



Department
for Education

Research on the Educational Psychologist Workforce

Research report

March 2019

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Social Science in Government

Acknowledgements

We are grateful for the support provided by organisations to mail out the survey invitation to participants, in particular the National Association of Principal Educational Psychologists (NAPEP) who helped to promote the Principal Educational Psychologist (PEP) survey, and the Association of Educational Psychologists (AEP) and training providers who helped with promoting the Newly-Qualified Educational Psychologist (QEP) survey. We are also thankful to all organisations, in particular the Department for Education (DfE), NAPEP and AEP, who supported the team in recruiting volunteers to take part in either interviews or focus groups by sending out email invitations to their contacts. We would also like to thank everybody who took time to participate in this study, including experts, stakeholders, training providers, Principal Educational Psychologists and Educational Psychologists. We are extremely grateful to the team at the Department for Education for all their help and support throughout the project.

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Acronyms

AEP	Association of Educational Psychologists
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
DfE	Department for Education
DHSC	Department of Health and Social Care (formerly Department of Health, DOH)
EHC plans	Education, Health and Care plans
EIP	Educational Inclusion and Partnership
EP	Educational Psychologists
EPS	Educational Psychology Services
FTE	Full-time equivalent
HCPC	Health and Care Professions Council
IAPT	Improving Access to Psychological Therapies
ITEP	Initial Training for Educational Psychologists
LA	Local Authority
NAPEP	National Association of Principal Educational Psychologists UK
PEP	Principal Educational Psychologists
PT	Part-time
QEP	(Newly-) Qualified Educational Psychologists
SEN	Special educational needs
SEND	Special educational needs and disability
SPSS	Statistical Package of the Social Sciences
TEP	Trainee Educational Psychologist

Glossary of selected terms

Academies and free schools	Funded by central government, Academies receive additional funding to provide help for children with special educational needs. Academies and free schools were created after the Academies Act 2010 that received Royal Assent in July 2010.
LA maintained schools	Schools funded by Local Authorities (LAs)
Traded Services	Non-statutory services paid for by schools and other organisations. A partially or fully “traded” model is one in which the existing service organisation is required to generate income from “customers” (mainly schools) in order to meet some or all of its costs ¹ . There has also been a corresponding rise in EPs working within other “trading” organisations such as limited company psychological service providers, social enterprises, or as sole traders ² .

¹ National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL). (2014). Educational psychology workforce survey: Research report April 2014. Manchester, NH: NCTL; Woods, K. (2014a). “In this together”: Developing university-workplace partnerships in initial professional training for practitioner educational psychologists. In O. McNamara, J. Murray, & M. Jones (Eds.), *Teacher learning in the workplace: Widening perspectives on practice and policy. Part 2: Insights from practice across professions and nations* (pp.87–102). London: Springer; Woods, K. (2014b). The preparation of practitioner educational psychologists in England. *International Journal of School & Educational Psychology*, 2, 198–204.

² NCTL (*ibid.*)

Executive summary

The Institute for Employment Research (IER) at the University of Warwick was commissioned by the Department for Education (DfE) to conduct research into the educational psychologist (EP) workforce in England. The main aims of the study were to:

- Map the current distribution and demographic profile of the Local Authority (LA) EP workforce in England and, where possible, also the non-LA EP workforce;
- Provide evidence on factors driving shortages of trainee and qualified EPs in LAs facing recruitment and retention difficulties;
- Inform an evidence-based decision on whether to implement a regional commissioning training model, wherein training provider places would be redistributed to broadly correspond to the number of LAs in each region.

The study took a mixed-methods approach to meeting these aims, including analysis of EP workforce data, surveys of newly-qualified EPs (QEPs) and LA principal EPs (PEPs) and telephone interviews and focus groups with key stakeholders.

Key findings

Mapping the EP workforce

- **The majority of EPs are employed by LAs.** Over four-fifths (85%) of QEP survey respondents were currently employed by an LA for at least some of their work time.
- However, a common theme in interviews and focus groups with key stakeholders and PEPs was that **private practice is becoming an increasingly important source of employment for EPs.** PEP survey data also showed that portfolio working across the public and private sectors is becoming more prevalent, with almost half (47%) of LA PEPs saying that some of their employees were also working in private practice.
- When asked if working for an LA was important to them, **more than three quarters (78%) of QEPs currently employed by an LA said that it was very or quite important**, while only 6% said that it was unimportant. The reasons given for preferring LA employment focussed on engaging with and serving a local community; the quality of colleagues; opportunities for team-working and multi-agency work; and job security and associated benefits.
- The PEP survey showed that the number of EPs employed by individual LAs ranged from under five to over thirty full-time equivalent (FTE) staff. **Larger LAs, with a bigger pool of potential supervisors, tended to have more capacity to**

take trainee EPs and were slightly more resilient to recruitment problems. The PEP survey showed that the majority of LAs had at least one final year trainee on placement, but almost half of those surveyed (47%) had only one.

- The Association of Educational Psychologists (AEP) monthly recruitment data shows that **public sector recruitment of EPs has fallen by a third (33%) between 2015 and 2017**, from 476 to 321, which continued into 2018. Private sector recruitment doubled between 2017 and 2018 but, as it represents only about 5% of the public sector total, this doubling in recruitment from 12 to 23 provides few employment opportunities.

Understanding the drivers of EP shortages

Recruitment

- **Over two-thirds (68%) of PEPs surveyed reported difficulties in recruiting to fill vacant posts**, resulting in a shortage of EPs and insufficient staff to cope with demands. Two-thirds (66%) of LA PEPs said that they had at least one vacancy for a permanent EP post and of these, 83% reported that they consistently experienced recruitment difficulties.
- However, **not all LAs with vacancies were actively recruiting to fill these posts**. The PEP survey highlighted that just over half (55%) of LAs with a vacancy were recruiting to fill the vacancy: feedback from PEP focus groups was that this was partly due to a consistent failure to recruit when vacancies were advertised and to uncertainty about the funding of posts.

Supply and demand factors

- The two supply-side issues most commonly cited by PEPs as driving recruitment difficulties were a **lack of applicants for vacant posts** (mentioned by 56% of LA PEPs in the survey) and a **lack of EPs being trained** (53%).
- Under-supply was also exacerbated by factors such as the **availability of EP jobs outside LAs** (mentioned by 50% of LA PEPs who were experiencing recruitment difficulties).
- **Location** was less commonly cited as a factor: 23% of LA PEPs said that they experienced recruitment difficulties because their location was unattractive to EPs and 10% said that their distance from a training provider had an impact.
- **Demographic factors** were also raised. A strong theme from the stakeholder and expert interviews was that the profession had become increasingly characterised by females in the younger age brackets, with a corresponding absence due to maternity leave and greater levels of part-time working to care for children. This

meant that the number of trainees graduating each year did not necessarily translate into the number of EPs who were available to work at any one time.

- Data from all sources suggested that the under-supply of EPs was exacerbated by demand factors, such as **perceptions of the high workload of LA EPs** (mentioned by 40% of LA PEPs experiencing recruitment difficulties) and **pay levels** (23%).
- Of the LA PEPs surveyed, **93% said that they were experiencing more demand for EP services than could currently be met**. The most commonly cited demand-side factor contributing to a shortage of EPs in LAs was the **increase in statutory assessment work** following the SEND reforms in 2014. More than three quarters of the QEPs surveyed thought that their workload was increasing (78%) and that they never seemed to have enough time to get everything done on their job (76%).
- PEPs noted that in some LAs, EPs were not only seeing an increase in their workloads, but were also seeing a **decrease in the variety of work** they did due to the amount of statutory work required.

Mechanisms for addressing shortages

- The most commonly-cited demand-side mechanisms used by PEPs to help alleviate the shortfall of EPs in the short-to-medium term included **increasing workforce capacity and improving the variety of work undertaken by LA EPs to improve the attractiveness of the job**. Other common measures suggested by PEPs in the focus groups included increasing their pay offer and reviewing the career structure of EPs to introduce more opportunities for progression, employing more assistant EPs and recruiting trainee EPs (TEPs) before they completed their courses.
- **45% of PEPs and 49% of QEPs in the survey thought that the current training model worked well, while 31% of PEPs and 21% of QEPs thought it was not working well**. The most common responses to what did not work well related to issues around a lack of trainees being trained, the funding of placements and the geographical location of some training providers. A strong theme emerging from this research was a high level of satisfaction with the current quality of the training, the relationships between training and placement providers and the operation of the consortium system.
- **There was little support from PEPs and training providers for the creation of new training providers to increase the geographical spread of training availability**. It was felt that without an increase in the number of training places, such a reform would merely result in moving problems around the country. Focus group participants were generally also not supportive of increasing the number of

training places and distributing these to new providers, as questions were raised about the quality of new providers and the difficulties faced in building good relationships with placement providers.

- PEPs, training providers and stakeholders tended to feel strongly that **a regional training model** that distributed training places based on the number of LAs local to a training provider, or the demographic characteristics of the areas served, **could not adequately account for changing replacement demand** when EPs retired, moved out of LA work or to different LAs, or took time out of the profession.
- **The most common preference amongst PEPs and training providers focussed on increasing the number of training places and distributing them to existing providers.** There was a common concern, however, related to the capacity of placement providers in some areas to offer more placements without some assistance in off-setting the costs.

1. Introduction

The Institute for Employment Research (IER) at the University of Warwick was commissioned by the Department for Education (DfE) to conduct research into the educational psychologist (EP) workforce in England. The aim of the research was to gain a better understanding of the profile of the workforce, and of any recruitment and retention issues that may be addressed by future reform of the training model. This section sets out the background to the study, followed by the main aim and objectives of the research.

EPs are critical in identifying special educational needs (SEN) and providing a statutory contribution to Education, Health and Care (EHC) assessments. They also play an essential role in upskilling the education and wider workforce, thus ensuring high quality special educational needs and disability (SEND) provision is available. A fundamental part of their role is supporting the social, emotional and mental wellbeing of children and young people, families and teachers, to help address the increase in mental health problems in children and young people³.

A review held in 2016, jointly commissioned by the then Department of Health (DoH) and the DfE, the National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) and NHS Health Education England (HEE), found that although Local Authorities (LAs) employ the majority of EPs, increasing numbers are employed directly by academies and other schools, the National Health Service (NHS) or as independent contractors (*ibid*).

To become a qualified EP, trainees are required to undertake a three-year doctoral training course, including two years on a practice placement with an LA or other organisation. The number of Initial Training for Educational Psychologists (ITEP) places has risen from 116 in 2012 to 150 in 2017 and 160 in 2018, representing an increase of 38% since 2012. In 2013, 98% of ITEP graduates had secured employment as EPs within 6 months of completion⁴. However, recruitment into the profession is a recurring concern, as are problems of uneven recruitment across England. According to the National Association of Principal Educational Psychologists (NAPEP), the number of EP vacancies has been increasing (e.g. almost three quarters of LAs reported vacancies in 2015⁵), and both the public and private sectors report difficulties in filling vacancies. The number of services experiencing difficulties in

³ National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) and NHS Health Education England (HEE) (2016) Review of clinical and educational psychology training arrangements March 2016. https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/510725/Review_of_clinical_and_educational_psychology_training_arrangements_report.pdf

⁴ National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) and NHS Health Education England (HEE) (2016) *ibid*.

⁵ NAPEP National Executive Committee (2015) The Educational Psychology Workforce Survey 2015, June 2015. <http://www.napep.org/Educational%20Psychology%20Workforce%20Survey%202015.pdf>.

recruiting rose by 10% from 2013, with a 20% increase since 2012⁶. However, it must be noted that these workforce surveys are limited, since they cover only 70% of all LAs.

According to different data sources, the proportion of LAs with vacancies that were hard to fill ranges from 43%⁷ to 67%⁸. Numerous reasons have been suggested in publications by NAPEP (2015), the National College for Teaching and Learning (NCTL) and the DfE (2012 and 2013), NCTL and NHS Health Education England (HEE) (2016) and other published sources, including the Local Government Association, for these recruitment (and retention) difficulties, including:

- Greater demand for EPs, partly due to increasing statutory duties including the introduction of the 2014 SEND reforms (including the introduction of the EHC plan process and expansion of the age range covered by SEN provision) and other policy developments in Improving Access to Psychological Therapy (IAPT), Education and Inclusion Partnership (EIP) and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS);
- Inadequate number and/or poor-quality⁹ of applicants for employment, partly caused by moving to three-year training courses and recruitment gaps caused by public sector freezes;
- An overall shortage of EPs being trained;
- Increased competition for EP services due to increases in traded services and staff working for more than one provider;
- Changes to staff pay and conditions, and increasing workloads, making the profession less attractive;
- An ageing workforce, with greater numbers retiring or due to retire;

⁶ NAPEP National Executive Committee (2015) *ibid*.

⁷ Truong, Y. and Ellam, H. (2014) Educational Psychology Workforce Survey 2013. National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) & DfE. http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/19840/1/RR338_-_Educational_Psychology_Workforce_Survey_April_2013.pdf This represents an increase of 10% from 33% in 2012.

⁸ Local Government Association, 2014. Soulbury pay and workforce survey 2013. <https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/soulbury-survey-report-20-967.pdf>. This figure is for recruitment to the main educational psychologist grade. NAPEP (2015) *ibid*. give a figure of 50%, an increase of 10% from 2013 and 20% from 2012.

⁹ Possible poor quality of applicants is mentioned in the Soulbury reports, e.g. Local Government Association, 2014 (*ibid*), but it should be noted that these report combine findings on educational improvement professionals and educational psychologists, rather than on EPs alone.

- Training arrangements led by DfE and the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) evolving relatively independently of policy-making related to SEND and Mental Health support¹⁰;
- Lack of alternative routes into the profession;
- Geographical location of some LAs, with some attracting fewer trainee EPs and qualified EPs than others.

This range of suggestions to explain the recruitment/retention difficulties highlights multiple areas where policy interventions may help to address shortages in the EP profession. However, more evidence is needed about the most appropriate level of policy intervention, including whether this should be at the national level or whether there is scope for greater devolution in the commissioning model. This report aims to contribute to this evidence base.

1.1 The research requirements

The main aim of this research is to gather evidence on the distribution and demographic characteristics of the current EP workforce – with a particular focus on the LA EP workforce - in order to map existing and projected EP shortages. It also aims to review the current training model.

1.2 The research objectives

The project has the following objectives:

- To map the current distribution and demographic profile of the LA EP workforce in England;
- Where possible, to map the current distribution and demographic profile of the non-LA EP workforce in England;
- To provide evidence on factors driving shortages of trainee and qualified EPs in LAs having recruitment and retention difficulties;
- To inform an evidence-based decision on whether to implement a regional commissioning model (wherein training provider places would be redistributed so that they broadly correspond to the number of LAs in each region) or an alternative

¹⁰ National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) and NHS Health Education England (HEE) (2016) Review of clinical and educational psychology training arrangements, March 2016. https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/510725/Review_of_clinical_and_educational_psychology_training_arrangements_report.pdf

solution based on the factors that have been identified as driving recruitment and retention issues.

1.3 Report structure

The report begins with an Executive Summary of the full report. This is followed by Section 1, the introduction to the report, which includes research aims and objectives, and then Section 2, outlining the methodology used during the research. Section 3 sets the context for the research, including an outline of the current distribution and demographic profile of the LA EP workforce and, where possible, the non-LA EP workforce in England. In Section 4, the drivers for difficulties in recruitment and retention of trainee and qualified EPs are highlighted, while Section 5 highlights the current training models and evidence gathered on any changes to the existing model. Conclusions are set out in Section 6, followed by References and Appendices.

2. Methodology

A mixed-methods study was conducted, incorporating five phases.

- **Phase 1** comprised a series of expert interviews with representatives from professional bodies, training providers, Principal Educational Psychologists (PEPs) and others with an overview of the sector as a whole;
- **Phase 2** involved analyses of existing EP workforce data, including data from the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC), the Association of Educational Psychologists (AEP) and DfE;
- **Phase 3** comprised an online survey of all PEPs working in LAs;
- **Phase 4** was an online survey of newly-qualified EPs (QEPs) who had graduated in the past five years;
- **Phase 5** included focus groups and telephone interviews with a range of other stakeholders, including PEPs, EPs, training providers, school representatives, private EP agency representatives and SEN experts, among others.

More details on each of the study elements are provided below and in Appendix I.

All data collection tools were cleared with the University of Warwick Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and with the DfE before any fieldwork commenced. All data collection and analysis fully complied with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) requirements, which came into force shortly before the project started.

2.1 Expert interviews

To obtain information on the changing pattern of organisations employing EPs and views on EP shortages, and to gauge existing EP workforce data sources, eight expert interviews, lasting between 30 and 45 minutes each, were conducted with representatives of professional bodies, schools and training providers¹¹. The DfE provided a list of initial contacts and others were approached as a result of recommendations from interviewees or if the original contact was unavailable. These findings fed into the design of the topic guides for later stakeholder interviews and focus groups, as well as the online survey questionnaires.

¹¹ In order to protect the anonymity of our sources, these bodies are not named here but include all relevant stakeholders involved in issues relating to the EP workforce.

2.2 Workforce data analysis

Given that the number of EPs in England is relatively small (see Table 3.5), limited information on the profession is available from statistical data sources such as the Labour Force Survey. Other sources providing data for the EP profession therefore needed to be identified that could provide information on the demographic profile (age and gender), the type of employer (LA or other organisation) or self-employment, and the geographical distribution of EPs across England.

Information about potential data sources was gathered through early expert interviews (see above). Organisational representatives were asked a) if they held comprehensive workforce data; b) if they would be willing to share their anonymised data for the purposes of the project, in line with GDPR requirements; and/or c) if they could provide requested breakdowns of data (e.g. by age group and gender). Where it was not possible to collect workforce data on these issues, the new surveys and qualitative data from this research provided more information.

Three sources were identified that could provide more information on the profile of the EP workforce:

- **HCPC:** The most comprehensive data is available from the HCPC as all EPs are required to register with them. The HCPC registration questionnaire asks for relevant data such as the demographic characteristics of EPs and their geographical distribution (home and/or work address) and cross-tabulated data for a range of characteristics were provided on request.
- **AEP:** A high percentage of EPs are members of the AEP and some of their membership data have been used here to provide additional information about the profile of their members.
- **School Workforce Census:** Finally, the annual DfE School Workforce Census collects data about EPs in LAs, but findings from these datasets have only been published in the form of written answers to House of Commons Parliamentary Questions. On balance, this data was not considered to be robust and was therefore excluded from this reporting.

Workforce data from the first two sources are presented in tables or figures in Section 3 of the report.

2.3 Online survey with Principal Educational Psychologists (PEPs)

The survey was designed by drawing on previous surveys such as the NCTL & DfE EP Workforce Survey (2013)¹² and the 2015 NAPEP survey of EPs¹³ in order to review the changing EP workforce over time. The survey set out to replicate the wording of questions drawn from the 2013 and 2015 surveys to allow comparability of data. Where there were discrepancies between the two surveys (in the terminology used to refer to trainee contracts/bursaries, for example) the 2015 questions were used as this provided comparability to the most recent data available. As well as the questions replicating the previous surveys, additional questions were included that addressed issues that have arisen following the SEND reforms, subsequent changes to EP services and other trends identified in previous surveys¹⁴.

The survey invitation and two subsequent reminders were emailed out via NAPEP, AEP, the Educational Psychology List (EPNET) and through personal networks of PEPs and training providers to all PEPs working in any of the 152 LAs across England. Overall, 95 PEPs responded, giving a response rate of approximately 63%¹⁵.

2.4 Online survey with Newly-Qualified Educational Psychologists (QEPs)

While the PEP survey allows identification of some of the factors affecting EP employment choices, it could not provide information about how EPs make those choices. Previous research on career choices¹⁶ has shown that what people want and believe to be possible in terms of their future career, and the factors they are willing to compromise on in order to find broadly suitable employment, often change when they enter the labour market. Consequently, an additional survey was conducted of EPs

¹² Truong, Y. and Ellam, H. (2014) *ibid*.

¹³ NAPEP National Executive Committee (2015) *ibid*.

¹⁴ These include increases in EPs working across services and commissioners; the continuing rise of direct commissioning by schools (particularly as a result of conversions to academy status), employment of EPs for some or most of their time by NHS services (including CAMHS, Health and Wellbeing Boards and Clinical Commissioning Groups), EPs working in social enterprises, the voluntary sector and as private consultants; and the impact of vacancy freezes and training reforms travelling through the system.

¹⁵ It is not possible to provide the total number of PEPs that the survey was issued to, and therefore not possible to provide the true response rate for PEPs. The approximate response rate of 63% is based on the number of PEP responses compared to the number of LAs in England.

¹⁶ See, for example, Purcell, K., Elias, P., Atfield, G., Behle, H., Ellison, R., Luchinskaya, D., Snape, J., Conaghan, L. and Tzanakou, C. (2012) *Futuretrack: Transitions into employment, further study and other outcomes*. HECSU and IER.

who had qualified in the past five years, to allow further investigation of the factors that ultimately affected where EPs chose to work. This new QEP survey provided the added benefit of including EPs working in all settings, including those working in LAs, as well as those working as private self-employed EPs.

The survey invitation was distributed by training providers, via the mailing lists of professional organisations (AEP and NAPEP) and the EPNET mailing list and by PEPs to their staff, targeting all QEPs who had qualified within the last 5 years. To boost response rates, two reminders were also emailed via these organisations. The survey received 217 valid responses from QEPs,¹⁷ resulting in a response rate of approximately 36%. Responses should be taken as indicative rather than representative.

2.5 Online focus groups

The key aim of the online focus groups was to discuss local and regional workforce issues and training commissioning models in detail.

Three focus groups with different target groups were held, with each group lasting up to 90 minutes and one giving participants the option to provide follow-up details to a named researcher. One focus group comprised representatives from a particular region with EP recruitment and retention difficulties (3 participants), one included EPs and PEPs (7 participants) and the final focus group included training providers only (8 participants).

