value the feelings and views of parents and take proper account of them?
- Were parents treated as active partners and were plans jointly formulated?
- Did the EP communicate clearly with parents regarding the aims, nature, extent and outcomes of any work undertaken?
- Was the EP open in their response to parents' questions?
- Was the EP familiar with legislation, policies and best practice regarding the rights and involvement of parents?
- Was the contact marked by sensitivity, promptness, reliability and efficiency?
- Did parents having confidence that the EP was working in the best interests of their child, unfettered by Local Authority restriction.

These points formed the basis of the questions used. Parental feedback identified a lack of precision in the wording of some questions. Whilst this is a valid criticism, this is deliberate and has been made necessary because of the need to accommodate the range of circumstances to which the form of involvement might relate.

### **How the system works**

Any Local Authority EP service in the UK can participate. All that is asked is that services use the questionnaire in the way outlined here. In this way there can be some assurance that the data are not contaminated and a reasonable assumption about the comparability of ratings.

#### *1. Under what circumstance would the questionnaire be used?*

The simple answer is where there has been a significant EP involvement. By this phrase we are referring to a reasonable period of involvement with a child or young person. This might have been at any stage of the code of practice (school action, school action-plus, statutory or post-statutory) and could have been in the form of an assessment, observation or consultation. However it is not appropriate that this questionnaire be used to evaluate training or therapeutic intervention which would normally be evaluated via a more bespoke arrangement linked to the anticipated outcomes. The other critical criterion is that it needs to be a form of contact of which parents have some direct knowledge, preferably through a face-to-face meeting with the EP.

#### *2. How do we sample which parents receive a questionnaire?*

An approach which has found favour in some services is to send a questionnaire to parents on a fixed ratio basis (e.g. every fourth significant involvement). Having a standard system of this type reduces the potential for the EP to select which parents are approached. In some services, the EP is asked if sending a questionnaire might exacerbate a sensitive situation, if so they can veto it going out as long as they can defend such a position.

The actual ratio is not critical; services can sample at a higher or lower level if they wish. One limiting factor, however, may be the cost in that stamped addressed envelopes will be required.

### 3. When would the questionnaire be given to parents?

The questionnaire is designed to capture parents' views about the nature of the contact and consequently needs to be with them relatively soon after the involvement, less they start to forget details (ideally within approximately a month of the contact). Consequently, it could be sent with any report or related paperwork outlining what was found and the advice offered. In the case of consultation sessions, for which there is often no formal paperwork, it would seem sensible to give it to parents at the end of the session. In both cases parents will also need a stamped addressed envelope for the return of the response.

### 4. What needs to be done before giving parents the questionnaire?

In the analysis of data during the pilot exercise (NAPEP, 2012) it was found that there were statistically significant differences in the ratings parents gave in respect to the age of the child and the nature of the EP involvement (assessment, observation or consultation). Consequently, it is felt that details about these variables need to be captured. As parental responses are anonymous these need to be recorded on the questionnaire before it is given to parents (as it is impossible to do afterwards). All of these details are in the first section of the questionnaire, labelled "For office use".

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**For office use:**

|                  |                      |                                  |                              |
|------------------|----------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Local Authority: |                      | National Curriculum Year:        | Gender: <i>Male / Female</i> |
| Stage of Code:   | <i>Non-statutory</i> | <i>Statutory</i>                 | <i>Post-statutory</i>        |
| Type of contact: | <i>Consultation</i>  | <i>Assessment or observation</i> |                              |

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The EP will need to write in the Local Authority EP Service and the National Curriculum year of the pupil concerned. They then circle the stage of the code of practice and the nature of the contact. For clarification the categories used in stage of code can be regarded as:

- Non-statutory – contact with a pupil identified as being at School Action or School Action Plus
- Statutory – contact with a pupil for the purpose of completing an Appendix D
- Post-statutory – contact with a pupil who already has a Statement of Special Educational Needs (e.g. for the purposes of an annual review)

Similarly type of contact divides into two broad categories:

- Consultation – there is no direct contact with the child or young person. The meeting is with adults who have concerns and are working to identify ways forward (school staff and/or parents). The meeting takes the form of a focussed collaborative discussion of some sort.
- Assessment or observation – the EP has some direct contact with the child either through an observation or an assessment of some kind.

### 5. What do services need to do with the returns?

The Research & Evaluation Unit (REU) at Hampshire Educational Psychology (HEP) manage and analyse the data and produce reports summarising the outcomes. Each service is responsible for entering it's own returns onto an online SurveyMonkey pro forma. Alternatively, where parents have access to the internet, they can be given

the link to complete the online version themselves. However they will still need to have the first section completed for them to be able to do so.