Invitations for the first focus group were sent out with the help of DfE, while recruitment for the EP and PEP focus group took place via invitations on the AEP and NAPEP mailing lists, recommendations by DfE and targeted invitations to participants in the PEP survey who had indicated that they were willing to be contacted about participation in other parts of the research. Training providers were contacted directly via the initial contact details provided by the DfE and consortia leads. Training providers who were unable to participate in a focus group were invited to submit written answers to the focus group questions which focussed on the training model. Five training providers provided written answers. In total, 12 of the 13 training providers contributed their views to the research.

¹⁷ There were 600 DfE-funded training places available to students completing their Doctorate between 2013 and 2017 (the target group for this survey). However, in the survey there are also a small number of self-funded QEPs, making the precise response rate difficult to measure. QEPs who trained outside England. Additionally, 6% of QEP survey respondents completed their Doctorate at an HEI not in England.

2.6 Telephone interviews with other stakeholders

Semi-structured telephone interviews with relevant stakeholders were conducted across a number of regions in England to explore similar issues as those in the expert interviews. Overall, 8 participants took part across 7 interviews (two stakeholders from the same organisation chose to take part together in one interview), including EPs, PEPs, training providers, representatives of schools and teachers and those with specific expertise in SEN-related issues.

For more detail on the methodology for the project, see Appendix I.

The following sections highlight the main findings from the research, drawing on all sources of data.

3. Mapping the EP workforce

3.1 Introduction

This section brings together information from a range of sources: existing EP workforce data, as well as new data gathered through an online survey with PEPs in LAs to explore EP employment in LAs, and another with QEPs to learn more about their preferences and employment patterns during the early stages of their careers.

Data on the size of the entire EP workforce are available from the HCPC as all practising EPs need to be registered with the regulator. However, as will be seen later, this does not provide comprehensive information about the type of employer which would permit a full assessment of the size of the EP workforce in LAs. Workforce data about EPs working in schools are collected annually by the DfE, as part of the School Workforce Census. This data has only been made available through parliamentary enquiries and time-series data raises questions about the robustness of this data, in part due to a significant number of LAs not submitting a response in different survey years.

With the introduction of traded services¹⁸, a wider range of organisations have evolved to deliver Educational Psychology Services (EPS), including (publicly-funded) not-for-profit community interest companies, other private organisations and independent EPs being self-employed. LAs may also have set up a trade arm or launched a new organisation, together with other stakeholders. Thus some of the work previously undertaken by LAs may now be outsourced, in part or in full. As will be seen in Sections 3 and 4, EPs may adapt to changes in service delivery to optimise their working conditions by, for example, choosing to combine public and private work. Taking all of this into account, the following section presents data which aims to map the EP workforce. This is designed to provide context to later discussions on supply and demand issues related to recruitment and retention. This section provides data on:

- Newly-qualified EPs' employment upon course completion;
- How many EPs are currently working in LAs in England and their contractual status;
- How the EP workforce is distributed across LAs in England;
- The demographic profile of the EP workforce;
- The distribution and demographics of the non-LA EP workforce;

¹⁸ See Glossary of selected terms

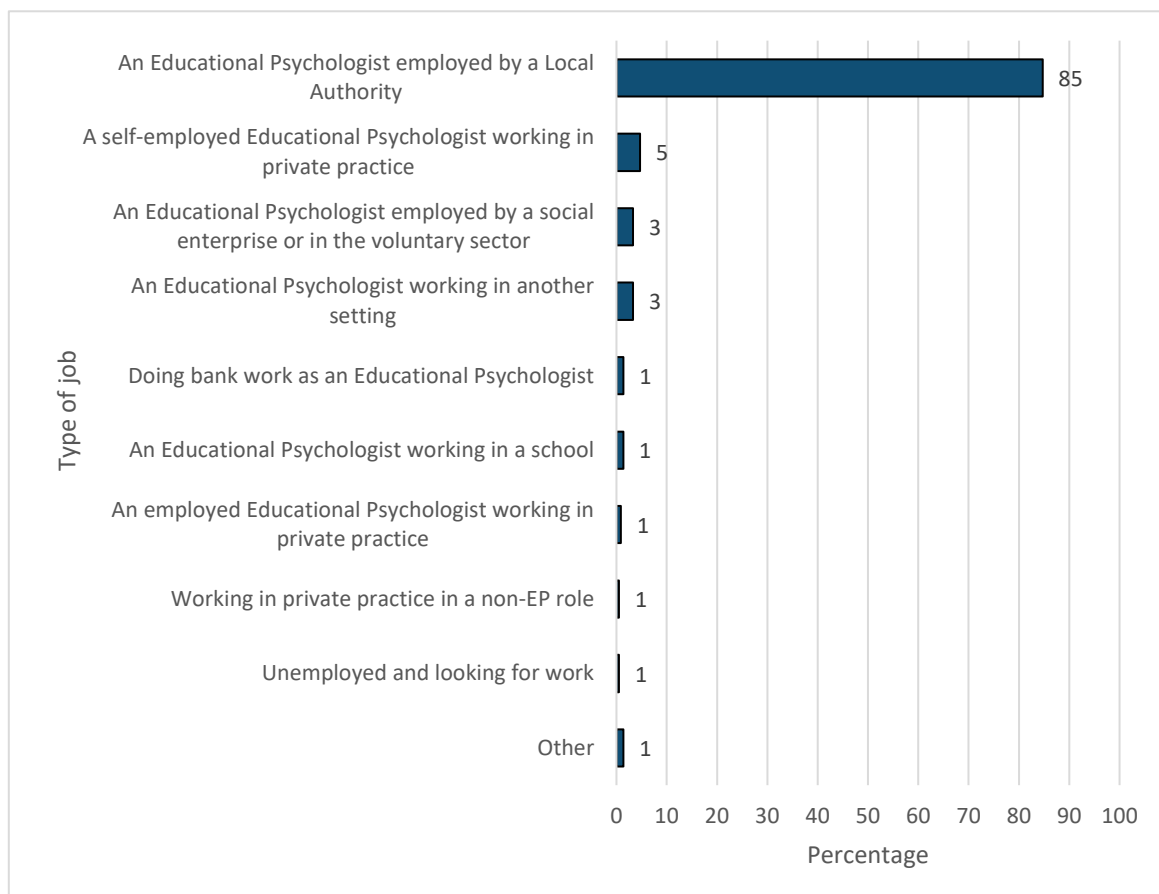
- The number of trainees currently on placement in England and the settings in which they work.

In relation to some of these issues, the data is limited or partial, and the strengths and limitations of the data are noted throughout.

3.2 Newly-qualified EPs' employment upon course completion

As can be seen in Figure 3.1, data from the survey of EPs who had qualified in the past five years (QEPs) shows that the majority (85% of the 217 survey respondents) were currently employed by an LA for at least some of their work time. At this early stage in their careers, only 6% worked in some form of private practice but, as will be seen in Section 4, this pattern is less pronounced later in EPs' careers, with increasing numbers moving into private practice, whether in a self-employed or sole-trader capacity or as an employee of a larger private provider.

Figure 3.1 Current job of EPs who qualified in the past five years



Source: Survey of Educational Psychologists who qualified in the past five years. N=217. Multiple responses indicating multiple jobs possible

Less than 2% of survey respondents were not employed as an EP at the time of responding or at all in the previous 5 years. In part, this is likely to reflect the requirement that trainees are employed as an EP in England for two years post-qualification or they may be required to repay their bursary, but it is also the case that at this stage in their careers, QEPs saw a range of benefits from being employed by an LA. LA employment after completion of the training programme was driven largely by choice (see below).

The placement experiences gave trainees an opportunity to find out what is important to them in their professional practice and what they are looking for in an employer after the end of the training programme. Additional detailed comments provided in the QEP survey show that preferences vary between individuals and may include type of employer, type of work, methods used, size of the work team or reputation of EPS.

“Having three placements meant I knew what I was looking for in employment and looking for to avoid. Things like how time allocations were handled, reputation of EP service with schools, overall effectiveness and vision of wider LA children’s services, how EP services were structured and managed (...), and balance of statutory and early intervention and therapeutic work were all important”. (EP who trained and worked in the South of England)

Trainees who had a placement with an LA they enjoyed or that met with their expectations were more likely to apply for a job there, in part because this facilitated transition into employment after the training programme.

“I stayed at my final year placement when I completed the training and am still there now. This enabled me to continue working with schools and staff that I already knew and made the transition into full time work as an EP much easier and reduced the stress of starting a new place of work, learning procedures etc.” (EP who trained and worked in the South East of England)

Others reported that they were looking for LA employment but were choosing a different LA after their placement that matched their preferences or to broaden their skills set.

Some had changed the type of organisation or were considering changing the type of employer as they had not enjoyed their experience.

“[T]he balance of statutory and interesting and useful preventative/ early intervention work was poor so I moved on after one year. I moved back to [region] to a private psychology practice and spent a year as a salaried

employee of a large private practice". (EP working for a Local Authority in the Midlands)

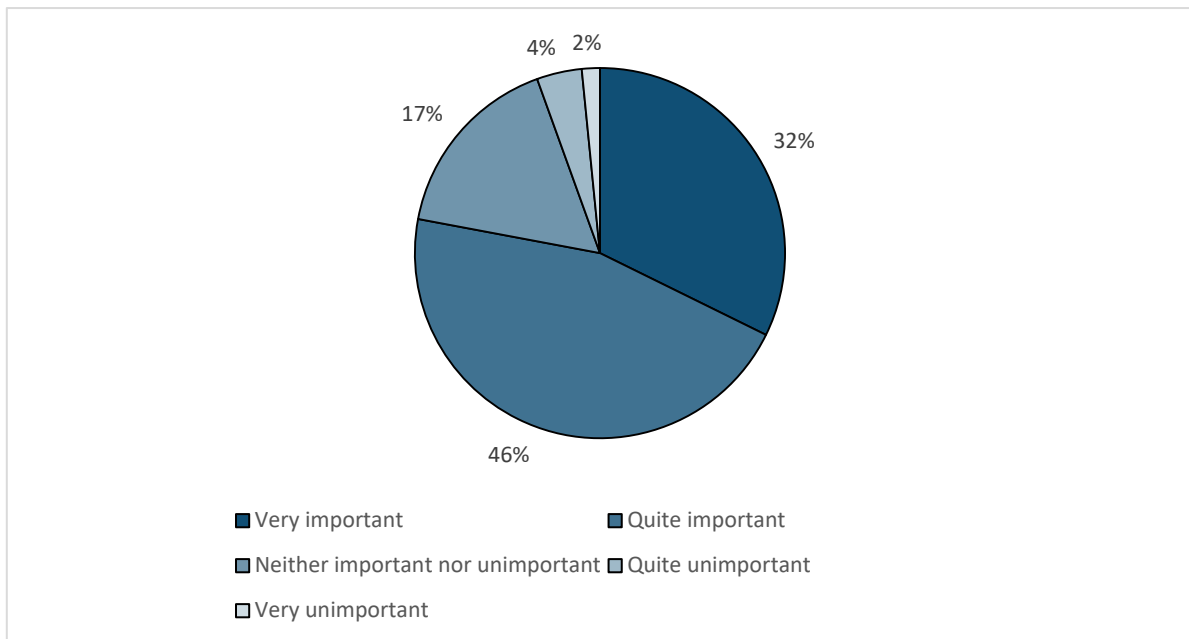
"I didn't enjoy working in a private company. I felt like it was far less creative than the LA and I enjoyed having a larger team in the LA, there were more opportunities for informal support and supervision". (EP working for a Local Authority in the North West)

As Figure 3.2 shows, more than three quarters (78%) of QEPs currently employed by an LA said that it was very or quite important for them to be employed by an LA, while only 6% said that it was quite or very unimportant. When asked to provide more detail about the benefits of working for an LA EP service, QEPs focussed on three areas: an altruistic sense of engaging with the community and those with most need; the quality of their colleagues and their experience, including opportunities for team-working and multi-agency work; and job security and associated benefits, including pensions, paid sickness leave and maternity pay.

"It seems fairer - EP services are accessed on the basis of need across the LA rather than according to which parents can pay. Also, from a selfish perspective, the LA offers a good pension scheme". (EP working for a Local Authority in the Midlands)

"Working as part of a team of EPs, providing a service for local children and families within the community that I live. Good holiday pay, maternity rights and pension benefits". (EP working for a Local Authority in the South)

Figure 3.2 Whether working for a Local Authority is important to newly-qualified Educational Psychologists employed by a Local Authority



Source: Survey of Educational Psychologists who qualified in the past five years. N=184

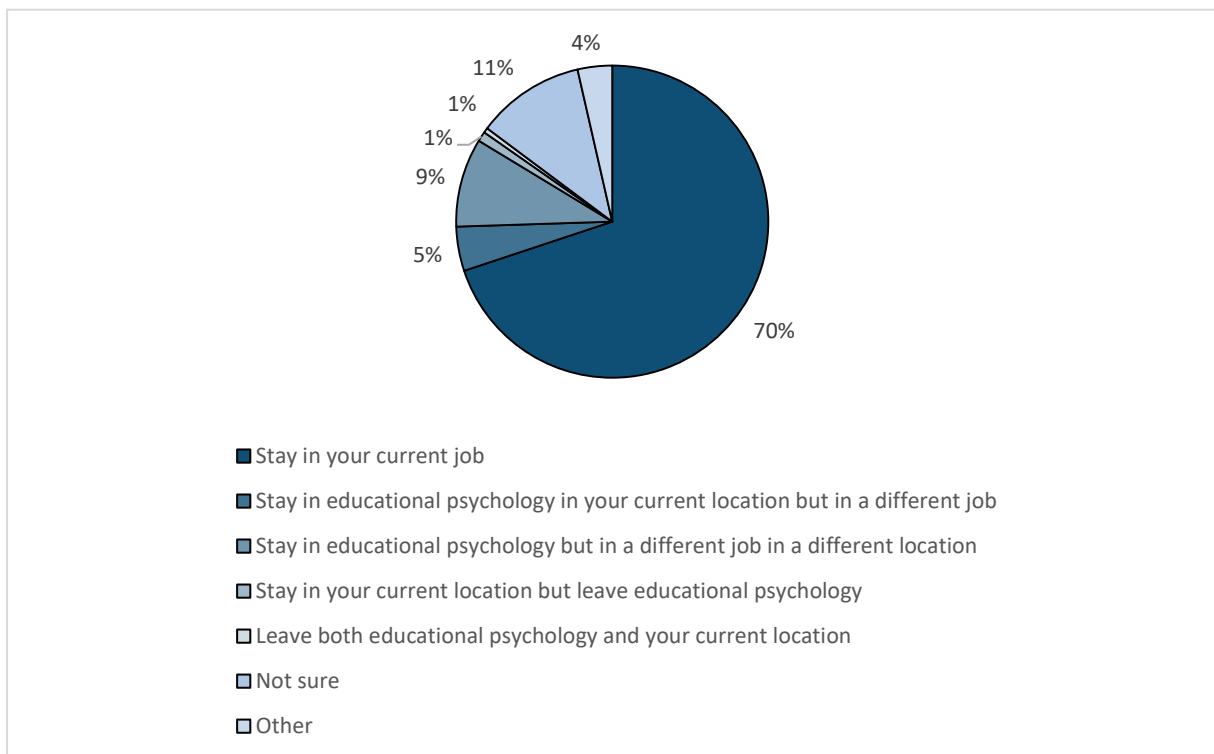
Across the sector, almost two thirds of QEPs (63%) were working full-time in permanent jobs, although a fifth (20%) were working part-time and 6% were in temporary employment. Further detailed responses from survey participants who were working part-time showed that part-time working appeared to be largely driven by choice and was primarily related to decisions about personal work-life balance and, in some cases, returning to work after having children.

Three quarters (75%) of the EPs who responded to the survey said that the job they were doing was definitely the type of job they thought that they would go into when they were training and a further fifth said that the job was one that they were considering while they were training. Just 2% said that they did not know what kind of work they wanted to go into while they were training, a further 2% said that they had not considered doing the type of job they were currently doing and 1% said that while they were training they thought that they would not go into the kind of job they were currently doing.

Taken together, these findings suggest that educational psychology is not a profession that relies on insecure employment which causes frequent job changes (i.e. people

are not leaving their jobs because their contract has ended)¹⁹. However, as will be seen in Section 4, it appears to be the case that there is a certain amount of turnover as a result of people moving between jobs with permanent contracts, prompted in part by the nature of the work undertaken by EPs working in LAs. As Figures 3.3 and 3.4 show, while 70% of QEPs anticipated remaining in their current job for the next one or two years, with this figure being consistent across those in LA and non-LA employment, just over a third (37%) of those who said they would remain in their current job in the short-term thought that they would do so in the longer term²⁰. The proportion of respondents in LA employment who anticipated remaining in their current job in both the short and longer term was 35%, slightly lower than average.

Figure 3.3 Career plans of newly-qualified Educational Psychologists over the next one to two years

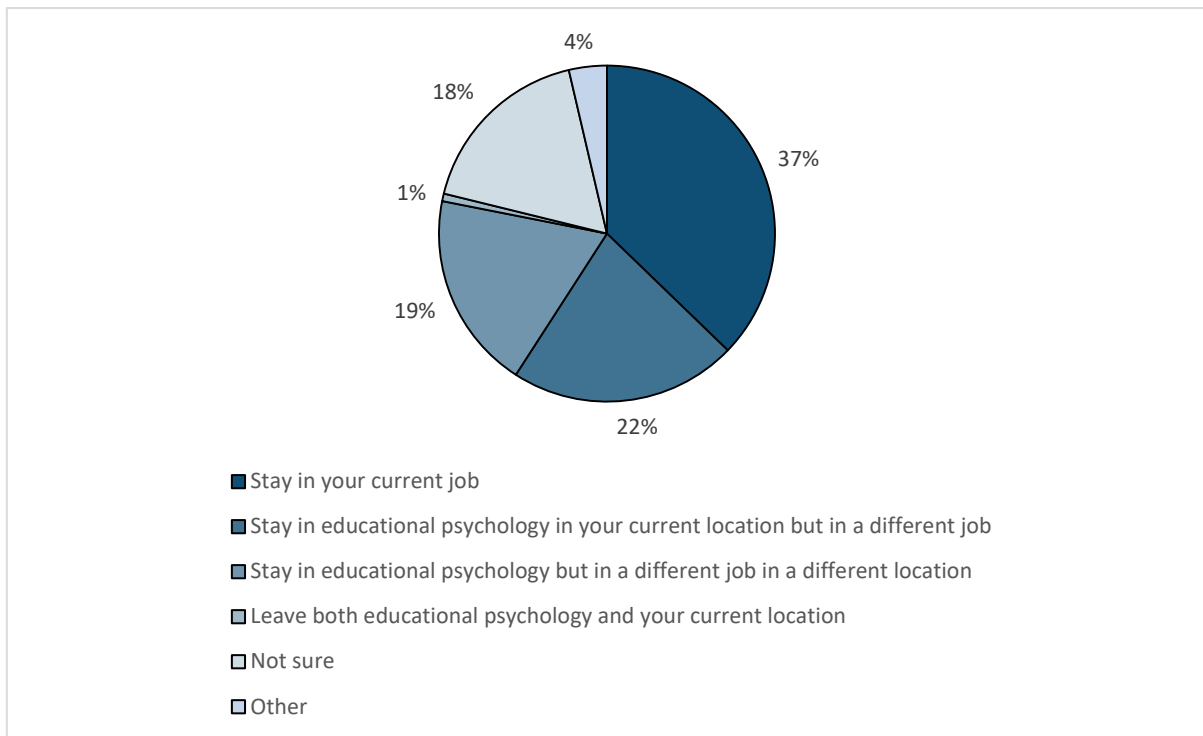


Source: Survey of Educational Psychologists who qualified in the past five years.
N=198

¹⁹ See also Section 3.3.

²⁰ It should be noted that 22% said they would stay in Educational Psychology in their current location but in a different job which could mean promotion within the same LA, moving into private practice or to work for another type of non-LA employer, or job changes involving working in a different LA but continuing to live in the same location.

Figure 3.4 Longer-term career plans of newly-qualified Educational Psychologists who anticipated remaining in their current job in the short-term



Source: Survey of Educational Psychologists who qualified in the past five years. N=139

The reasons behind these findings will be discussed further in Section 4, which outlines the drivers of recruitment and retention issues.

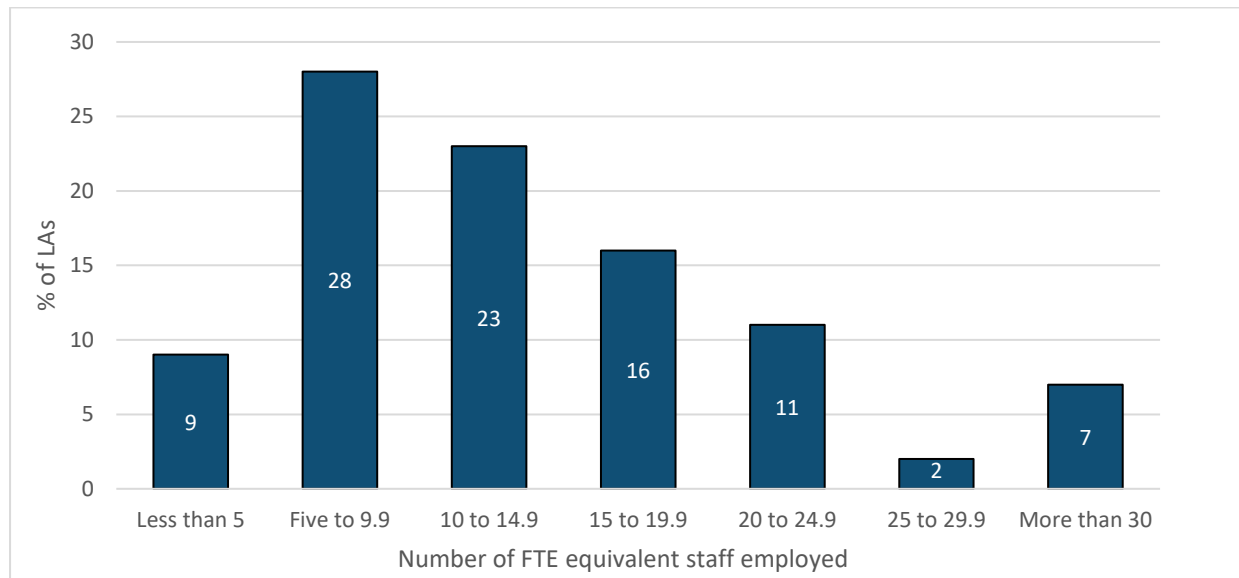
3.3 How many qualified EPs are currently working in individual Local Authorities in England?

Figures provided by PEPs suggest that there is a spread in the number of EPs employed by each LA. As Figure 3.5 shows, 9% of LAs in the PEP survey employed less than five FTE EPs: at the other end of the scale, however, 7% employed more than 30 FTE and the highest number recorded was almost 58 FTE. This has an impact on the capacity of different LAs both to fund trainees and to absorb the impact of recruitment and retention issues. For example, a common view among stakeholders²¹ related to the particular issues faced by smaller, especially unitary, authorities outside

²¹ For more on stakeholders, see Section 2.6.

London, simply because a larger LA has more staff to take on a share of the additional workload caused by the need to supervise trainees or to cover vacant posts.

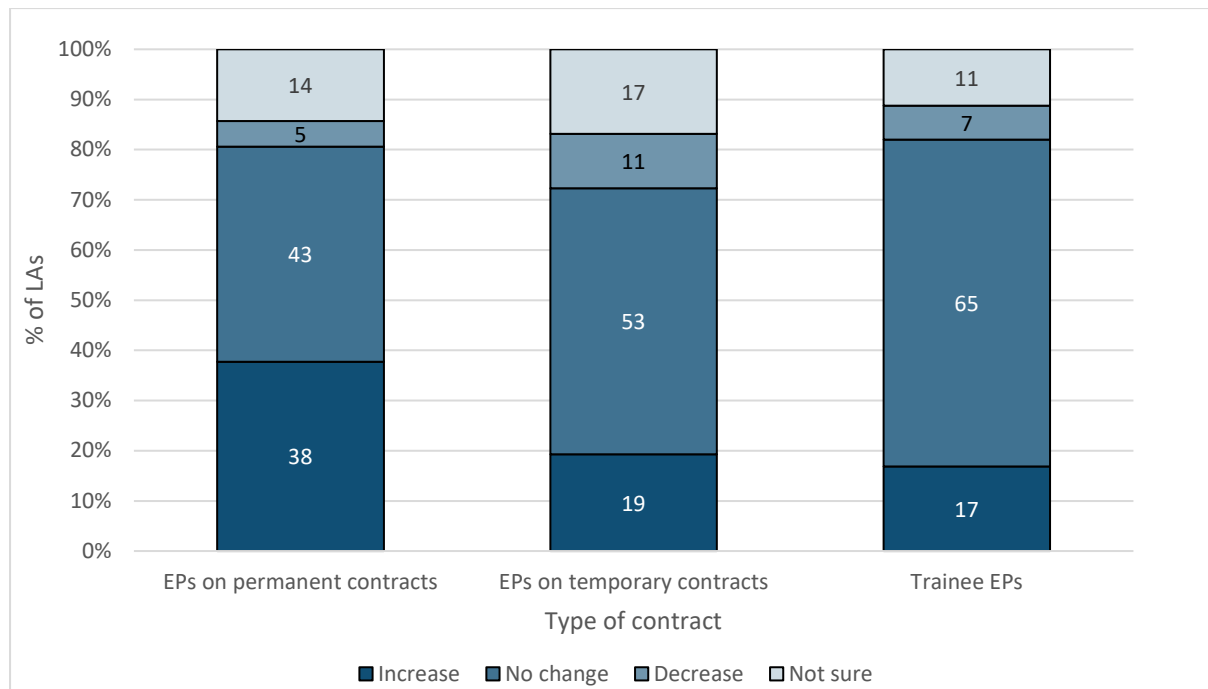
Figure 3.5 Number of Full Time Equivalent (FTE) qualified Educational Psychologists employed by each LA



Source: Survey of Principal Educational Psychologists. N=96

The PEP survey provided some evidence of an increase in the use of temporary contracts, but the picture is mixed across the LAs that participated in the survey (Figure 3.6). Overall, 30% of LA PEPs said that the proportion of their EP staff on temporary contracts had increased over the past five years, while 17% said that it had declined and 38% said it had stayed about the same. In addition, 19% of PEPs thought that the number of EPs they employed on temporary contracts would increase over the next year, but 38% anticipated that the number of EPs they employed on full-time contracts would increase. It should be noted that only 6% of QEPs responding to the survey were in temporary employment (63% were working full-time in permanent jobs and 20% were working part-time and, on average, each LA employs 1.8 people on a temporary contract, 0.84 as a FTE). This suggests that there has not been a significant casualisation of the profession and PEPs do not anticipate that there will be in the near future.

Figure 3.6 Anticipated changes to the size of each Local Authority’s Educational Psychology workforce by type of contract



Source: Survey of Principal Educational Psychologists. N=95

3.4 How is the Local Authority EP workforce distributed across Local Authorities in England?

The number of male and female EPs on the HCPC register currently working within each pre-2006 Strategic Health Authority (SHA) area is presented in Table 3.1²². The numbers presented understate the total number of EPs, because this data is derived from the information provided upon registration (and not everyone stated their location of work or residence).

The regional total of EPs working in each SHA tends to be higher in southern England and other more populous parts of England, and lower in more peripheral areas. The percentage of females is highest in London (80% or more, rising to 91% in South West London) and lowest in Greater Manchester (59%). It is also lower in some SHAs neighbouring London (e.g. 71% to 72% in Essex and Kent and Medway), some more

²² It is unusual that the HCPC uses this areal framework, since SHAs have not been operational since 2005.

peripheral SHAs (e.g. the South West Peninsula) and North-West England (75 to 76% in Cheshire and Merseyside and Cumbria and Lancashire), although still high overall.

Table 3.1 Work location of educational psychologists on HCPC register by gender, 2018

Strategic Health Authority (SHA) pre-2006	Gender		Percentage female	Share of all EPs
	Female	Male		
North Central London	99	21	82.5	4.3
North East London	88	23	79.3	4.0
North West London	104	17	86.0	4.4
South East London	85	17	83.3	3.7
South West London	112	11	91.1	4.4
Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire	48	9	84.2	2.1
Birmingham and the Black Country	100	19	84.0	4.3
Coventry, Warwickshire, Herefordshire and Worcestershire	60	16	78.9	2.7
Essex	46	18	71.9	2.3
Leicestershire, Northamptonshire and Rutland	82	21	79.6	3.7
Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire	76	22	77.6	3.5
Shropshire and Staffordshire	69	14	83.1	3.0
Trent	99	23	81.1	4.4
Cheshire & Merseyside	83	28	74.8	4.0
County Durham and Tees Valley	54	10	84.4	2.3
Cumbria and Lancashire	51	16	76.1	2.4
Greater Manchester	87	61	58.8	5.3
North and East Yorkshire and Northern	59	10	85.5	2.5
Northumberland, Tyne & Wear	68	17	80.0	3.1
West Yorkshire	80	25	76.2	3.8
Avon, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire	122	27	81.9	5.4
Dorset and Somerset	72	8	90.0	2.9
Hampshire and Isle of Wight	108	17	86.4	4.5
Kent and Medway	40	16	71.4	2.0
South West Peninsula	72	26	73.5	3.5
Surrey and Sussex	153	30	83.6	6.6
Thames Valley	119	20	85.6	5.0
England	2236	542	80.5	100.0

Source: HCPC data 2018

Summarising this table to Government Office Regions (Table 3.2) emphasises the concentration of EPs in London and South-East England (each of which contains a fifth of all EPs), and enables a clearer comparison of how well the geographical distribution of EPs meets the potential demand for their services to be calculated.

The ratio of the number of people in the age groups in which most education takes place (aged 5 to 19) to the number of EPs working in a region gives an indication of the extent to which EPs are under-represented or otherwise in any given region. The number of people aged 5 to 19 served by each EP is lowest in London, the South-West, the North-East and the South-East, and highest in Yorkshire and the Humber (more than twice as high as in London) and the East of England, suggesting some under-representation in these two regions.

Table 3.2 Educational psychologists working in each Government Office Region by gender

Government Office Region	Gender		% female	Thousand persons aged 5-19 per EP 2017	Share of EPs
	Male	Female			
East	170	49	77.6	4.9	7.9
East Midlands	181	44	80.4	3.7	8.1
London	488	89	84.6	2.7	20.8
North East	122	27	81.9	3.0	5.4
North West	221	105	67.8	3.9	11.7
South East	420	83	83.5	3.2	18.1
South West	266	61	81.3	2.8	11.8
West Midlands	229	49	82.4	3.8	10.0
Yorkshire and The Humber	139	35	79.9	5.6	6.3
England	2236	542	80.5	3.5	100.0

Source: HCPC and ONS mid-year population estimates, 2017

3.5 The demographic profile of the Local Authority EP workforce in England

The HCPC provided tabulations of data from their registration system and the AEP provided data on their membership. Numbers in the HCPC data are higher than those in the AEP data as EPs have to register with HCPC in order to practice, whereas membership of the AEP is voluntary. The HCPC data presents information on age and

gender, location of residence and workplace²³, as well as the profession of psychologists. EPs may also be registered as working as Clinical, Occupational, Forensic or Sport psychologists or in “Health” or “Counselling”.

Table 3.3 Gender profile of Educational Psychologists (2018)

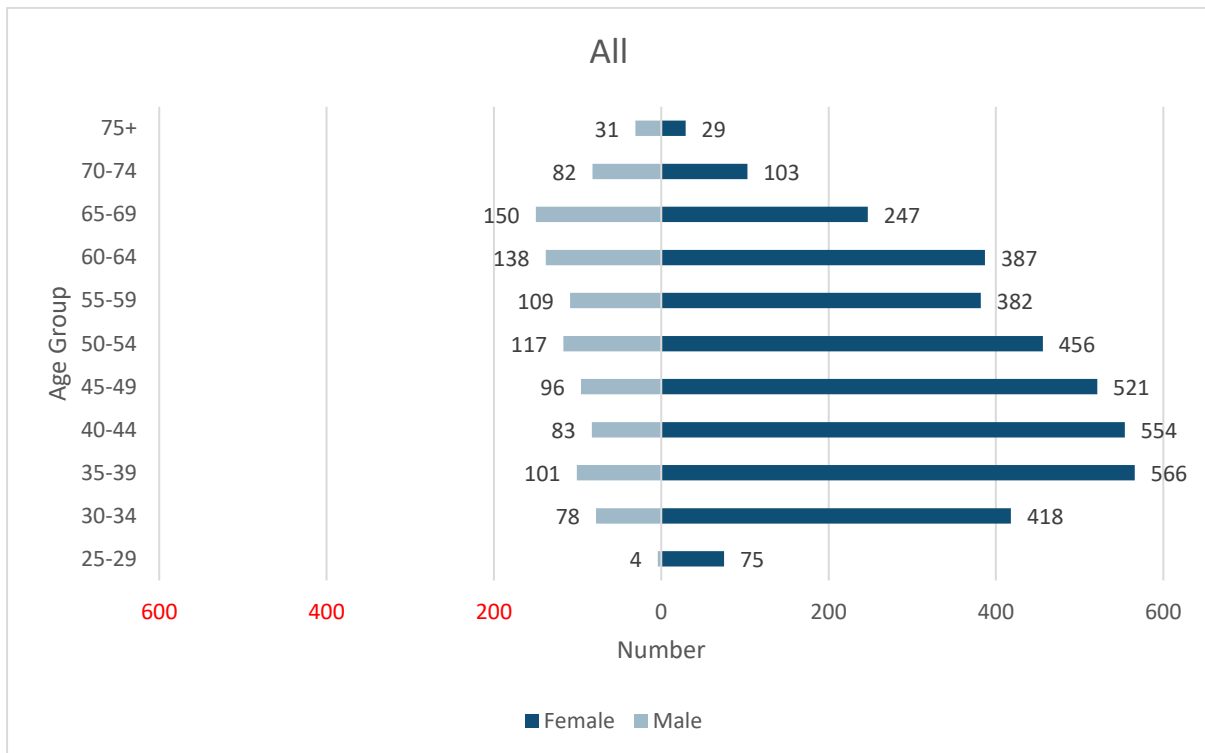
	Female	Male	Total	Percentage female
All Educational Psychologists with education as a responsibility alongside others	3,756	790	4,546	82.6
Educational Psychologist only	3,697	754	4,451	83.1
Percent with non-educational roles	1.6%	4.6%	2.1%	Unknown

Source: HCPC data, 2018

More than four-fifths (83%) of all EPs are female (Table 3.3; the percentage of those who are educational psychologists only is slightly higher than the overall average). Male EPs tend to be older, with only 8% per cent aged under 35 (compared to 13% for females) and the largest single age group for men (15%) is 65-69 (see Table A3, Appendix II). This can be seen in Figures 3.7 and 3.8. As will be discussed further in Section 4, the result of these changes is that the EP workforce is becoming increasingly female.

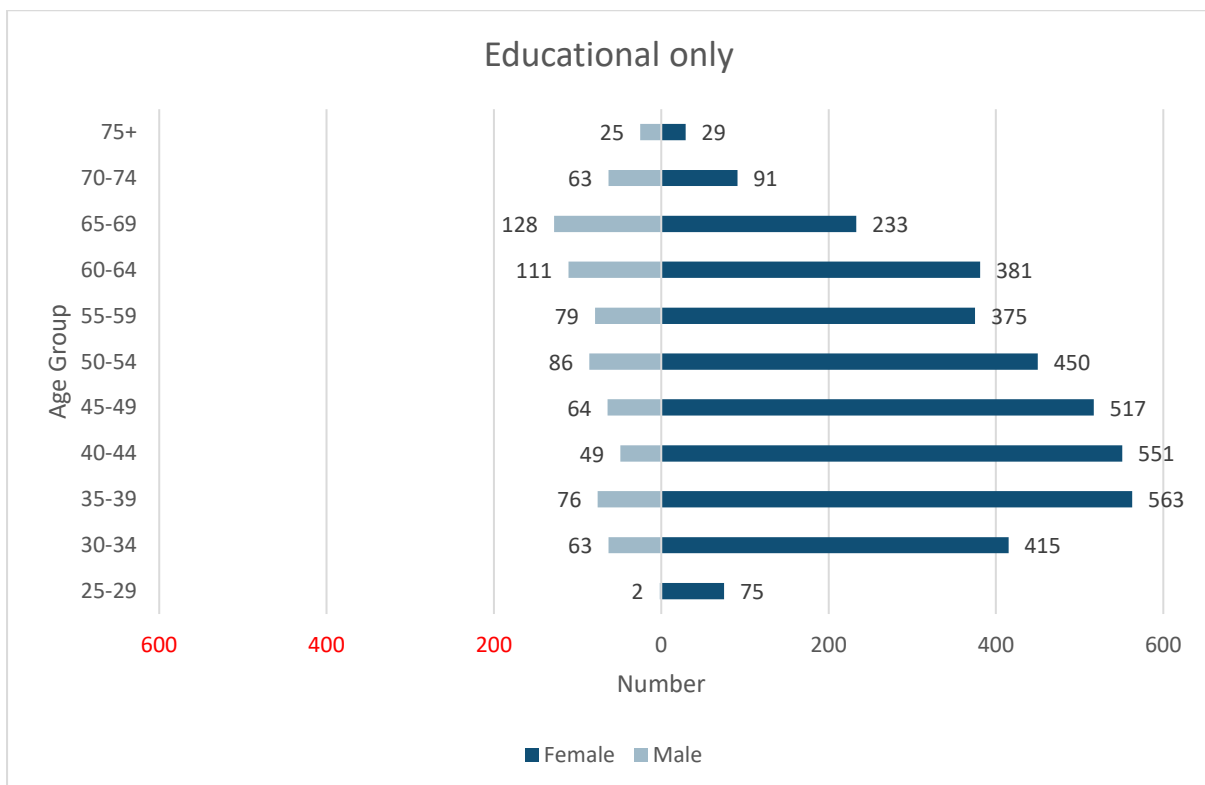
²³ Registered address is also provided, but this seems to be the same as home address. Note, only 2778 have a work address and 2779 have a home address, and there is no breakdown possible into those working as Educational Psychologists only and those with other responsibilities.

Figure 3.7 Age/gender breakdown for all EPs



Source: HCPC data, 2018
 Total sample: males = 989; females = 3798.

Figure 3.8 Age/gender breakdown for EPs working in education only



Source: HCPC data 2018
Total sample: males = 746; females = 3680.

The AEP provided time-series data on their membership, which was used to provide an indication of change in the number of EPs by age and gender over time. Table 3.4 compares the mean number of members²⁴ in 2011 and 2017 by age and gender. Figure 3.9 contrasts membership types by gender in 2018, showing once again that females make up the majority of all categories of membership.

Table 3.4 Change in the mean number of registered EPs by age and gender, 2011-2017

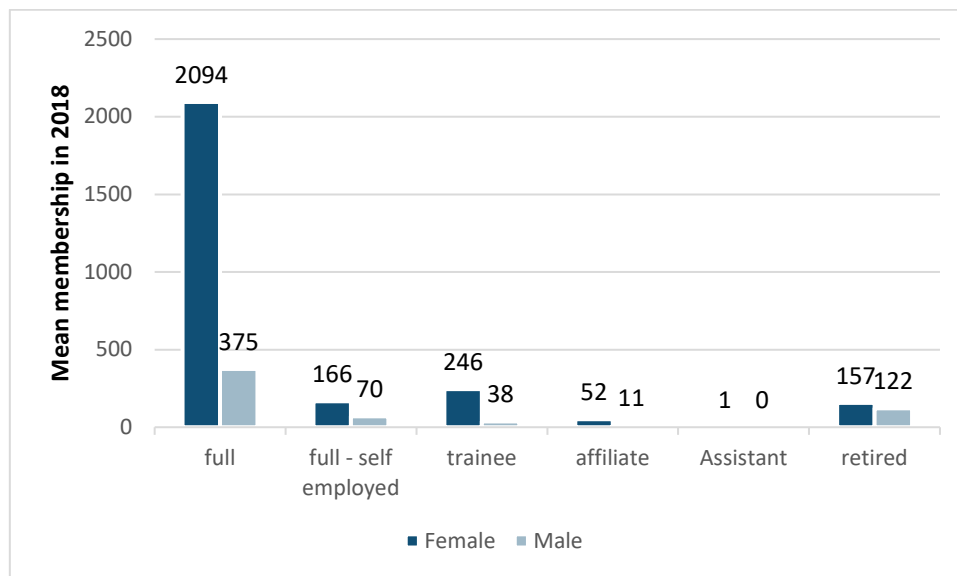
Age group	2011	2017	change	% change
<i>Males</i>				
Below 25	5	0	-5	-100.0%
25-34	50	72	22	44.2%
35-44	104	85	-19	-18.1%
45-54	153	114	-38	-25.1%
55-64	318	142	-176	-55.3%
65-74	86	159	73	84.7%
75-84	12	36	24	197.9%
85-94	3	6	3	88.6%
No date of birth	6	2	-4	-65.2%
Total	736	616	-120	-16.3%
<i>Females</i>				
Below 25	8	2	-6	-73.7%
25-34	513	463	-50	-9.8%
35-44	736	766	30	4.1%
45-54	650	699	48	7.4%
55-64	554	523	-31	-5.6%
65-74	94	233	139	148.5%
75-84	9	16	7	81.7%
85-94	0	3	3	100%
No date of birth	14	11	-3	-20.9%
Total	2577	2716	138	5.4%

Source: AEP membership data 2011-2017.

Note: AEP membership data and HCPC data are not consistent with each other. AEP totals should be smaller than HCPC because they record membership of a professional organisation while HCPC records the registrations necessary for an educational psychologist to practice.

²⁴ The mean number is provided due to monthly fluctuations in membership numbers.

Figure 3.9 AEP membership type by gender, 2018



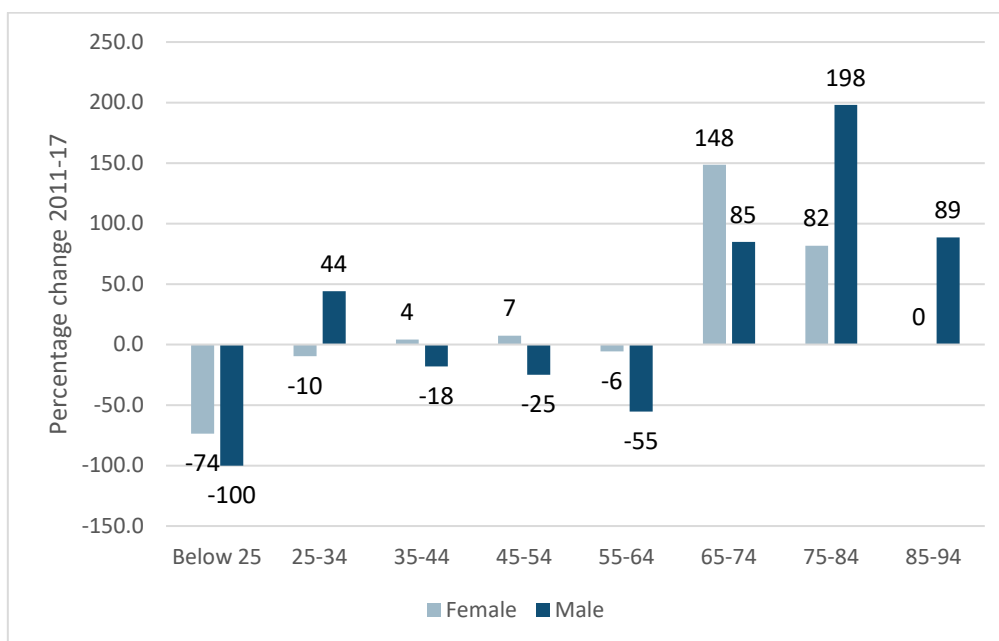
Source: AEP membership data, 2018

As shown in Table 3.4, the number of male AEP members fell by 16% between 2011 and 2017, while the number of females increased by 5%. The increase in the number of females exceeded the decrease in males. In total, females accounted for 78% of all EPs in 2011, rising to 82% of EPs in 2017.