A query has been raised about the security of these data and whether *SurveyMonkey* is safe. Whilst any service can access the online questionnaire in order to make returns, only the REU have the access code necessary to access the completed responses. The data collected is regarded as private, confidential and the property of NAPEP. This means that only the REU will see the raw data and it will be not be disclosed to anyone else, including service managers within HEP, other than through the public report. In addition Survey-Monkey is listed on the United States Department of Commerce's safe harbor list and meets the European Union requirements relating to data privacy.

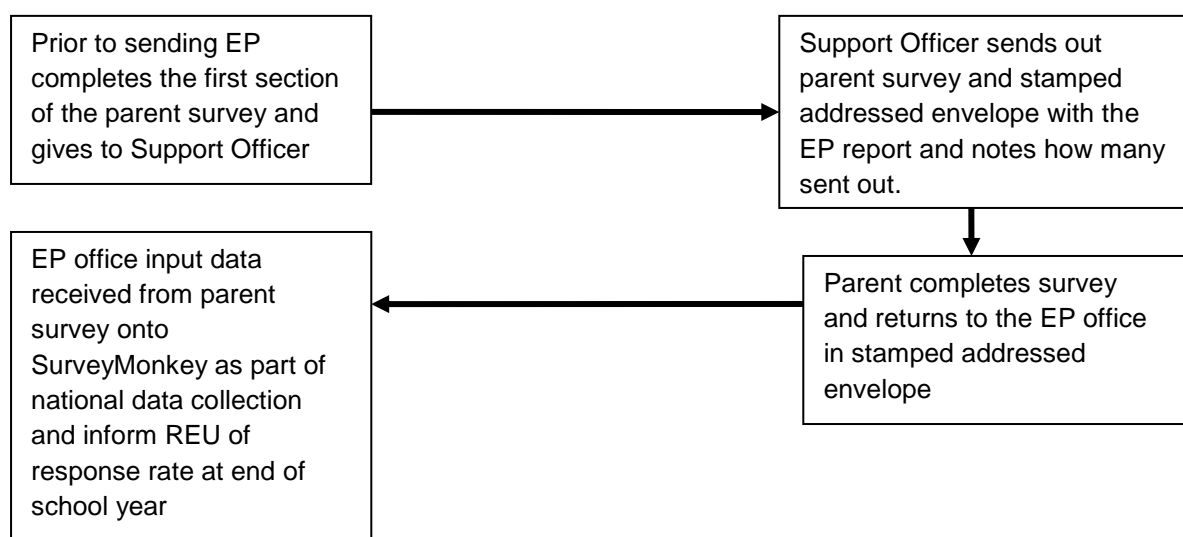
#### 6. How will services come to know their results?

As exemplified by the NAPEP (2012) report, at the end of the academic year (after 31<sup>st</sup> July 2013) the REU will start to analyse all the data received. A report of the overall findings will then be available towards the middle of September.

An appendix will contain tables reporting the response to the quantitative responses (parental ratings) for each service. These data will be coded so that only the service concerned will know which data relate to them. This will enable each service to compare their data with the overall averages in respect to each individual question.

An analysis of all the qualitative responses will be included in the report. However, it is not possible to analyse this type of data at a service level as the workload would be prohibitive. However it would be possible, on request, to provide each service with a spreadsheet of their qualitative responses. Similarly it is possible to download all of the data for a service from SurveyMonkey onto an Excel spreadsheet should a service require access before the report in September.

#### Overview of possible arrangements



### *7 Monitoring response rates?*

A lack of response always introduces the notion of a bias, which may skew the results and threaten the validity of the results. In fact Dowling and Leibowitz (1994) remarked upon the unreliability of some parental surveys undertaken by EP services, due to low return rate. Hence, it is important to monitor response rates but as services will be using different arrangements for distribution only they know how many questionnaires were distributed. Consequently it is asked that each service make arrangements for recording how many questionnaires were distributed and report these to the REU at the end of the summer term. The response rates will be reported in the September report so that a service can determine how they compare with others.

### **Ethical considerations**

Parents have a right to know why they have been asked to complete the questionnaire and what use will be made of the information. It also needs to be made clear that the survey is anonymous and the information will be treated with respect and kept safely. These points are made in the introduction to the questionnaire enclosed but services may wish to amend this to fit their own particular circumstances and arrangements. Hertfordshire EPS for instance enclosed a cover letter' stating the following:

*The National Association of Principal Educational Psychologists (NAPEP) has asked Hertfordshire Educational Psychology Service along with other Educational Psychology Services across England to take part in a project. This project aims to find out what parents think about Educational Psychology Services and in particular what we are doing well and where we might need to make changes or improvements. We are very interested in your views and enclose a short questionnaire. We would be grateful if you could complete this survey and return it in the pre-paid enveloped provided. All the information received is anonymous – no one will be able to identify you with the answers you give. The information will be treated confidentially. It will give information about our service and will be used to inform improvements.*

Similarly it is up to each individual service to decide what they do with the data that are collected. However parents have an ethical right to the outcomes of the exercise and it is recommend that the service publish their data on their website. In addition if this feedback prompts any modifications to existing arrangements it would seem appropriate to describe what and why these have been made. In this way the exercise moves from being a static one-sided arrangement to become a form of dialogue with parents.