While the number of 55-64 year old male AEP members fell by more than half, there was a high rate of increase in the number of older male AEP members. Figure 3.10 illustrates the ageing of the AEP membership. Part of the pattern is determined by an increase in the number of retired members for both genders (Figure 3.10), but the number of male full members fell as the number of female self-employed and trainee members increased over the period 2011-2017.

The number of female AEP members fell fastest in the youngest age groups, while the number of 55-64 year olds also declined. It is unclear why these figures have changed over time. While the number of female members aged over 65 increased rapidly, it is likely that many of the older AEP members are no longer working.

Figure 3.10: Percentage change in AEP memberships by age and gender, 2011-2017



Source: AEP membership data 2011-2017

3.6 The distribution and demographics of the non-Local Authority EP workforce in England

The written answer to House of Commons parliamentary question 137956 (asked by Chris Ruane on 25 April 2018) stated that in November 2016, 1,368 EPs were directly employed by LAs in England (this excludes LAs where EP provision has been outsourced or shared with other LAs)²⁵. Though individual academies and free schools obtain private provision, the written answer states that “information regarding the number of EPs employed in the private sector is not held centrally”²⁶.

AEP monthly recruitment data for the public and private sector provides a further indication of where EPs work (Table 3.5). The most notable feature of the data is the fall in the level of recruitment between 2015 and 2017, from 476 to 321 in the public sector (a 33% decline) and from 28 to 12 in the private sector (a 57% decline). This decline seems to have continued for public sector recruitment into 2018, although figures are only provided up until August. For the private sector, however, the numbers increased in 2018. Private sector recruitment represents about 5% of the public sector

²⁵ Data from the 2017 School Workforce Census has not yet been published.

²⁶ Data from HoC written questions: <https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-04-25/137956>

total, so the doubling in private sector recruitment between 2017 and 2018 provides few employment opportunities.

Table 3.5 Monthly EP recruitment totals by sector, 2015-2018

Public sector EPs													
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
2015	41	34	37	41	45	66	45	9	39	65	44	10	476
2016	19	34	29	25	36	35	23	10	30	39	47	20	347
2017	11	31	28	18	44	40	22	17	22	44	37	7	321
2018	38	22	27	35	28	27	30	8					215
Private sector EPs													
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
2015	4	5	1	6	1	3	0	0	4	4	0	0	28
2016	0	9	2	1	4	1	6	1	0	0	6	6	36
2017	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	4	3	12
2018	0	0	2	3	6	1	1	10					23

Source: AEP data 2015-2018

The workforce datasets provide no information on EPs working with an LA in England while also undertaking work outside an LA. The PEP survey gives some indication of the extent of this issue. Nearly half of the LA PEPs who responded to the survey (47%) stated that some of their qualified EPs were also working as private providers and 10% of LAs have outsourced at least some of their EP services to a private provider.

Nine in ten LAs (90%) were aware of non-LA EP services being provided in their area, and a third (34%) were aware of other LA-provided EP services being provided in their area. This suggests that there is some potential for private providers to draw EPs away from LA work, but, as Table 3.5 shows, the proportion of EPs working for private providers remains relatively low.

3.7 How many trainee EPs are on placement in each Local Authority in England?

No directly relevant information on the number of trainees on placement in each LA was available from our workforce data sources. What is known, however, is the number of EP training places per year (Table 3.6).

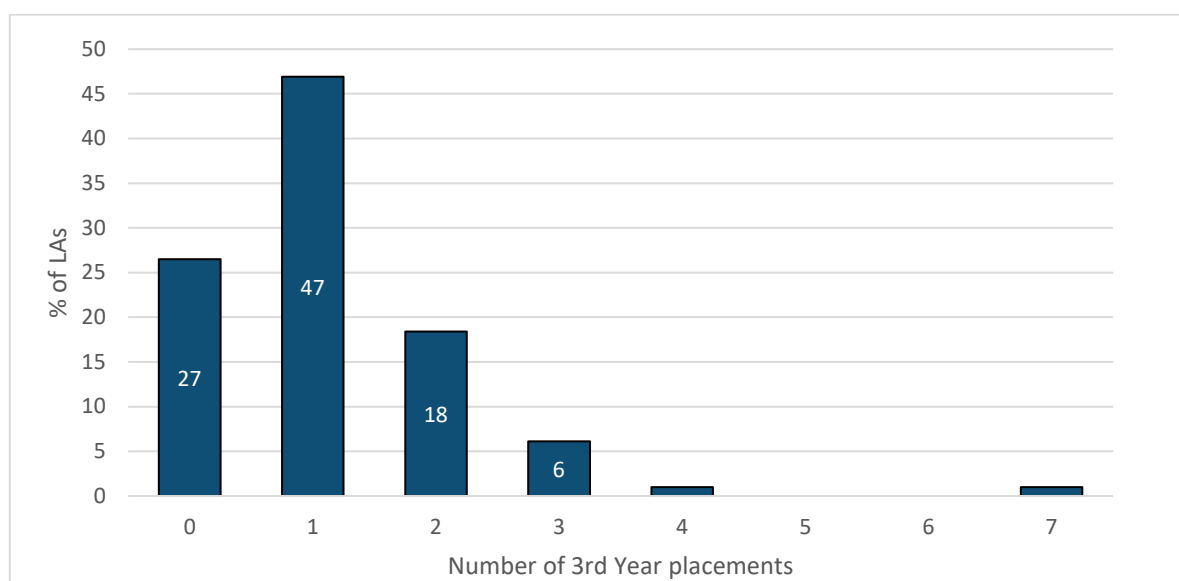
Table 3.6 Number of EP trainees funded each year

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Number of trainees	120	116	132	129	132	153	150	160

Source: data provided by DfE, 2018

Figure 3.11 shows survey data on the number of Year 3 trainees that LAs were hosting on placement. Almost three quarters (73%) of LAs had at least one third year trainee on placement, giving a total of 112 Year 3 placements. Of these, 83% were in the same organisation in their second year. Over a quarter (27%) of LAs had no third-year trainees on placement.

Figure 3.11 Number of 3rd Year placements in each LA as of October 2018



Source: Survey of Principal Educational Psychologists. N=95

3.8 Conclusions

Much of the data on the EP profession is partial or incomplete and must be drawn from various sources that do not necessarily employ the same terminology or definitions. Additionally, much of the available information is based on membership data from

professional bodies such as the AEP. While membership of the AEP is high, the exclusion of non-members from this data means that accurate figures cannot be provided on issues relating to, for example, temporary and part-time employment.

Overall, the data shows that LAs continue to be significant employers and newly-qualified EPs who took part in the survey show a preference for working for an LA, at least in the early stages of their careers. Private providers account for a relatively low share of employment. However, there is no accurate data on EPs leaving LA work to establish as sole traders or self-employed EPs, which is a common route into private practice and it is clear that there is capacity for this sector to expand and, potentially, to draw EPs away from LA work.

Educational psychology is not a profession that relies on insecure employment, but there appear to be some structural issues, such as a relatively flat career structure with limited opportunities for progression, that have the potential to cause turnover in the profession, with EPs moving between LAs and private work, as well as combining the two. These issues will be discussed in greater detail in the following section.

Examination of HCPC data shows there has been an increasing shift towards a greater proportion of women than men in the profession and the largest number of female employees are in the younger age groups. This presents a series of workforce planning considerations related to increased cover required for maternity leave and higher rates of part-time working and, as will be seen, LA PEPs have limited capacity to respond to these issues.

4. Understanding the drivers of EP shortages

4.1 Introduction

This section examines the evidence of shortages related to recruitment and retention in the EP profession. It then discusses the supply and demand drivers that have been identified as contributing to these shortages. It covers:

- Whether LAs are experiencing shortages of EPs;
- Whether LAs are experiencing difficulties recruiting trainees for practice placements, and whether this has a subsequent impact on recruitment of employees;
- Patterns and common factors in the supply and demand drivers underlying shortages of EPs, including the factors affecting newly-qualified EPs' choices of employment destinations;
- Changes in demand for EP services and the impact this has on recruitment and retention in the profession.

Under the provision of the Children and Families Act 2014, LAs were required to replace SEN statements with EHC plans by April 2018. EPs have a statutory role in providing advice or information to LAs for children who are being assessed for an EHC plan. The age range covered by SEN provision was also expanded, alongside other policy developments in Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT), Education and Inclusion Partnership (EIP) and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).

The number of pupils with SEN in England increased for a second consecutive year from 1,244,255 in January 2017 to 1,276,215 in January 2018, an increase from 14.4% to 14.6% of pupils. This followed a period of year-on-year decreases from 1,704,980 in January 2010 to 1,228,785 in 2016. Currently, 2.9% of all pupils have complex needs requiring statements of SEN or EHC plans, an increase from 2.8% in 2017²⁷.

These changes have meant additional work for EPs employed by LAs. A strong theme that emerged from the interviews and focus groups with PEPs was the impact of direct cuts to LA budgets as a result of austerity measures. Stakeholders commonly argued

²⁷ [Special Educational Needs in England: January 2018](#)

that cuts directly affect the number of EPs employed and the number of placements offered within EP training programmes by some LAs and that some regions are more badly affected than others, a point further highlighted by PEPs who participated in the focus groups.

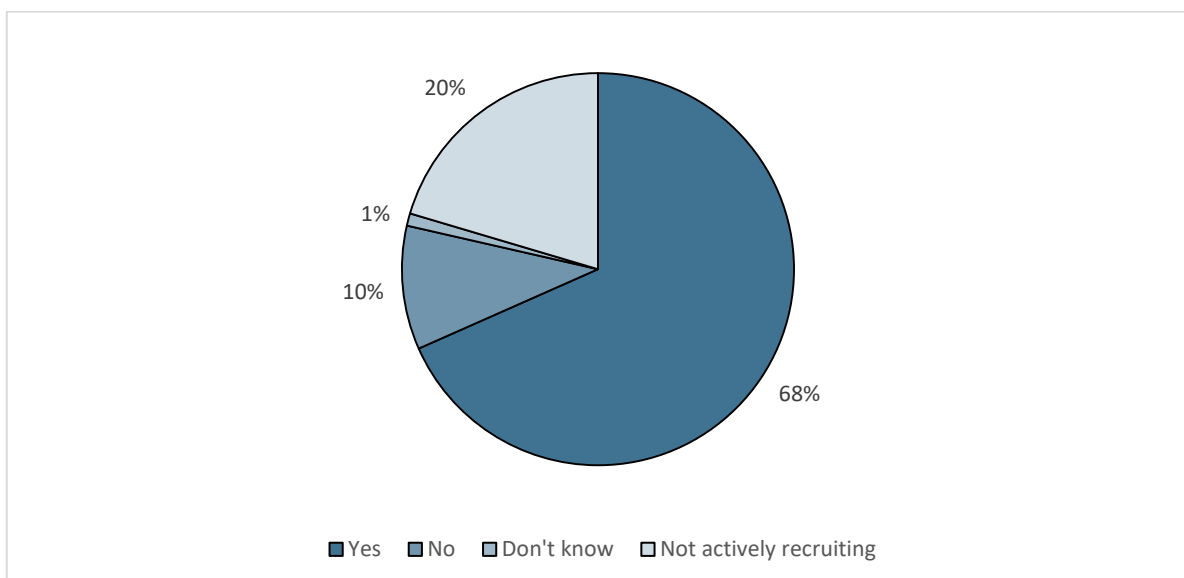
“We were 'hit' by austerity in the LA which reduced our capacity to be able to support TEP placements. This reduced our name within the region and we effectively became anonymous to TEPs. It's only by being able to tell the directors of education that this has to be prioritised that we have been able to become known again to the training provider and TEPs”. (PEP working in a Local Authority in the North East)

“The 'elephant in the room' is the fact that LAs have had their budgets severely cut and cannot afford the numbers of EPs they had in any case” (PEP working in a Local Authority in the South East)

4.2 Are Local Authorities experiencing a shortage of EPs?

Shortages of EPs can occur when vacant posts cannot be filled. Data from the PEP survey shows that more than two thirds of PEPs (68%) reported experiencing difficulties recruiting to fill vacant LA posts (see Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1 Whether Local Authorities reported experiencing difficulties recruiting to fill vacant posts



Source: Survey of Principal Educational Psychologists. N=94

Overall, two thirds (66%) of PEPs surveyed reported at least one vacancy for a permanent EP post, but of these, only 55% were actively recruiting to fill any of the vacancies they had. Similarly, 18% of PEPs said that they had at least one vacancy for a temporary EP post but a higher proportion (67%) were recruiting to fill those vacancies. Participants in a focus group from an area experiencing particular difficulties were reluctant to try to recruit: they found recruitment costly and were concerned that potential employees would see they were repeatedly recruiting and consider them a less attractive employer. Moreover, other focus group participants and stakeholders tended to feel strongly that some LAs were also unable to recruit due to budget cuts or uncertainty over budgets.

Of the 66% of PEPs who said that they currently had at least one vacant post, 83% reported that they consistently experienced recruitment difficulties.

“We haven’t had a full staff complement for years”. (PEP working in a Local Authority in the North East)

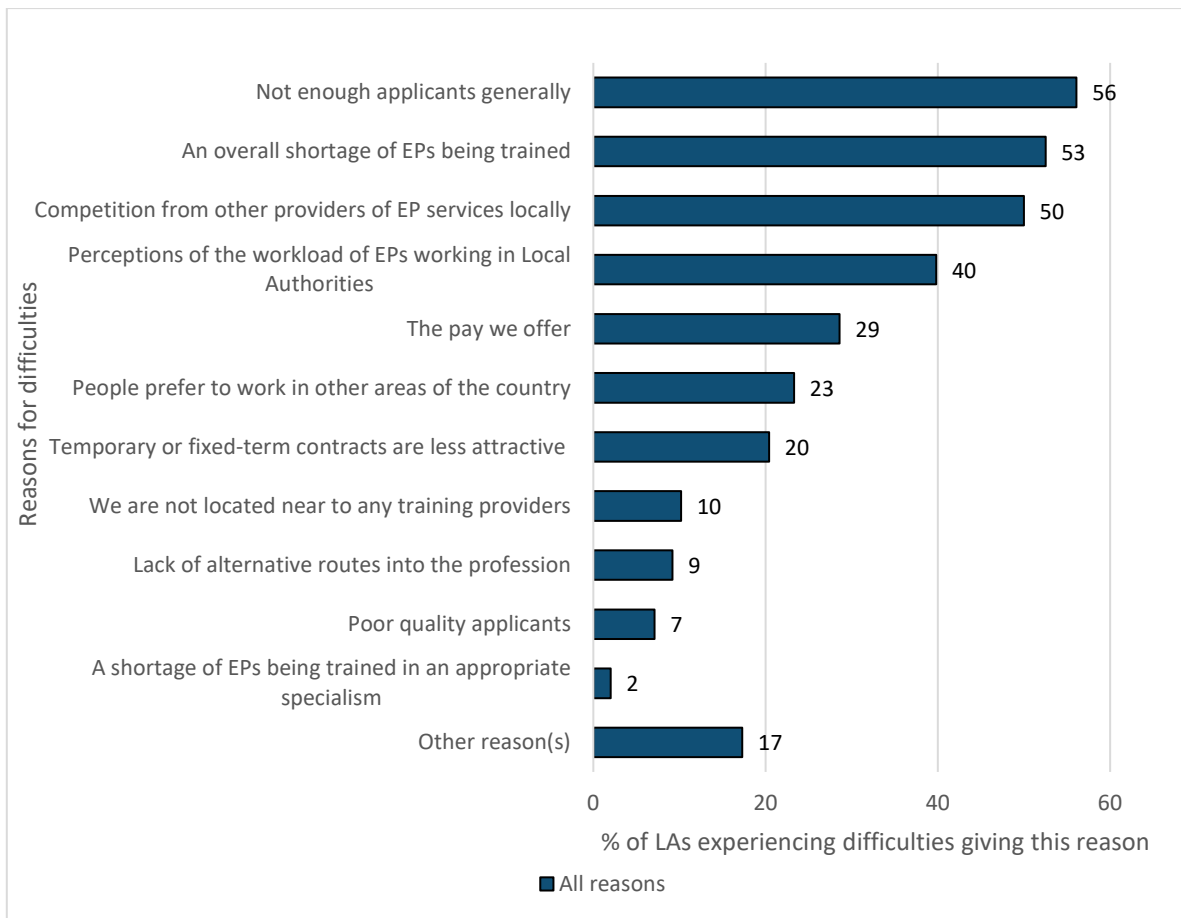
4.3 What are the drivers of EP shortages?

Broadly, the drivers of the shortages identified by experts, PEPs and other stakeholders interviewed as part of the research can be divided into those that are primarily related to the supply of EPs and those pertaining to changes in demand for EP services. However, as will be seen in the following sections, supply and demand issues are also interlinked.

PEPs who reported in the survey that they were experiencing recruitment difficulties were asked about all the underlying reasons and the three main reasons they thought were contributing to these difficulties. As Figure 4.2 shows, a lack of applicants was mentioned by 56%, an overall shortage of EPs being trained by 53% and competition from other providers by 50%. More than 40% saw the lack of applicants and the overall shortage as one of the three main reasons for recruitment difficulties and 20% said provider competition (not shown in Figure 4.2). Among all the reasons given, 40% also mentioned perceptions of the workload of EPs working in LAs, while fewer PEPs mentioned pay (29%), preferences for other geographical areas (23%) and non-permanent contracts being less attractive (20%).²⁸

²⁸ As a third of LA PEPs did not respond to the survey, it should be noted that other LAs may have provided different reasons for recruitment difficulties.

Figure 4.2 All reasons Local Authorities believed they were experiencing recruitment difficulties



Source: Survey of Principal Educational Psychologists. N=65. Multiple responses possible

A general theme from additional detailed information provided by PEP survey respondents also noted that an increased demand for certain EP services, such as statutory assessment work, can result in a decreased supply of EPs willing to work in that LA because they perceive the work to be repetitive and stressful.

“I think some of the difficulties are around the type of work available. I know that some authorities are restricted by funds to do statutory work only [...] EPs who have moved to us from other LAs talk about workload and those kind of pressures too. Probably more retention related”. (PEP working for a Local Authority in the South East)

“LAs can suffer a downward spiral of recruitment. If EPs are lost the strain on those who are left means that more are tempted to leave (and there are usually vacancies elsewhere) and the situation escalates. A small number of EPs in a LA also means that most work will be statutory which gives much

less work satisfaction for EPs and means they are unable to engage in preventative work". (PEP working for a Local Authority in the South East)

4.3.1 Supply-side drivers of EP shortages

In addition to those supply-side drivers highlighted in the PEP survey, the most common supply-side drivers of EP shortages identified through the interviews and the focus groups were:

- A lack of EPs being trained and consequently a lack of EPs applying for vacancies;
- Demographic issues related to an increasingly female-dominated profession;
- The location of certain LAs, in terms of their accessibility, attractiveness and proximity to training providers.

The QEP survey respondents also highlighted some concerns about remaining in LA work in the longer-term due to structural issues related to pay, progression and job content.

A lack of EPs being trained was consistently considered by all the different groups taking part in the study to be the most important supply-side driver of shortages in the EP profession. This was both important in itself, but also in the way it interacted with other supply and demand drivers. These issues are now considered separately.

Too few EPs being trained

As Figure 4.2 above shows, the most commonly cited reason for LAs' recruitment difficulties was a lack of applicants (56%) and the second most commonly cited problem causing recruitment difficulties was a lack of EPs being trained (53%). One PEP stated:

"Currently there are just 150-160 qualified EPs produced each year. There are 152 or so LAs. If each LA service has just one EP retiring each year this would be insufficient to replace them. In addition to this there is increased demand created by the Children and Families Act 2014 and the migration towards trading which has increased demand. Increasingly colleagues are leaving LAs to work independently". (PEP working for a Local Authority in the South East)

As will be seen, this under-supply means that EPs are able to choose between many potential employers, both LAs and private providers. As the quote below illustrates, factors including demand for EP services and, consequently, the type of work an EP

would be expected to do, are intertwined with these supply issues. This exacerbates the problem for many LAs.

“Retention [is] less of an issue than recruitment generally but I observe perhaps more movement than usual between regional services as individuals have choice re job offers. So there can be an exacerbating effect in a 'stretched' service in that the pressure on those who remain pushes them to move somewhere where the range of work/ opportunities are more appealing”. (PEP working for a Local Authority in the North East)

Demographic factors

A strong theme emerging from stakeholder interviews was that between 2011 and 2015, redundancies of EPs aged over 55 and retirements reduced the pool of available EPs. At the time, this was considered by LAs to be an appropriate response to cuts in LA budgets, but it has reduced the pool of EPs available to work in LAs as some left the profession and others moved into private practice, following increases in demand for EP services (discussed later in this section). Generally, PEPs and training provider focus group participants felt that as older members of the workforce have left the profession it has become increasingly female and, in particular, reliant on younger staff who may wish to take leave for family-related reasons or reduce their hours of work to look after family members.

“I think training courses need to consider their diversity of recruitment - EPs tend to share similar characteristics of people on certain life courses who are likely to become part time/ work privately/ retire early”. (PEP working in a Local Authority in the South East)

“Factors linked to problems of EP retention by LA employers include the demographics of the workforce (loss of staffing due to maternity leave and retirement); impact on EP role of LA financial pressures, extension of responsibilities up to 25, statutory demands”. (Training provider)

This has caused workforce planning issues for PEPs who took part in the survey, as well as those in the interviews and focus groups. The most common views on this topic were that while on paper there may be sufficient numbers of EPs being trained, when some of these are not available to work because they are on maternity or paternity leave or have decided to work part-time services are left understaffed. Moreover, an LA may be unable to recruit temporary replacements for those on maternity or paternity leave as the general under-supply of EPs means that few are willing to take less attractive temporary work when there is an over-supply of permanent work available. This may in turn increase the workload of EPs who remain in LA employment, making their jobs less attractive and potentially leading to greater

turnover in the profession as EPs leave to move to more attractive LAs or decide to move into private practice to gain more control over their workloads (see also 3.2).

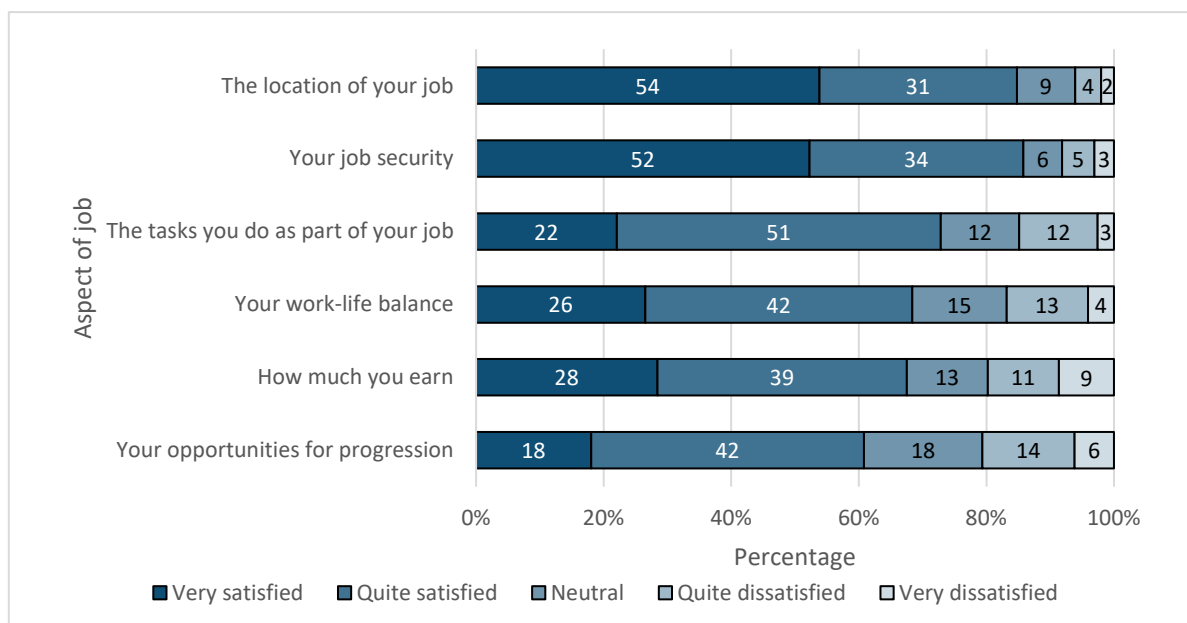
“Our workloads are definitely bigger. Requests for EHCPs have gone through the roof, we are expected to turn them around in a shorter space of time than before. When waiting for TEPs to qualify, we are working understaffed and therefore under capacity. We also have lots of EPs off on maternity leave... which is not covered apart from the others still working”. (PEP working in an LA in the South East)

Job content, pay and progression

In section 3, it was noted that there is little evidence of structural turnover caused by EPs moving through a series of temporary contracts, but there was evidence of voluntary movement caused by EPs choosing to move jobs to seek better conditions. These conditions include not just the type of work an EP is expected to do (see also 4.2), but also the rewards they receive for it.

As mentioned earlier, the majority of QEPs were currently employed by LAs. Figure 4.3 shows that, although overall there were relatively high levels of satisfaction amongst QEPs with the job content (73% were very or quite satisfied), what they earned (67%) and their opportunities for progression (60%), in each case there was a minority who were quite or very dissatisfied.

Figure 4.3 Whether QEPs were satisfied with different aspects of their current job



Source: Survey of Educational Psychologists who qualified in the past five years.

N=197

A common theme emerging from additional detailed information provided by PEP and QEP survey respondents noted the relatively flat structure of the LA EP profession. This means that there are few opportunities for progression that do not involve moving into a managerial role. Not only is the number of these roles limited, many EPs do not aspire to roles that remove them from day-to-day contact with service users.

One EP elaborated on pay-related considerations:

“Private work can pay a lot more, although it comes with its own costs and disadvantages. Pay is capped on the Soulbury scales - no or very limited potential to earn any more after five or six years, no matter how much more skilled and experienced you get (unless you want to go into management). I know many experienced EPs work part time for local authorities and do private work on the side to increase their earnings”. (EP working for a Local Authority in the South East)

Geographical location

Although most PEPs did not think that their location had an impact on their recruitment difficulties, as shown in Figure 4.2, just under a quarter (23%) of PEP survey participants did think that this was the case because EPs preferred to work in other parts of the country, while 10% also said that their distance from a training provider had an effect.

“I don’t think [name of region] region has an attractive profile, compared perhaps to some other areas. Also there are some very challenging demographics and communities to serve. We need to ask, why would someone want to come to [name of region]?” (PEP working in a Local Authority in the North East)

On the other hand, there was a strong feeling among participants in interviews and focus groups that recruitment was a difficulty across the whole country:

“I’m not sure there are any regions who don’t have trouble recruiting”. (PEP working in a Local Authority in the Midlands)

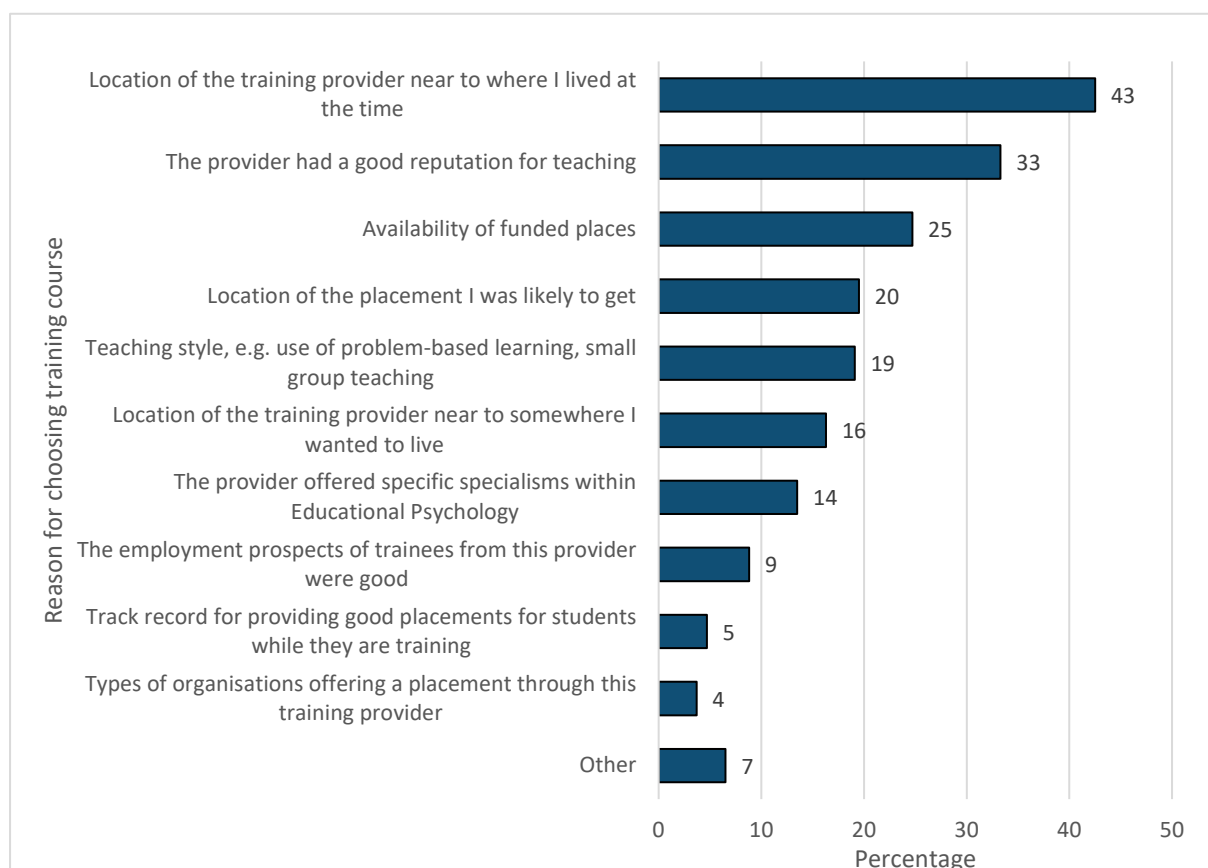
“I am not aware that location is an issue. I am close to 4 training providers and still have huge difficulties”. (PEP working in a Local Authority in the Midlands)

The importance of location can be seen in the responses of QEPs when asked about the factors that affected their choice of training and placement providers. As Figure 4.4 shows, three reasons related to location were mentioned by QEPs for choosing their training course, most commonly wanting to study near to where they were living (43%). Less commonly mentioned were the probable location of their placement (20%) and the training provider being near to somewhere they wanted to live (16%).

Reasons for placement locations and subsequent employment can be intertwined.

“I wanted to work in the local authority I had been living, and working in, before I started training. I was fortunate enough to be on placement in this local authority as a trainee in Year 2 and did not want to leave, so I applied for a job there when I started Year 3 knowing it was where I wanted to work”.
(EP who trained and worked in the South East)

Figure 4.4 Newly-qualified Educational Psychologists’ main reasons for choosing their training course



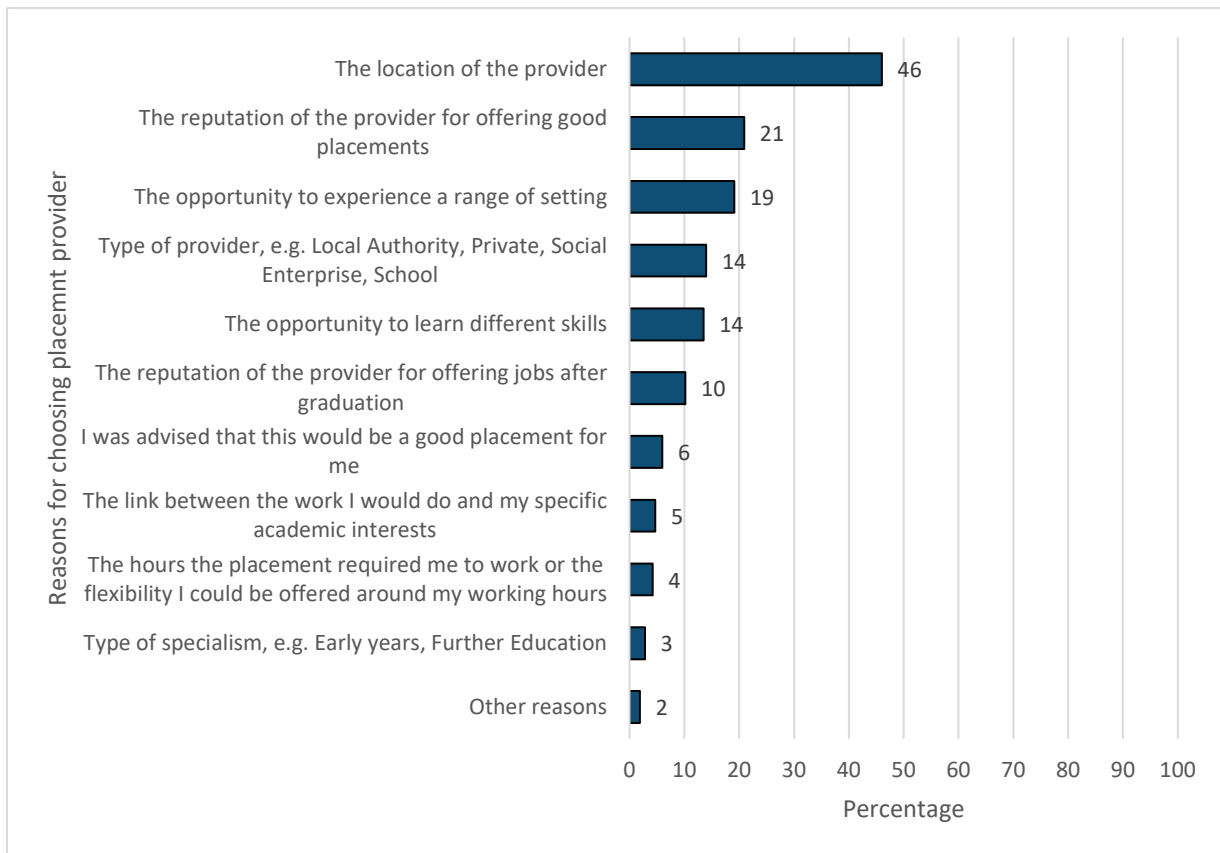
Source: Survey of Educational Psychologists who qualified in the past five years.
N=215. Multiple responses possible

Similarly, location played an important role in QEPs' decisions about where to do their practice placements, as shown in Figure 4.5. Overall, three quarters (75%) of QEPs stated that they were able to indicate an interest in a placement provider and were allocated one of their choices (7% said that they were able to indicate an interest but were not allocated one of their choices and 5% said that there were not given the opportunity to choose their placement).

A common theme in the qualitative evidence was that LAs in more remote areas or those that were more distant from training providers were more likely to miss out on a trainee in situations where there were more placements available than there were trainees to fill them because trainees did not choose placements that were hard to get to or far away. The most common reason cited by those PEPs who had consistently bid to host a placement, but were very rarely allocated one, was the location of their LA. One training provider noted that an LA had resorted to fully funding three training places at a local training provider to ensure that they were able to host trainees on placement, as they believed that would increase their chances of being able to employ these trainees in the future.

As Figure 4.5 shows, the location of the placement provider was the most frequently mentioned reason for QEPs choosing a particular provider, given by nearly half (46%) of QEPs.

Figure 4.5 Newly-qualified Educational Psychologists' main reasons for choosing their placement provider



Source: Survey of Educational Psychologists who qualified in the past five years.
N=215

4.3.2 Demand-side drivers of EP shortages

As in the case of the supply-side drivers of EP shortages, one demand-side issue was commonly mentioned by experts, PEPs, QEPs and stakeholders as being the key driver of shortages, both in isolation and in the ways it interacted with other supply and demand-led drivers (as is discussed earlier in Section 4.3). This was the increase in statutory work being undertaken by LAs. The other frequently mentioned demand-side driver was the increase in the range of services which were funding and commissioning EP work.

Increases in statutory assessment work and other SEND reforms

More than nine in ten (93%) of participants in the PEP survey reported that their LA was currently experiencing more demand for their EP services than could be met, while for just 6% this was not the case.

A strong theme emerging from additional information provided by PEP and QEP survey respondents, as well as in stakeholder interviews, was that this was due to the increase in statutory assessment work required of LAs following the SEND reforms in 2014, which were to be fully implemented by 2018. One PEP noted that this was largely related to the lowering of the threshold for assessment to cover children and young people who 'may' have a SEN clause.

"Increased level of demand from schools and settings for a traded service, combined with increased numbers of requests for statutory assessments (funded by the Local Authority) has put huge pressure on the team. Last year, some schools had to receive refunds for the time they had requested that we were unable to deliver, due to increased statutory pressures and reduced capacity due to staff on maternity / sickness leave. There is no "slack" in the system". (PEP working in a Local Authority in the North East)

"So I'm asked to write a statutory advice about a child I've never met, in a couple of weeks, to inform the LA about that child's needs....seriously? Times 7 which is my current EHCP load". (PEP working in a Local Authority in the South West)

The effect of this general increase in statutory EHCP assessment work was compounded by the increase in the age range covered by EPs, with the upper age limit moving from 18 to 25, increasing the number of young people who fell under the jurisdiction of EP services. The increase in the amount of time LA EPs were spending on statutory assessment work meant there was less capacity to focus on preventative work, a common theme highlighted in further information provided by QEP survey respondents. As will be highlighted in the following section, QEPs and training providers tended to link this with the job satisfaction of EPs. As one PEP noted, LA EPs were always dealing with crises, making the job feel like '*a continual round of stressful firefighting, rather than a managed process of linked services*'.

Changes in the range of services that are funding and commissioning EP work

The SEND reforms occurred concurrently with other external developments which acted as demand-side drivers of changes in the operation of EP services²⁹. The most influential of these was the growing number of LA schools that have become Academies since 2010. The National Audit Office found that by January 2018, 35% of

²⁹ See page 11.

state-funded schools in England were Academies³⁰. These Academy Schools have control of their own budgets and are able to commission SEND and other EP services from that budget.

A common theme among stakeholders and PEPs was that this type of commissioning had resulted in an increased demand for statutory assessment work and a more customer-driven approach to service delivery, with work being required over shorter time-scales and to more varied specifications than had previously been the case. Table 4.1 shows the diversity of commissioners of LA EP work and shows clearly the impact of academisation in the 71% of PEP survey respondents who reported that some of their services were commissioned directly by Academies, Trusts or Free Schools.

Table 4.1 All commissioners of Local Authority Educational Psychology services

	All commissioners
By the Local Authority	93.9
By Local Authority maintained schools (primary, secondary, special)	76.5
By academies, trusts or free schools (primary, secondary, special)	71.4
By a cluster or partnership of schools	38.8
By the Local Authority Children’s Services senior management team	31.6
By the clinical commissioning group	21.4
By a public health organisation	11.2
By another local authority	9.2
By parents	3.1
By a social enterprise	1.0
Other	18.4

Source: Survey of Principal Educational Psychologists. N=95. Multiple responses possible

³⁰ National Audit Office (2018) *Converting maintained schools to academies*. HC720. London: NAO. <https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Converting-maintained-schools-to-academies.pdf>

In response to a question about their main sources of funding, 51% of PEPs also said that Academies, Trusts and Free Schools were one of their three main sources of commissioning.

Similarly, as is shown in Table 4.2, 81% of LA EPs reported that income generation streams such as traded services through payment by schools made up at least some of their funding.

Table 4.2 All funders of Local Authority Educational Psychology services

	All funders
Core Council budget (i.e. Revenue Support Grant)	81.6
Income generation stream i.e. traded services (e.g. payment by schools)	80.6
Central expenditure element of Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)	41.8
Another part of the same organisation	35.7
Another agency / agencies	15.3
Another organisation or Local Authority	13.3
Another grant(s)	10.2
Other funders	10.2

Source: Survey of Principal Educational Psychologists. N=95. Multiple responses possible.

While some participants embraced traded services, others were less enthusiastic.

“Wouldn't it be lovely if all EP services could go back to being funded via the LA via government so traded services didn't have to exist. A whole model of EP delivery into CAMHS, TAMHS, YOT and whoever else could be centrally funded with EPs and other professionals driving what can be done, not schools who are paying for a service and demanding what they want”.
(PEP working in a Local Authority in the North East)

According to the PEP survey, income generation streams were also used by four in ten LAs (41%) to fund trainee placements, the most frequently mentioned main funding stream for these.

One QEP responding to the write-in comments in the survey highlighted the impact this increasingly complex funding and commissioning landscape had on their work:

“The level of statutory work is very high, which limits the variety of the work and means that I spend a lot of time writing reports. The work is predominantly reactive rather than proactive, and there is not enough capacity to pick up work unless it is statutory meaning that schools apply for EHCPs because it is the only way to gain our involvement”. (QEP working for a Local Authority in the South East)

4.3.3 The combination of supply and demand-side drivers

As has been noted throughout this section, supply and demand-side drivers of EP shortages not only have an impact in isolation, they also combine to create a set of issues that may discourage EPs from wanting to work in LAs and also have the potential to drive out those who are currently working in LAs. For example,

“Feedback from our graduates is that they are forced into other types of employment because the shortage of EPs in their service leads to a very restricted type of practice”. (Training provider)

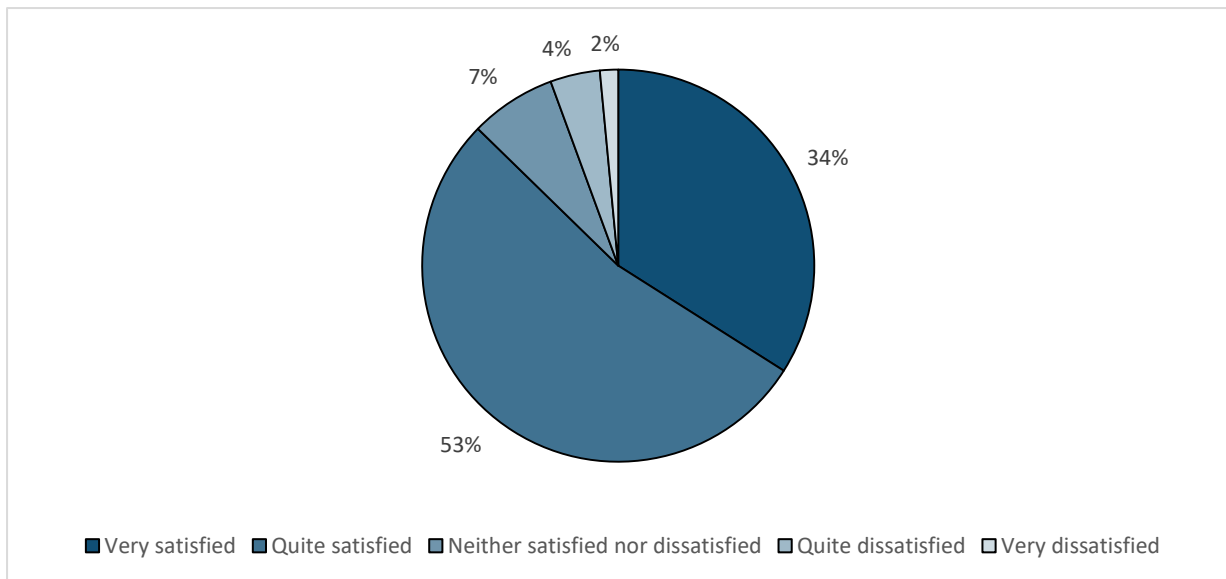
“Most would remain in LA if the work was varied and balanced; the shift in funding has shifted the work to statutory and lots feel overwhelmed and move into private work contexts”. (Training provider)

While there was little evidence of QEPs leaving LAs to work elsewhere early in their careers, there was a general feeling among stakeholders taking part in the interviews³¹, training providers and PEPs that this was more common later in EPs’ careers but that EPs were now considering moving earlier than previous years.