### **Facilitating parental access.**

In the feedback to the 2011-12 exercise some parents with literacy and visual difficulties, indicated that they had sought the help of a friend or neighbour in



completing the questionnaire. This would seem perfectly legitimate and unlikely to skew the outcomes. It is possible that there are other local services which can also offer such support where appropriate and services need to keep this need in mind.

During the meeting in London in October 2012 the desirability of having other language versions available was discussed. Presumably local translation services are available where they are needed. Before a service embarks on commissioning a translation it would seem sensible to contact the REU who will coordinate what versions are already available. The responses however will need to be translated into English before they are entered onto SurveyMonkey and this is the responsibility of each service to do.

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## Questionnaire

### FEEDBACK FROM PARENTS AND CARERS

We are hoping you can help us to know more about what we are doing well and where we need to make changes or improvements to the Educational Psychology Service. The questionnaire takes about 10 minutes to complete and we would be grateful if you could fill it in and return it in the stamped addressed envelope provided. The survey is anonymous. All the information received will be treated confidentially and used to inform improvements to our service. Any report produced as a result of this survey may quote some of your comments but will not identify you, your child or the school they attend.

If you have any questions about this survey or problems in completing it please contact us on .....

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#### For office use:

Local Authority: \_\_\_\_\_ National Curriculum Year: \_\_\_\_\_ Gender: *Male / Female*  
 Stage of Code: *Non-statutory*      *Statutory*      *Post-statutory*  
 Type of contact: *Consultation*      *Assessment or observation*

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Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements (tick the relevant column):

|  | Disagree | Marginally disagree | Neither Agree nor Disagree | Marginally agree | Agree | Not applicable |
|--|----------|---------------------|----------------------------|------------------|-------|----------------|
| 1. I knew why the Educational Psychologist was going to be involved.   |          |                     |                            |                  |       |                |
| 2. The Educational Psychologist seemed to value my views and take them into account.                           |          |                     |                            |                  |       |                |
| 3. I was able to share my views and any concerns.  |          |                     |                            |                  |       |                |
| 4. I consider the Educational Psychologist provided independent advice unhindered by local policy.             |          |                     |                            |                  |       |                |
| 5. I was fully involved in the discussion about my child's needs and what was going to happen to address them. |          |                     |                            |                  |       |                |
| 6. Sufficient time was provided during this contact to discuss my child's needs.                               |          |                     |                            |                  |       |                |
| 7. The Educational Psychologist seemed knowledgeable and assisted in finding ways to help.                     |          |                     |                            |                  |       |                |
| 8. All of my questions and concerns were addressed.  |          |                     |                            |                  |       |                |
| 9. The involvement provided a better insight into the situation.   |          |                     |                            |                  |       |                |
| 10. Actions agreed were relevant, useful and able to be done.  |          |                     |                            |                  |       |                |

|   | Disagree | Marginally disagree | Neither Agree nor Disagree | Marginally agree | Agree | Not applicable |
|---|----------|---------------------|----------------------------|------------------|-------|----------------|
| 11. At the end of the Educational Psychologist's involvement it was made clear who would be doing what. |          |                     |                            |                  |       |                |
| 12. The Educational Psychologist did everything they had agreed to do.                                  |          |                     |                            |                  |       |                |
| 13. I would have liked the Educational Psychologist to have been involved sooner.                       |          |                     |                            |                  |       |                |
| 14. I am confident that my child's needs will be met more effectively as a result of this involvement.  |          |                     |                            |                  |       |                |
| 15. The report (or related paperwork) arrived without undue delay.                                      |          |                     |                            |                  |       |                |
| 16. The report (or related paperwork) was accurate, constructive and helpful.                           |          |                     |                            |                  |       |                |

17. How satisfied were you that the Educational Psychologist made a useful contribution?  
(please circle the appropriate): *Very satisfied / Satisfied / Not very satisfied / Dissatisfied*

18. What did you find the most helpful part of the EP contact?

19. What aspect could have been improved upon and how?

20. What other types of service would you like to see Educational Psychologists provide?

21. Any other comments?

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22. Lastly, how could we improve this questionnaire?

*Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey, your help is appreciated. Please return it to us by post in the envelope provided.*