Overall job satisfaction was high among QEPs. As Figure 4.6 shows, 87% of QEPs were satisfied (either quite or very satisfied) with their current job, with around a third (34%) very satisfied.

³¹ For more on stakeholders, see Section 2.6.

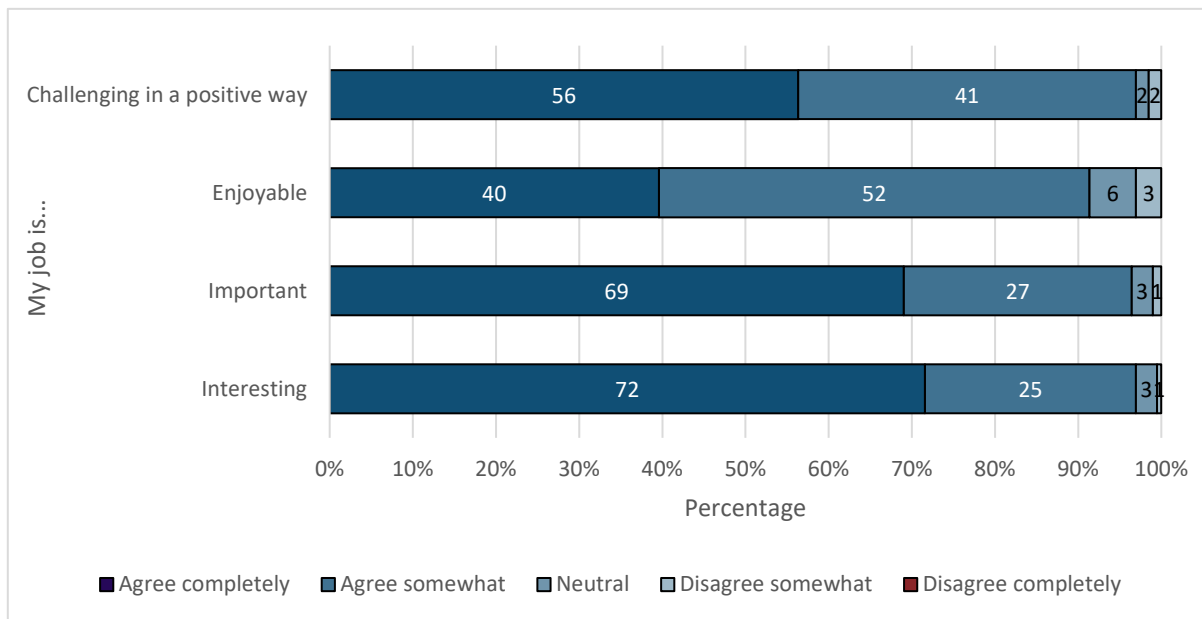
Figure 4.6 Whether newly-qualified Educational Psychologists were satisfied with their current job



Source: Survey of Educational Psychologists who qualified in the past five years.
N=215

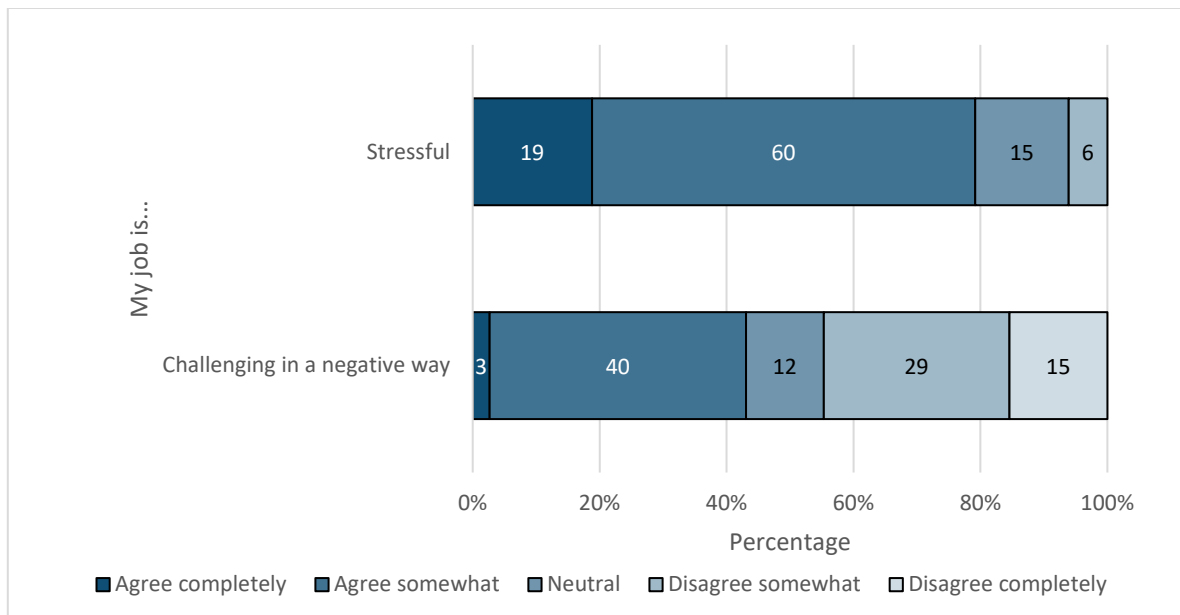
However, the picture was more mixed when looking at different aspects of job satisfaction. Figure 4.7 shows that the vast majority of QEPs generally found their job challenging in a positive way (97%), enjoyable (92%), important (96%) and interesting (97%). Conversely, as Figure 4.8 shows, 79% of QEPs found their current job stressful and, although a lower figure than the positive scores above, 43% considered their job challenging in a negative way.

Figure 4.7 Newly-qualified Educational Psychologists' positive perceptions of their current job



Source: Survey of Educational Psychologists who qualified in the past five years.
N=197

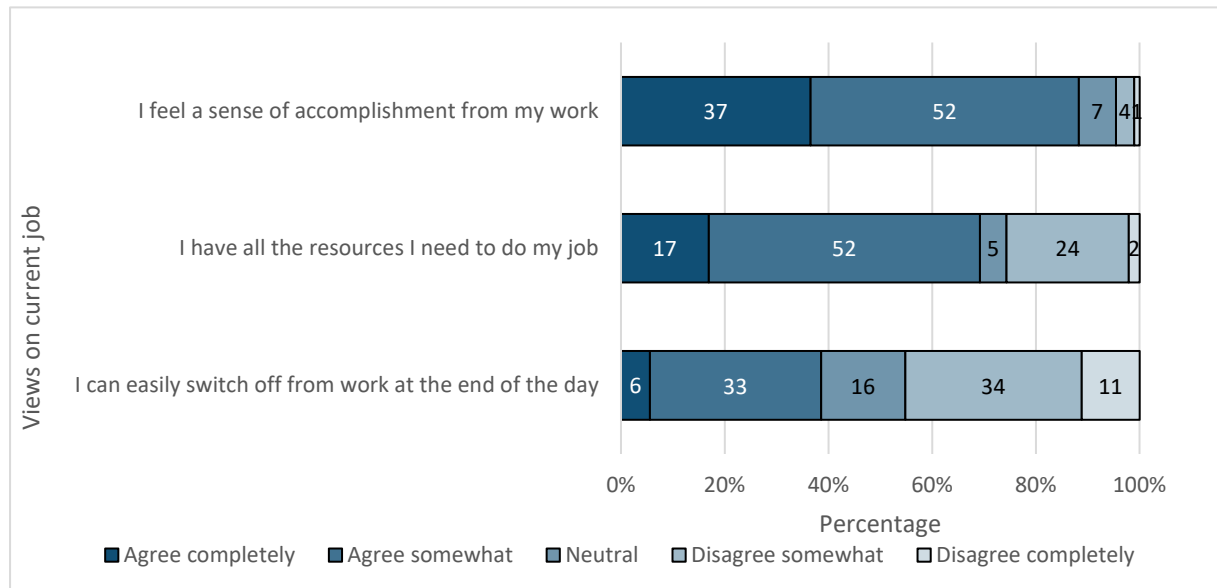
Figure 4.8 Newly-qualified Educational Psychologists' negative perceptions of their current job



Source: Survey of Educational Psychologists who qualified in the past five years.
N=197

As can be seen in Figures 4.9 and 4.10, 89% of QEPs felt a sense of accomplishment from their work, and this is a higher proportion than some other professions used here as comparators.³² On the other hand, 45% said that they did not find it easy to switch off from work at the end of the day,³³ 78% reported that the amount of work they were required to do seemed to be increasing and 76% stated that they never seemed to have enough time to get everything done on their job.

Figure 4.9 Newly-qualified Educational Psychologists’ positive perceptions of their engagement, resourcing and workload

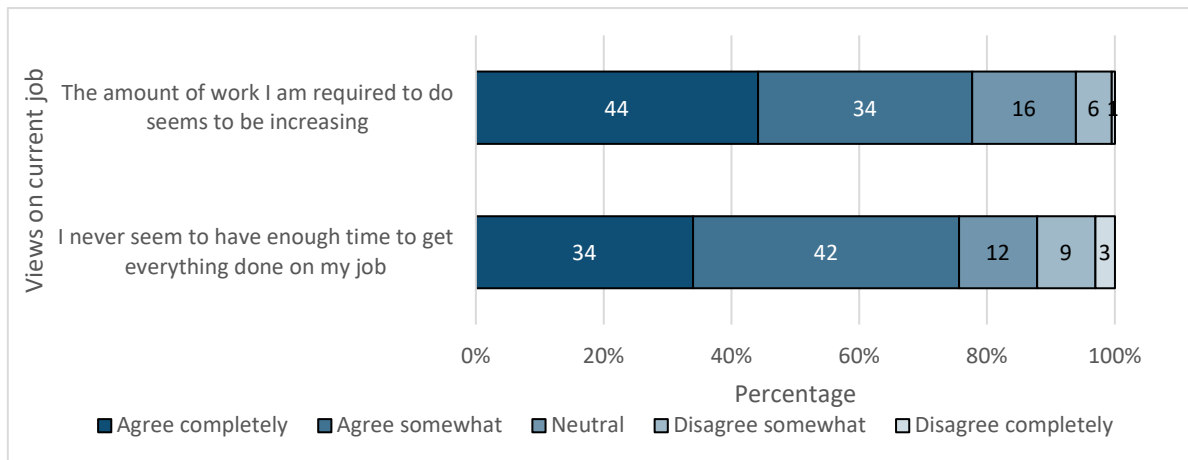


Source: Survey of Educational Psychologists who qualified in the past five years. N=197

³² The comparable figure for the Civil Service is 76%, Council employees 76%, Universities 77% (ORC International data 2016/7).

³³ Comparable figure for public sector workers is 35% agree to some extent that they can easily switch off from work, compared with 39% of QEPs (CIPD / Halogen Employee Outlook Report 2017 https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/employee-outlook_2017-spring_tcm18-21163.pdf)

Figure 4.10 Newly-qualified Educational Psychologists’ negative perceptions of their engagement, resourcing and workload



Source: Survey of Educational Psychologists who qualified in the past five years. N=197

Although overall job satisfaction is very high, these negative perceptions of QEPs are a concern because, as has been noted, with an under-supply of trained EPs, QEPs and those further into their careers have a variety of options that might allow them to improve their job satisfaction. When statutory work is seen as too demanding and all-encompassing for EPs working in LAs, the growing private provider sector offers them alternatives. Stakeholders and PEPs in both the survey and the focus groups reported that, as more people leave LAs to work in the private sector, the pressure on those who remain is likely to become more intense and the amount of statutory work an individual has to do increases still further, possibly reducing the job satisfaction of those who remain. Generally, there was a strong feeling among PEPs and training providers in the focus groups that this could encourage EPs to leave LA employment altogether.

“Statutory workload particularly [...]. I would have to say that over the past 7-8 months 70% of my work has been statutory work with children I don’t know. This is THE most unfulfilling work I do (in my opinion)”. (PEP working for a Local Authority in the South West)

Section 5 outlines some potential ways in which this situation might be addressed.

4.4 Conclusions

Data from the PEP survey suggests that most LAs are experiencing a shortage of EPs and that this shortage can be seen in both recruitment and retention. This research suggests that this can be attributed to both supply and demand-side drivers and, importantly, the interaction between two key supply and demand issues: an under-

supply of EPs being trained and an increase in the amount of statutory work being undertaken by LAs which is seen as making the job both stressful and repetitive.

These issues are exacerbated by various other supply and demand factors. The most notable of these, according to PEPs in the PEP survey and focus groups, is the increase in the number of private providers of EP services who offer an alternative source of employment for EPs disillusioned with the high levels of statutory work required of them in LAs. These private providers are able to offer the types of services that LAs are increasingly unable to offer, including preventative work, and receive direct commissions from the growing group of Academies, Trusts and Free Schools.

While QEPs generally show high levels of job satisfaction, their views on their employment also show areas of concern, particularly when they are asked about the amount of work they are expected to do and the proportion who find their job stressful.

5. Possible mechanisms for addressing the shortage of EPs

5.1 Introduction

The previous sections of this report outlined the extent of the shortage of EPs in LAs and the drivers behind these shortages. This section discusses possible mechanisms and interventions that may help to address these shortages or reduce their effects.

The first part of this section looks at the ways in which PEPs in the survey and focus groups said they were attempting to address their recruitment and retention difficulties, focussing on interventions to address both supply and demand-side issues. The second part provides an outline of PEPs, QEPs and stakeholders' views of the current training model and their assessment of the advantages and disadvantages of other EP training models that may help reduce supply-side drivers of shortages.

5.2 Local Authority strategies to address shortages

In an open survey question, PEPs were asked what strategies they use to address recruitment and retention issues. This was explored in more depth in the focus group and interviews with PEPs. Their responses can be grouped into three areas:

- Working towards increasing workforce capacity in the short, medium or long term;
- Reviewing service delivery and business models; and
- Rationing of services.

5.2.1 Increasing workforce capacity

These strategies focus on increasing the capacity of the existing workforce. There is, however, recognition that recruitment is likely to continue to be difficult or impossible for many LAs if there is no increase in the number of EPs being trained.

Some strategies included making jobs more attractive to help promote recruitment and retention in the longer term. For example, some PEPs sought to create more varied work for EPs by offering a mix of statutory and traded services. This would enable EPs to maintain a broad skill set and facilitate better management of workloads which was less driven by the need, or meeting deadlines, for statutory assessments. Other strategies for increasing the attractiveness of the profession included introducing higher salaries and reviewing career development pathways to address some of the issues related to pay and progression outlined in Section 4.

Other mechanisms for increasing workforce capacity focused on 'growing your own' staff. Recognising that there were limited routes into the profession, some PEPs expressed a strong preference for employing staff as EP assistants, generally with a view to them subsequently receiving funding for doctoral training and hoping that they would return to the LA once qualified.

Other PEPs were less enthusiastic about the use of assistants, questioning what work they would be able to do and the possibility that being an assistant could become a career in itself, but one that offered little potential for development and progression. One LA that had made quite significant use of assistants who subsequently went on to train as EPs noted that only half of their ten assistants returned to the LA after completing their training, which was felt to be not much higher than the proportion of EPs who return to their placement provider once qualified.

Some PEPs also considered other changes to recruitment practices, including recruiting TEPs while they were in the second year of training and broadening their recruitment channels, including for example organising outreach events, such as open days for psychology graduates.

"We regularly have Year 2 trainees with job offers". (Training provider)

"We've tried to avoid doing that - there has been a kind of regional agreement in place to only seek to recruit TEPS in the 3rd year, but I am aware of some services moving away from that now". (PEP working for an LA in the Midlands)

Clearly, these longer-term approaches to capacity development take some time to have an effect on EP shortages at the individual LA level. Consequently, LAs also reported using short-term stop-gap measures to increase staff numbers temporarily. These were largely measures to draw upon agency staff, locum EPs, staff on temporary contract or associate EPs, including retired former EPs, to create temporal flexibility. While temporary work was not generally highly sought-after by QEPs, in some cases temporary and part-time work provided opportunities for those seeking to combine different types of work, for example, LA work and self-employment as a private provider of EP services.

5.2.2 Reviews of service delivery and business models

The changes to statutory assessments had prompted some PEPs to request that LAs review their reporting mechanisms and requirements. There was a general feeling amongst PEPs that the requirements being placed upon them exceeded what was strictly necessary and involved a lot of repetition of work, draining EP time. The aim, as one PEP put it, was to review 'how we write statutory reports to ensure these are

produced ethically but efficiently'. Other PEPs were reviewing other aspects of their service delivery model to try to make them more efficient and effective.

Reviews of business models largely involved exploring and pursuing different funding streams. This involved PEPs being proactive in tapping strategically into available funding sources, for example, joint commissioning, new government initiatives and traded services, and using those areas to grow demand for non-statutory work.

5.2.3 Rationing services

Rationing of LA EP services was another strategy adopted by some PEPs in the PEP survey. It was regarded as the least desirable option for coping with under-supply of EPs and excess demand for EP services, but some LA PEPs had found it to be necessary. This primarily involved reduction of non-statutory services and reducing EP involvement in areas such as research and development. However, this increased the proportion of an individual EP's time that was spent on statutory work which, as was seen in section 4, was a potentially key driver in prompting EPs to move between LAs or out of LA work altogether, so while this strategy may be successful for managing demand in the short-term, it may create longer-term problems.

Examples of multi-pronged approaches to addressing supply and demand issues are presented in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1 Examples of multi-pronged approaches to meet increased service demands

<p>Mainly focused on the workforce</p> <p>Currently being implemented:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wider promotion of vacancies • Offering a recruitment and retention supplement • Increasing the number of trainee EP posts • Commissioning services from Associate/locum EPs • Commissioning time from an associate clinical psychologist <p>Planned initiatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewing the career development pathway • Exploring the possibility of employing a clinical psychologist • Developing lean systems • Renegotiating SLAs [Service Level Agreement] 	<p>Focusing on influencing service demand</p> <p>Planned initiatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plans to refocus services to provide better early intervention for children with specific needs • Reviewing statutory assessment pathways • Considering rationing services in some areas (either amount or depth)
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Source: Survey of Principal Educational Psychologists (abridged examples)

5.3 Potential reforms to the training model

This section begins by highlighting views on the current training model (Section 5.3.1), before moving on to participants' views on three potential changes to the training model (Section 5.3.2):

(i) **The introduction of new training providers:** an increase in the number of training providers, with a particular focus on increasing the geographical spread of providers;

(ii) **New training places distributed to existing training providers:** an increase in the number of funded training places, with all or the majority of new places going to existing training providers; and

(iii) **A regional training model:** the development of a regional training model or some other area-based model constructed around the number of LAs in a particular area or

an alternative way of determining demand, such as the demographics and need in different areas.

5.3.1 The current training model

The current training model commissions 13 training providers (split into two consortia plus the new course at UEA) to deliver the EP training course. The original 12 universities are split into two consortia. SEEL covers predominantly London and the South East and has 70 placements, comprising:

- Institute of Education
- Tavistock & Portman NHS Trust
- University College London
- University of Southampton
- University of East London

NORMID-SW covers the North and South West and has 80 placements, comprising:

- Bristol University
- Exeter University
- Newcastle University
- Sheffield University
- University of Birmingham
- University of Manchester
- University of Nottingham

A new contract was recently awarded to the University of East Anglia (UEA) for 10 placements and their first cohort started in 2018. They are not currently part of a consortium.

Overall, there are a total of 160 EP training places available starting in September 2018. A breakdown of the total number of places per university is shown below:

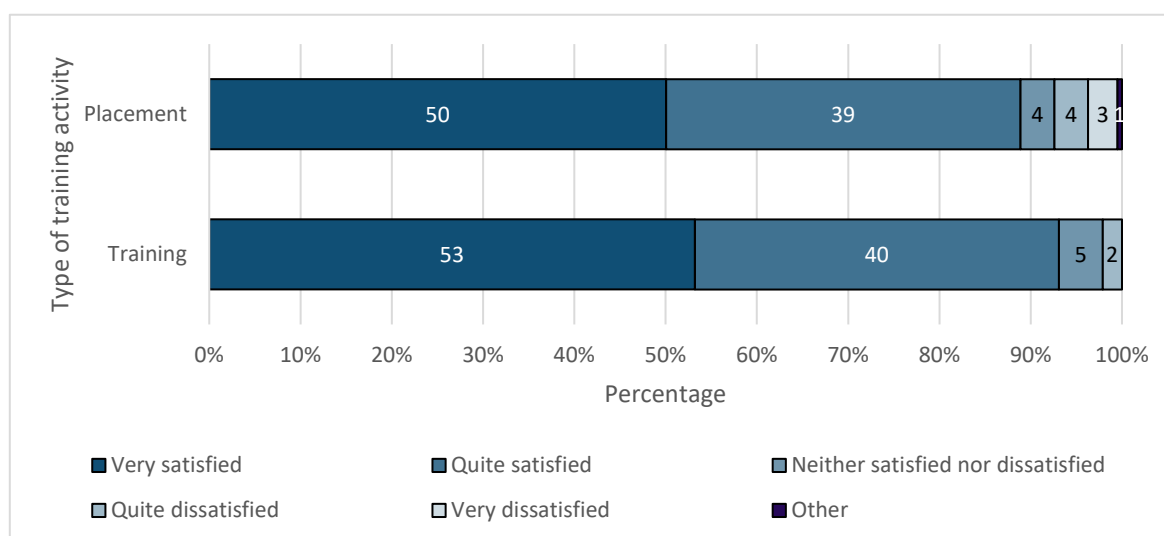
Table 5.2 Training providers by number of training places available

University	Number of places
Bristol University	10
Exeter University	10
Newcastle University	10

University	Number of places
University of East Anglia	10
Sheffield University	12
University of Nottingham	12
University of Birmingham	13
University of Manchester	13
Institute of Education	14
Tavistock & Portman NHS Trust	14
University of College London	14
University of East London	14
University of Southampton	14

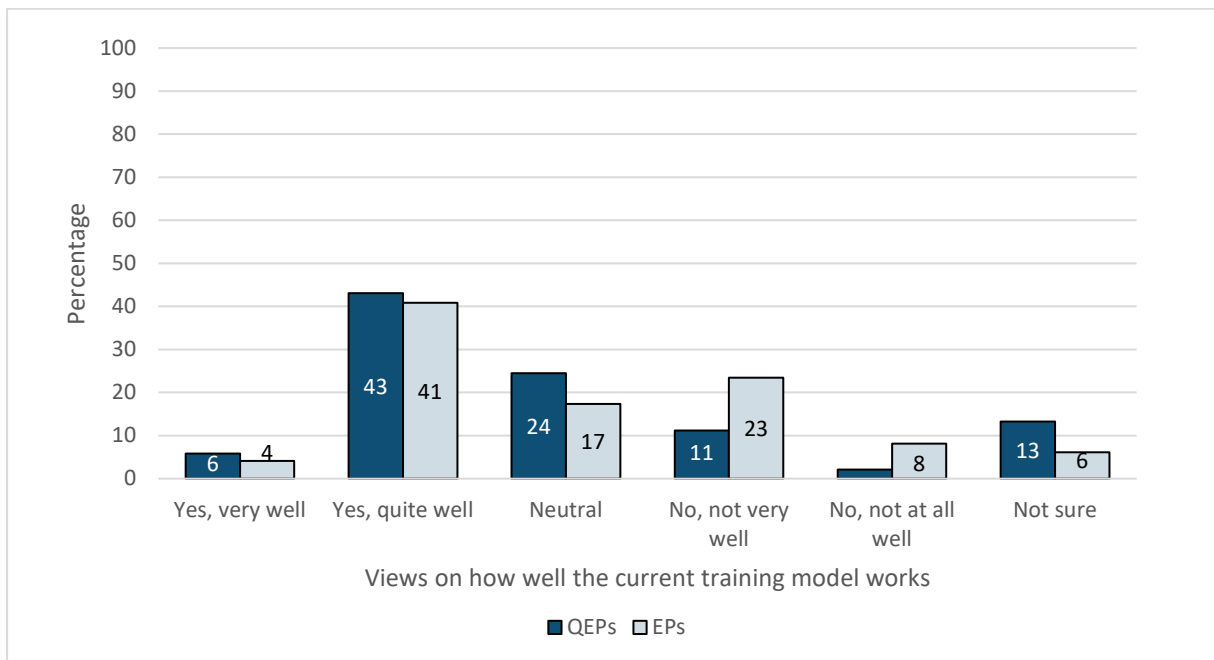
Overall, views on the current training model were somewhat mixed. QEPs reported high levels of satisfaction overall with regard to their placement (89% being very or quite satisfied) and their personal experience of training (93%), as Figure 5.1 shows.

Figure 5.1 Newly-qualified Educational Psychologists' satisfaction with the training and placement



Source: Survey of Educational Psychologists who qualified in the past five years.
N=188

Figure 5.2 Whether PEPs and QEPs think that the current training model works well



Source: Survey of PEPs, n=95 and Survey of QEPs, n=188

As Figure 5.2 shows, 49% of QEPs and 45% of PEPs thought that the current training model was working very well or quite well, while 12% of QEPs and 31% of PEPs thought that it was not working well. PEPs and QEPs were asked in the surveys to describe in more detail what worked well and what worked less well in the current model. The main themes emerging from the qualitative responses can be summarised as follows:

- The high quality of the training being delivered and the skills of trainees and qualified EPs:

“The model generally works well. Courses train EPs in a wide range of skills and techniques. This further influences practice in our team and develops our CPD too. University tutors are in touch with what LA providers need. There are good relationships and regular consultation from the universities”. (PEP working in a Local Authority in the North West)

- The positive relationships that had been developed between training providers and placement providers and the ways in which these relationships allowed training to be tailored to the needs of the local area:

“The training providers have established relationships with the placement providers. Everyone got a job in the area that they wanted at the end of training”. (EP who trained in London)

- The functioning of the two consortia and the scope the consortia system provides for trainee EPs to access different placements:

“It provided me with placements in areas that were accessible to me. I think that having three placements allowed me to see different models of working and to come into contact with EPs with varying specialisms”. (EP who trained in the South East)

PEPs, QEPs and stakeholders were also asked what they thought worked less well in the current training model. Responses fell into three broad areas:

- Issues related to the lack of trainees being trained which resulted in a lack of qualified EPs being available for employment;
- Issues related to funding of placements;
- Problems associated with the geographical location of the training providers.

These are addressed in turn below.

Issues related to the number of EPs being trained

As was noted in section 4, PEPs, QEPs and stakeholders expressed their concerns about supply-side drivers of EP shortages, i.e. the number of qualified EPs who are available to work and, overwhelmingly, these were thought to be related to not enough EPs being trained. Consequently, not enough EPs were entering the workforce to meet existing demand and to replace EPs who were retiring or temporarily out of the workforce due to maternity or paternity leave or reducing their hours due to caring commitments. This was seen to be an issue across England as a whole, although it particularly affected LAs that were perceived to be in some way less attractive by potential recruits (e.g. in remote or less attractive areas). In other cases, LAs were further away from training providers, so EPs lacked familiarity with the area and were unlikely to relocate there when they had other options.

“The main thing is the number of trainee places currently on offer - this needs to be increased to reflect service vacancies across the country. It is becoming increasingly difficult in the current financial climate to pay the bursaries to our trainees”. (PEP working in a Local Authority in the South West)

“Too few trainees in the local course to meet the needs of the area both as trainees and as fully qualified EPs”. (PEP working in a Local Authority in the North East)

Issues related to the funding of placements

When asked about issues related to the funding of placements, a common theme emerging from PEPs, training providers and other stakeholders in the interviews and focus groups was the amount that placement providers were expected to pay as a bursary in order to host a trainee.

“We can't afford to have a trainee (provide a bursary) - so we cannot have a trainee” (PEP working in a Local Authority in the Midlands)

Concerns were also raised about the time that supervising a trainee on placement involved, the effect this had on the supervisor's other work and the funding that training providers received to cover their academic supervision.

“The partnership generally works well, however the lack of consistent commitment from some LA partners to support Y2/3 placements, due to budget pressures, their preference for qualified staff or difficulties in supervisory capacity means that this aspect of training is insecure. If LA budgets get further tightened and restricted this could create a situation in which trainees can't continue”. (Training provider)

While these issues were common across many LAs, as reported by the PEPs, they were seen as a greater issue for particular LAs. An inability to provide a bursary for a placement student was seen to especially affect small LAs and for those working in areas with little potential to engage in traded services (as was noted in section 4, bursaries were often funded through traded services).

“Yes we need to be aware that a tiny EP service stressed with work overload cannot necessarily find the time to supervise even if they had the money for a bursary - more of the vicious circle”. (Training provider)

Some PEPs expressed concerns about the general amount of the bursaries in an open question, as they saw this as acting as a barrier to more mature people entering the profession, reducing diversity.

“There are not enough fully qualified EPs emerging to fill vacancies. EP candidates are good but the demographic is limited, there are few men and the majority are young women of a certain age who go on to take maternity leave in the early years of their practice. This is understandable given the

general age of the cohort but this leads to extensive part-time working. I can see that the universities are having to select from a restricted range of applicants. The length of the training and the income levels are potentially preventing more mature candidates from applying". (PEP working in a Local Authority in London)

It was also suggested by PEPs that younger trainees may be more mobile and consequently less likely to remain in the area in which they trained, meaning that placement providers had invested considerable time and money in training someone who would be unlikely to choose to work for them after they graduated.

Geographical issues

There were mixed views amongst PEPs in the survey and focus groups, training providers in their focus group and written comments, as well as the stakeholder interviews, on the extent to which geographical issues were causing problems in the existing training model. A common theme related to issues around the accessibility of training providers and placements in more remote areas.

"...we are on the boundary between the two regions and not close to a training course. This has meant that since the introduction of the central allocations system we have had little control in TEPs placed with us. For example, we had one TEP who resided 40 miles away, who did not have transport, and who was on [a more distant] training course. The bursary TEPs we have had so far have not applied for vacancies with our LA." (PEP working in a Local Authority in the Midlands)

"Some LAs miss out each year due to geography, especially those located furthest away from the university within the region. Some years (like this one) we offered a placement but no one preferenced [sic] us, so we missed out and this can be problematic holding on to the funding for another year." (PEP working in a Local Authority in Yorkshire and the Humber)

This issue of geographical location was felt strongly to have a knock-on effect on the ability of some more remote LAs to recruit qualified EPs.

"While the universities are spread across the country, more remote areas struggle with EP retention - possibly due to being further from university placements. Many TEPs stay close to universities for placement and then get a job at that placement (for my cohort 50% stayed in their y2/y3 LA placement as a QEP)". (EP who trained in the Midlands)

The responses of the QEPs also support this to a certain extent. More than half (55%) of QEPs who responded to the survey said that they had been employed by an organisation where they did their placement for at least some of their time since they graduated. Similarly, 57% said that they had been employed in an LA area where they did their placement. It is clearly not the case that having a trainee on placement guarantees that PEPs will subsequently be able to employ that person in a job market where there is a high level of competition for EPs but, as noted in section 3, if trainees found the placement experience to be an agreeable one, they may apply for a job there.

5.3.2 Alternative training models

Training providers, stakeholders and experts were asked in interviews and focus groups about their views on three hypothetical changes to the training model. The first of these changes involved the introduction of new training providers with their location being primarily determined by a desire to create a greater geographical spread of training providers. This model could involve either maintaining the same number of trainees but transferring some of them to new providers or increasing the number of trainees and giving the new places created to new training providers.

The second model hypothesised an increase in the number of trainees but with the increased numbers being wholly or almost wholly absorbed by the existing training providers. The third hypothetical reform involved a redistribution of training places using an area-based model that used the number of LAs local to the training provider as the basis for the number of training places they were awarded. In this model, each training provider would act as a hub for training EPs to meet demand in a defined set of LAs.

The following sub-sections present the most common themes identified by the participants responding to these three hypothetical models, what they saw as the benefits and downfalls of each model and any unintended consequences they could foresee if the model were used as the basis for reforms to the training system.

The introduction of new training providers

Generally, there was limited support for the introduction of new training providers amongst PEPs who took part in interviews or the PEP and QEP focus group, and existing training providers in the training provider focus group, interviews and written comments, as this was generally seen as being both unnecessary and unlikely to resolve the underlying problems in the system. There was some limited support from training providers and QEPs for a gap analysis that sought to identify whether there were areas where access to current training providers was a significant issue. The most commonly mentioned area where this might be the case covered a section of the

North of England encompassing parts of the North East, Yorkshire and the Humber and Cumbria.

The least popular reform, according to the participants providing qualitative evidence, was a scenario in which the number of training places remained the same, but the number of training providers was increased, leading to a redistribution of training places. The consensus across participants was that without an increase in the number of training places, this kind of reform would merely be an expensive exercise in shuffling the problem. Some areas would become nearer to a placement provider (but this was not generally thought to have much impact on their ability to recruit trained EPs) whereas others would lose out.

There were also concerns that a reduction in the number of places the existing training providers were allocated could make their courses unviable as they would lose economies of scale and would have a more difficult time selling the course to their universities. This could result in the closure of long-established courses with strong links to local placement providers. It was also suggested that these issues relating to economies of scale would affect any potential new training providers and it may prove difficult to find universities in the right areas that would be willing to establish and run a quality course for a relatively small number of students.

PEPs who took part in interviews, the PEP and EP focus group, and the existing training providers in the training provider focus group, interviews or written comments tended not to be in favour of increasing the number of training places but distributing these places to new training providers³⁴. While an increase in the number of trainees was welcomed in a general sense, there were again concerns expressed about the quality of the training that would be delivered by the new providers, particularly if they were driven to cut corners to offset the costs of establishing a whole new course.

Two alternative approaches to attempting to reduce the impact of distance from a training provider were suggested. An increase in distance learning was discussed by PEPs and one training provider that had introduced this for some students thought that, although driven by necessity, it worked well. The potential to establish satellite campuses of existing training providers was also suggested³⁵. This would allow existing training providers to maintain control over the quality of the training being delivered and to maintain established links with local placement providers but bring a

³⁴ It should be noted that existing training providers are unlikely to be in favour of new or existing places being allocated to new training providers, creating greater competition and perhaps reducing the number of students on each course.

³⁵ Note that these comments were not necessarily endorsed by all training providers and PEPs but were some of the suggestions made within focus groups and interviews.

training provider to more areas. It was unclear how feasible this would be for all but a small minority of training providers, however.

New training places distributed to existing training providers

Overall, this was clearly the preferred model for training providers and PEPs. For PEPs it meant retaining established relationships with existing training providers, rather than having to establish new ones with new training providers whose quality was uncertain. As might be expected, the existing training providers felt strongly that this type of reform to the existing training model was the best option and that they would be able to accommodate an increased number of trainees at their own institution³⁶. Training providers in the focus group generally felt that they could support an increase of between 25% and 50% in their number of trainees, although this depended on additional funding in many cases, as discussed below³⁷.

There were, however, some caveats raised by training providers in the training provider focus group, interviews and written answers. These were related to the universities themselves and the provision of placements. Some training providers noted that the funding they received for doctoral training of EPs was relatively low, especially when compared to the funding that doctorates in Clinical Psychology attracted, and this made providing such training less attractive for universities, particularly those that regarded practice-based doctorates as being less prestigious.

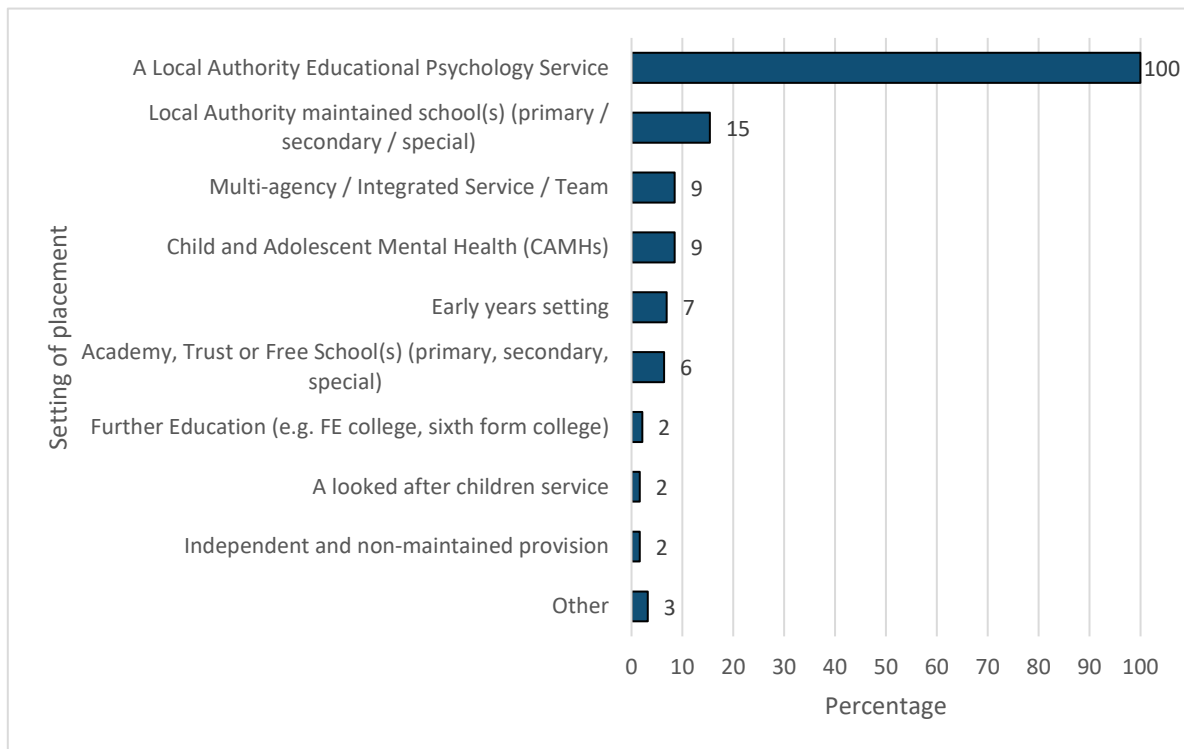
“The costs of training and lack of appropriate income generated by EP programmes is already being raised by University managers who are seeking to see how they can bring things back into balance. It has already been suggested that what we need to do is reduce our costs by terminating secondments of senior/experienced staff in favour of those who could be recruited at less cost. This would have a considerable impact on the quality of training offered”. (Training provider)

Some training providers were also concerned about their ability to find enough placements for a significant increase in the number of trainees. As Figure 5.3 shows, LAs provided by far the largest number of placements. All QEPs surveyed had done at least one placement in an LA and a third (33%) had done at least one placement that involved working outside an LA EP service.

³⁶ Once again, it should be noted that this option is to be expected from the existing training providers, as other options are more likely to create greater competition and possibly reduce student numbers on current courses.

³⁷ Some providers indicated that a lower number of new trainees could be accommodated.

Figure 5.3 Setting of Newly-qualified Educational Psychologists' placements



Source: Survey of Educational Psychologists who qualified in the past five years. N=188. Multiple placements and responses possible

As has been noted, having a trainee on placement brought significant costs, both financial and time-related. In some areas, training providers thought that LAs had reached the capacity for the number of placements they could afford to host, particularly smaller LAs and those who were already supporting several trainees. This limited their capacity for expansion. Training providers in the focus group were asked about how the burden on LAs might be reduced. Suggestions included widening the pool of organisations that offered placements to include more private providers and introducing shorter placements (in areas where this was not currently the case) so that an LA would take trainees on single year placements rather than for two years.

However, there was little strong support among focus group participants for either of these suggestions. There were concerns about the ability of private providers to give trainees the breadth of experience they required and about the capacity of small private providers to take on all supervisory responsibilities. While some training providers have shorter placements and believed that this system worked well, other training providers questioned the benefits of shorter placements for both the trainee and the hosting organisation. It was suggested that LAs would be unhappy to lose

their trainee after one year as this would mean that they had invested time in training them but would not then see the return on this training.

The only suggestion that received strong support within the training provider focus group related to the provision of financial support for placement providers or a move to a three-year bursary system similar to the system in Wales. In this way, placement providers would not be expected to make such a large financial investment in training (particularly given uncertainties about whether they would see a return on this investment in the form of recruitment of former trainees as qualified members of staff).

A regional training model

The final hypothetical training model presented to participants was a regional training model, or one constructed using similar area-based assumptions. Again, PEPs, training providers and other stakeholders generally felt strongly that this should not be supported³⁸. Some of these concerns were the same as those expressed in relation to the introduction of new providers, as existing training providers tended to assume that such a model could necessitate the establishment of new providers and a reduction in the number of trainees at some or all existing providers.

Generally, a regional model was viewed as being overly complicated and lacking the ability to respond to fluctuations in demand. A 'region' composed of 12 LAs might need 12 new EPs in a given year, but on the other hand, it might need 16 if there were a lot of retirements or people moving into part-time work. The proposed model would be unable to account for these differences. Focus group participants noted that such reforms had been discussed on a number of previous occasions and a computer model for distributing training places (based on a variant of this model that used demographics and the income deprivation affecting children index (IDACI) data to model demand, rather than simply number of LAs) had been developed. On each occasion, the model had been found to be unworkable and lacking in support.

There was some limited support from PEPs, training providers and stakeholders in the interviews, focus groups and written comments, for a less prescriptive regional model that encouraged local placement providers to offer their placements to students at their most local training provider. However, it should be noted that when QEPs were asked about what worked well in the training model, the way in which the consortium system

³⁸ It should be noted that existing training providers are unlikely to be in favour of a regional model which may mean places being allocated to new training providers, creating greater competition and perhaps reducing the number of students on each course.

allowed them to access placements in LAs that were quite distant from their training provider was one of the most frequently mentioned benefits.

5.4 Conclusions

LAs were taking multiple approaches to cope with the shortfall in EP numbers. These included attempts to increase the capacity of the existing EP workforce and to improve conditions as a means of making the job more attractive. The use of assistants was suggested as a potential way to address the lack of alternative routes into the profession, but views on the desirability of this were mixed. Reforms to service delivery and business models were also suggested as mechanisms that could go some way to remedying the problem of under-supply and over-demand. It was seen as a way in which LAs could derive benefit from the increased prevalence of traded services which was otherwise regarded somewhat negatively by some PEPs and QEPs as it meant 'selling' a service to customers.

Views on the current training model of 13 training providers (split into two consortia plus the new course at UEA) were mixed. Generally, the standard of training was thought to be very high, with good relationships being formed between training and placement providers and the consortia functioning well. However, problems were identified in the number of EPs being trained as this number was thought to be too low to meet demand (as was discussed in the previous sections). While the shortfall in numbers was the most pressing issue, problems relating to the funding of placements and the burden that this placed on providers (usually LAs) were also identified as being important, and it was acknowledged that the geographical location of training providers presented problems for some LAs.

Three alternative training models were discussed. Generally, PEPs and existing training providers were strongly in favour of a model in which the number of training places was increased and these new places were allocated to the existing providers, although the potential bias in training provider preferences to increasing their numbers of trainees, rather than allocating these to new providers, should be noted. The main potential barriers to this model were related to the willingness of universities to support more trainees if fees were not increased and the capacity of LAs in some areas to support more trainees on placement without additional financial support.

PEPs and existing training providers tended not to be in support of an increase in the number of training providers, except in very limited circumstances where a particular shortage had been identified. Without additional training places, such reforms were seen as simply shuffling problems around, giving advantages to some areas while disadvantaging others. If additional training places were available and were allocated to new providers, there remained concerns about the quality of the training provided and the viability of small courses. A regional training model, that could potentially see

the development of new training providers, also received little support. It was regarded as cumbersome and unworkable due to its inability to respond to changes in workforce numbers and general complexity.

6. Conclusions

Overall, the EP profession currently shows many of the features of a profession where there is an imbalance between supply and demand. Put simply, there are insufficient EPs both now and in the training pipeline to meet demand, which in turn exacerbates concerns over the workload and variety of work available for LA EPs.

6.1 Supply-side issues

On the supply-side, the key driver is a lack of numbers of EPs, attributed by research participants to a lack of EPs being trained, and exacerbated by the increasing prevalence of alternative sources of EP employment outside LAs, although this was still relatively low level. Recruitment by LAs was ultimately seen to be difficult, mainly because there were not enough people available to recruit.

These supply-side issues mean that LA EP services lack resilience to a range of demand-side factors that serve to further aggravate supply-side issues.

6.2 Demand-side issues

Demand-side issues highlighted from the research to be of particular importance include the increasing level of statutory assessment work experienced by LAs since 2014. Another important demand-side issue is the increasing proportion of EPs who are female and relatively young and who, consequently, are more likely to take breaks from EP employment for periods of maternity leave (and for the relatively small group of male EPs in this age range, paternity leave) and to request part-time working.

The increasing amount of statutory assessment work and a general increase in workload was seen by LA PEPs as making LA work unattractive, both for current employees and newly-qualified EPs making decisions about their careers. These findings were echoed in the QEP survey results, with 45% of the 217 respondents saying that they did not find it easy to switch off from work at the end of the day, 78% reporting that the amount of work they were required to do seemed to be increasing and 76% stating that they never seemed to have enough time to get everything done on their job. More than nine in ten LA PEPs said that they were experiencing more demand for their services than could currently be met. This increased the workload of LA EPs, but it also appeared to be making EP work in some LAs less varied as statutory assessment work had to come before all other types of EP work. As a result, tasks like early-intervention work, research and more broad-based multi-agency work were increasingly being cut. There were also questions raised about the rewards that EPs experienced for working in conditions that were seen as demanding and stressful. A fifth (20%) of QEPs expressed dissatisfaction with pay and also a lack of

opportunities to progress, although this appeared to be offset, to an extent, by other benefits of LA employment, including pensions and sickness and maternity pay. The proportion of respondents in LA employment who anticipated remaining in their current job in both the short and longer term was 35%, slightly lower than average.

It should be noted, however, that 87% of QEPs stated that they were very or quite satisfied with their current job. LAs also remain the most common employer of EPs and QEPs expressed strong preferences for doing LA work. Over three quarters (78%) of QEPs currently employed by an LA said that it was very or quite important for them to be employed by an LA, and only 6% said that it was quite or very unimportant. The benefits of working for an LA EP service, outlined by QEPs, focussed on three areas: an altruistic sense of engaging with the community and those with most need; the quality of their colleagues and their experience, including opportunities for team-working and multi-agency work; and job security and associated benefits, including pensions, paid sickness leave and maternity pay.

6.3 The interaction of supply and demand issues

The above evidence suggests that while there may be demand-side issues related to workloads and tasks, which cause issues both with recruitment and retention, these are not the key drivers of the under-supply of EPs experienced by LAs. They may interact with supply-side factors and their effects may be strongly felt in some LAs, but they are not, in themselves, the causes of under-supply in the profession. Further, it does not appear to be the case that EPs are dissatisfied with EP work and are leaving the profession, resulting in a lack of trained EPs willing to work in LAs (few people are leaving the profession for reasons other than retirement or temporary career breaks). Rather, it is the case that there are jobs available for EPs that would be considered relatively attractive but which are unfilled because there are not enough qualified EPs to fill them. While some LAs feel the effects of under-supply more than others, under-supply is a common problem for many LAs. At the time of the PEP survey, two thirds (66%) of LAs had at least one vacancy for a permanent post and of these LAs, 83% said that they had consistent recruitment difficulties.

In terms of overcoming the shortages experienced in the EP profession, findings highlighted that unless interventions were made to address the supply-side issues, the negative relationship between supply and demand would not be broken and demand-side interventions could only go so far to alleviate under-supply and the issues this caused for LAs. A negative cycle could be seen, whereby what were perceived to be worsening conditions in LAs prompted moves between LAs and, to a limited but growing extent, to EP jobs outside LAs, which in turn placed a greater burden on remaining LA employees (heightened by the difficulties LAs experienced in recruiting replacements for staff who left). This was worsening the working conditions of those who remained and prompting further moves. However, the negative cycle would only

be broken by addressing supply-side factors. LAs were making some limited interventions to try to improve the working conditions and overall impressions that EPs had of LA work, but these were regarded by PEPs as coping mechanisms, undertaken to prevent a bad situation becoming worse, rather than mechanisms that could address the underlying causes of the problems faced by LAs.

A key part of this research was to examine the effects of location on recruitment and retention of EPs and whether shortages in the EP profession might be resolved by geographically-focussed interventions. Overall, it appeared that while some LA PEPs felt strongly that their location had a negative impact on their ability to recruit and retain EPs, they were in the minority (23% of survey respondents). Of the LA PEPs who believed that their location was hindering their ability to recruit and retain staff, this was more commonly an issue related to the perceived attractiveness of their location (whether it was too remote, rural, expensive, poor, etc.), rather than something that could be easily resolved by targeted interventions that are within the remit of the DfE.

Just one in ten (10%) of LA PEPs responding to the survey thought that their distance from a training provider meant that they found it difficult to take a TEP on placement and that this, in turn, meant that they struggled to recruit QEPs once they had graduated.

Over half (52%) of the 217 QEP survey respondents said that since qualifying they had worked for one of the organisations where they did their training, but only 35% of respondents in LA employment anticipated remaining in their current job in both the short and longer term. While 43% of QEPs in the survey chose their training course because they wanted to study near to where they were living at the time, more recent trainees, and consequently new entrants to the profession, are younger people who may be more likely to move to find a job that most suits their preferences in terms of location, work conditions and career development opportunities³⁹. Some experts and stakeholders argued that the level of bursaries available to trainee EPs was too low to attract older potential trainees who had established careers and strong links to a particular area.

Currently, doctoral training for EPs is delivered by 13 training providers split along broadly geographical lines between two consortia: SEEL covering London and the South East and NORMID-SW covering the North of England, the Midlands and the South West. A new training course at the University of East Anglia began in 2018. In

³⁹ QEPs responding to the survey had a range of geographical ties to the location they were living in before they started training, to the location of their training provider and to the location of their placement and, alone, none of these could clearly predict the geographical location where an EP would ultimately work.

total, there were 160 DfE-funded training places available for EPs starting training in September 2018. Qualitative evidence highlighted that the quality of the training and placements provided were generally highly regarded by QEPs and PEPs. There was little evidence from the research participants to suggest that training providers are producing graduates who are not suitable for LA employment. Issues raised in relation to the training model again focussed on the lack of EPs being trained and consequently the lack of EPs available to fill vacancies in LAs. There were some secondary issues raised by focus group participants and stakeholders in relation to the funding of placements and of university-based training which are important to bear in mind when considering the feasibility of any proposed reforms to the training model.

The potential for geographical reform of the training model to alleviate issues of under-supply was generally felt by focus group participants (training providers and EPs/PEPs) to be limited. Largely, this was because under-supply was thought to be so widespread that it could not be attributed simply to geographical factors affecting a limited number of LAs, although it was acknowledged that geographical factors were of particular importance to some LAs. Reforms to the training model that focussed only on changing the geographical distribution of training providers were seen as being little more than an expensive way of engaging in a limited shuffling of the problem around the country, without addressing any of the underlying issues. Location of the training providers was not seen to be a particularly important cause of the shortages experienced by LAs and improving the situation for some LAs would only disadvantage others.

This meant that reforms to the training model that focussed on geographical reform received limited support from LA PEP respondents. There was little support from PEPs and training providers in the focus groups⁴⁰ for the introduction of new training providers, regardless of whether these new training providers were allocated additional training places on top of the existing numbers, or the number of training places remained the same but with some places redistributed to the new providers. It was suggested that there may be a case for the introduction of one or two new training providers to address very clear geographical gaps, as had happened in the case of the new East Anglia course. However, support for this was mixed and most commonly seen amongst QEP survey respondents who suggested that there may be a particular gap in the North of England within an area falling between the training providers in Newcastle, Sheffield and Manchester.

⁴⁰ It should be noted that existing training providers are unlikely to be in favour of new or existing places being allocated to new training providers, creating greater competition and perhaps reducing the number of students on each course.

There was also little support in the focus groups for geographical reforms focussed on the creation of a regional training model based on a hub and spoke model. Within this model, each training provider would serve a particular region and the LAs within it, with the number of training places at each provider being determined by the number of LAs within its region (or on the basis of the demography of the region). This was seen as being a complex system which took into account demand for services but not the other factors that contribute to demand for EPs, particularly replacement demand caused by retirements, periods of leave or people simply leaving to work elsewhere. As it focussed on redistributing training places, it would be unsuitable for addressing shortages as they arose, as LAs could not wait three years for someone to be trained to fill a vacancy.

The strong message emerging from PEPs and training providers in the focus groups was that expensive reforms of the training model that focussed on changing the geographical spread of training providers might damage the existing set-up and compromise quality, while not resolving any of the supply-side problems identified. The most efficient and effective way to address these problems, according to the focus group participants, was to increase the number of EPs being trained. Focus group participants tended to feel strongly that this increase in training places should then be directed to the existing training providers who had the experience and connections to continue to provide the quality staff that LA EP services needed and expected. It could be said that this is an expected finding from focus groups with existing training providers who are likely to benefit from an increase in training places, but there was also little support for any other type of reform from the PEP and EP focus groups, and such a reform would appear to most directly address the supply-side drivers of EP shortages outlined by respondents to the PEP and QEP surveys. Some caveats were raised by training providers, related to the funding of these new training places. There were suggestions in the focus groups and in written comments that, because such training was unattractive to universities due to the low fees it attracted, some providers may be unwilling to increase the number of training places they provide without a corresponding increase in fees. It was also suggested that some LAs would be unable to bear the cost of providing placements for additional trainees, and that this would affect some parts of the country more than others. If supply of EPs is to be increased, it may not be enough to simply increase the number of training places and consideration must also be given to how these increases are accommodated. Nonetheless, an increase in training places did appear to be considered the most appropriate way of addressing supply-side issues by participants in this research.

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Appendices

I. Detailed methodology

I.1 Online surveys

The surveys were delivered electronically using Qualtrics, which allows participants to save partially completed surveys and to have completed surveys reopened.

PEP survey management

The PEP survey was designed by drawing on previous surveys such as the National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) & DfE EP Workforce Survey (2013)⁴¹ and the 2015 National Association of Principal Educational Psychologists (NAPEP) survey of EPs⁴² in order to review the changing EP workforce over time. The survey set out to replicate the wording of questions drawn from the 2013 and 2015 surveys to allow comparability of data. Where there were discrepancies between the two surveys, for example, in the terminology used to refer to trainee contracts/bursaries, the 2015 questions were used as this provided comparability to the most recent data available.

The questions in the 2013 and 2015 surveys were divided into four main areas, and this structure was followed as far as possible in order to cover:

- The profile of the EP workforce, including employee and trainee headcount (full and part-time), demographic details of the EP and trainee population, and questions about recruitment;
- Commissioning and funding (including issues related to working across boundaries and shared services, and anticipated changes) and the diversification of potential commissioning sources;
- Service delivery and demand, which includes questions about the settings in which EPs and trainee EPs are working, ability to meet current demand, and anticipated changes in demand and staffing to meet this demand;
- Details of the participant, including contact details, job title and position, and the LA in which they work.

⁴¹ Truong, Y. and Ellam, H. (2014) *ibid*.

⁴² NAPEP National Executive Committee (2015) *ibid*.

The target population for the survey were the PEP working in each of the 152 Local Authorities in England. Initially, PEPs were contacted via the professional body, NAPEP. This included circulation of surveys to LA PEPs via the NAPEP-L mailing list and communication from NAPEP and regional representatives on the National Executive Committee of NAPEP to ensure that all Principal EPs were aware of the survey and the importance of completing it. Subsequently, the survey was also circulated on the AEP and EPNET mailing lists and through direct emails to PEPs. The survey was first emailed out and then followed up by two reminders, also circulated via NAPEP to encourage participation. Having been open for 5 weeks it closed on 28 September due to the short project timescales. The response rate (63%) was lower than had been hoped for, due to the survey being conducted in part over the school holidays and the need to meet project reporting deadlines, but was still higher than the 2015 NAPEP survey.

PEP data analysis

Data from the survey was analysed using SPSS. Table A1 shows the distribution of respondents by region and compares this to the distribution of LAs. The figures show that the sample was geographically representative. Although a definitive profile of the EP workforce was not available from existing data sources, other characteristics of the sample, such as the size of the LA and the number of trainees hosted, conformed closely to the broad profile seen in this data and that established in previous surveys of the EP workforce. Consequently, no weighting of the data was thought to be necessary. Given the sample size, data analysis concentrated on the analysis of frequencies to provide a narrative description of the current EP population, recruitment into the profession, and the impact of location on these issues. Data were presented in the form of tables and graphs/charts exploring key issues. A thematic analysis of the free text questions was conducted and verbatim quotes were used to illustrate particular issues and to provide context and explanation for the patterns identified in the statistical data.

Table A1 Comparison of the number of Local Authorities by region with the number of PEP survey respondents

Region	% of LAs	% of PEP respondents
East Midlands	6.7	5.2
East of England	7.3	7.2
London	21.3	21.7
North East	8.0	10.3
North West	15.3	16.5
South East	12.7	12.4

Region	% of LAs	% of PEP respondents
South West	10.0	7.2
West Midlands	9.3	9.3
Yorkshire and the Humber	10.0	10.3

QEP survey management

Questions in the QEP survey focused on employment choices and outcomes, including questions about:

- QEPs' current job, including the type of employer, location and contractual status;
- Their reasons for taking their current job, including questions about how their preferences may have changed since they were trainee EPs (TEPs) and any barriers they may have faced in finding the type of employment they wanted;
- Satisfaction with their current job overall and on a range of measures, including work-life balance, pay, job security, job location and opportunities for progression;
- Retention in the profession and career plans in the short and longer-term;
- Demographic details, including age, gender, location.

A mixture of open and closed questions were used to allow respondents to provide a rich picture of their decision-making processes while limiting the time required of respondents to complete the survey.

The target population for the survey was all EPs who had completed their three-year (full-time) doctorate degree in the past five years, and the total potential population was approximately 600 people. The survey was circulated through training providers involved in the training of EPs, on the AEP, NAPEP and EPNET mailing lists, and asking PEPs who had completed the PEP survey to circulate the QEP survey to their staff and within their networks. As with the PEP survey, the QEP survey was open from August to the end of September 2018.

QEP data analysis

Data from the survey was analysed using SPSS. As in the case of the PEP survey, no weighting of the data was used as a full-cohort comparator profile was not available for trainees who had completed their course in the past five years and the age and gender profile of respondents and their training provider (see Table A2) broadly conformed to expected distributions. The relatively small sample size limited the

options available for data analysis to descriptive analysis. A thematic analysis of the free text questions was conducted and verbatim quotes were used to illustrate particular issues and to provide more detailed explanation of the drivers of skills shortages in the profession as a whole and in particular parts of the country.

Table A2 Comparison of the number of training places per university with the number of QEP survey respondents who trained at each university

University	% of training places	% of QEP respondents
Bristol University	6.7	6.5
Exeter University	6.7	5
Newcastle University	9.3	8
Sheffield University	6.7	8
University of Nottingham	8.0	7
University of Birmingham	9.3	8.5
University of Manchester	8.7	9
Institute of Education	9.3	11.5
Tavistock & Portman NHS Trust	9.3	7.5
University of College London	8.7	9.5
University of East London	8.0	6
University of Southampton	9.3	13.5

Excludes respondents who trained outside England or whose training provider is unknown

I.2 Focus groups and qualitative interviews

The team used the VisionsLive platform for the online focus groups, which allows both moderators and participants to have a free-flowing discussion. Online focus groups allowed groups to be organised at convenient dates and times to attract participants. Online focus groups offer some of the same benefits as face-to-face groups, such as the ability to use visual stimuli, and offer a different environment in which participants can feel more comfortable and open to sharing views. Responses can be moderated and dominant voices are less of a problem and less likely to influence others because all respondents have the opportunity to type their answer to all questions. Participants are also able to share their views anonymously using an allocated pseudonym.

There are added benefits of this system in that it offers instant messaging for a private conversation and the use of visual stimuli, such as pre-designed polls to gauge views and record data on recruitment and retention issues. Participants communicate by text only. VisionsLive also offers instant transcription, reducing time and costs.

People interested in taking part in a focus group were directed to a web-based participant information sheet, specifying that the information they provided would only be used for research purposes and that they could withdraw at any time, and an online consent form that needed to be completed prior to participation. They were also asked to provide a few details (such as their job title and LA, if relevant) and indicate their preference for a range of dates and times and whether they were interested in taking part in an interview instead if the chosen focus group date was not suitable. Nobody who volunteered was excluded from attending a focus group.

The topic guide for the focus groups focused on two broad themes: discussion of workforce issues among EPs and assessment of training commissioning models. Details are provided below for two focus groups.

(a) PEP and EP focus group and focus group with participants in an area experiencing recruitment difficulties

- Discussion of workforce issues among EPs
 - whether there are any difficulties in recruiting and retaining EPs overall;
 - if this is the case, what factors are impacting on recruitment and retention in their LA area, plus any additional issues not already mentioned.
 - Where applicable, efforts being made to try and counteract any current or future EP shortages in their region and strategies that could be adopted in other regions.
- Assessment of training commissioning models
 - What works well and less well with the current commission model; why this is the case and how any issues could be addressed;
 - Assessment of whether a 'regional' model, which would see training places redistributed so that they broadly correspond to the number of LAs in each region, would help to address some of the issues with recruitment and retention identified above; any advantages or disadvantages this model would offer; whether current reforms would influence this model.

(b) Training provider focus group:

- Discussion of workforce issues among EPs
 - whether there are any difficulties in recruiting and retaining EPs overall and the underlying reasons;
- Assessment of different hypothetical training commissioning models (advantages, disadvantages, practical issues and preferences):
 - current model;

- a significant increase in the number of training places available by either increasing the number of training providers or the number of training places among existing providers;
- a 'regional' model, which would see the current number of training places redistributed so that they broadly correspond to the number of LAs in each region.

Five training providers who were unable to attend the online focus group provided written comments on the different hypothetical training models.

The topic guide for stakeholder interviews covered the two areas below.

- a) Changing patterns of EP employment and current EP shortages:
 - changing patterns among EP employment and training places over the past decade;
 - perceived key drivers for these changes;
 - perceived recruitment and retention problems and whether there are any particular regional issues;
- b) Training commissioning models:
 - what works well and less well with regard to the current training model and why;
 - perceived advantages or disadvantages of a 'regional' commissioning model (as defined above) and any comments on how this may be taken forward.

Qualitative data analysis

All of the interview and focus group data were analysed using a framework approach.⁴³ Data were coded and analysed according to themes that emerge. The team developed an agreed coding procedure and all qualitative researchers engaged in the data analysis. The coding and analysis was cross-checked by another member of the research team in order to maintain inter-coder reliability. Comprehensive Excel spreadsheets were designed to incorporate all key summary information. The findings were synthesised and analysed for the final report and anonymised verbatim quotes used to highlight key themes.

⁴³ Ritchie, J. and Spencer, L. (1994). Qualitative data analysis for applied policy research. In A. Bryman and R.G. Burgess (eds) *Analysing Qualitative Data* (pp.305-29). London: Routledge.

II. Additional workforce data

Table A3: Age structure of EPs by gender (percentage of EPs of each type, by gender)

Age group	Educational only		Educational and other		All EPs	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
25-29	2.0	0.3	0.0	0.8	2.0	0.4
30-34	11.3	8.4	5.2	6.2	11.2	7.9
35-39	15.3	10.2	5.2	10.3	15.1	10.2
40-44	15.0	6.6	5.2	14.0	14.8	8.4
45-49	14.0	8.6	6.9	13.2	13.9	9.7
50-54	12.2	11.5	10.3	12.8	12.2	11.8
55-59	10.2	10.6	12.1	12.3	10.2	11.0
60-64	10.4	14.9	10.3	11.1	10.4	14.0
65-69	6.3	17.2	24.1	9.1	6.6	15.2
70-74	2.5	8.4	20.7	7.8	2.8	8.3
75+	0.8	3.4	0.0	2.5	0.8	3.1
All ages (100%)	3,680	746	58	243	3,738	989

Source: HCPC, 2018



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