

What is an educational psychologist (EP)?

Nottinghamshire EPs work to support the development and well-being of children and young adults aged 0-25 years, referred to here as child/children. Where this development and well-being is good, children will:

- have a strong sense of self, including who they are, and who they want to be
- be making decisions about their life which are congruent with this sense of self
- be safe, and have the knowledge and skills to keep themselves safe
- have a strong sense of belonging, including to a community of peers
- have an understanding of their emotional triggers, both positive and negative, and be able to act to regulate their emotional state
- have internal resilience, as well as access to supportive adults should they need it
- be as independent as they can be, as well as having adult support which gives them access to a range of experiences which would otherwise be unavailable to them
- be confident in their strengths, their preferred learning style, and enjoy educational success

Whilst the focus of EP work is children, the vast majority of EP work is with the adults who are with the child on a day-to-day basis, such as teachers, parents and other professionals. EPs think of themselves as *indirect agents of change*, by working with and through these other people. EP involvement is about having conversations in a way that people see a child's situation differently and that brings about positive change for the child.

EPs tend to become involved when the situation around a child is seen to be problematic or stuck. Whilst most practitioners are familiar with implementing a plan, do, review process, where needed EPs can enhance this process by working with others to:

- reach agreement about what a 'better' or 'best outcome' might look like
- support others in believing in the possibility of change and of thinking about a situation differently
- enable people to think, talk and act positively
- enable people to engage in the process of change, by establishing 'common ground', for example by listening, empathising, reframing
- support people's emotional containment whilst they engage in this work
- enable the voice of the child to be heard

Taken together, this approach is described as a strength-based, collaborative and consultative model. The values, principles, and theoretical rationale which underpin EP work in Nottinghamshire are explored in more depth in the document entitled *Values and Principles of the EPS (02.06.10)*. EP work is guided by a desire to promote social inclusion and social justice for all Nottinghamshire children, but especially for the most vulnerable.

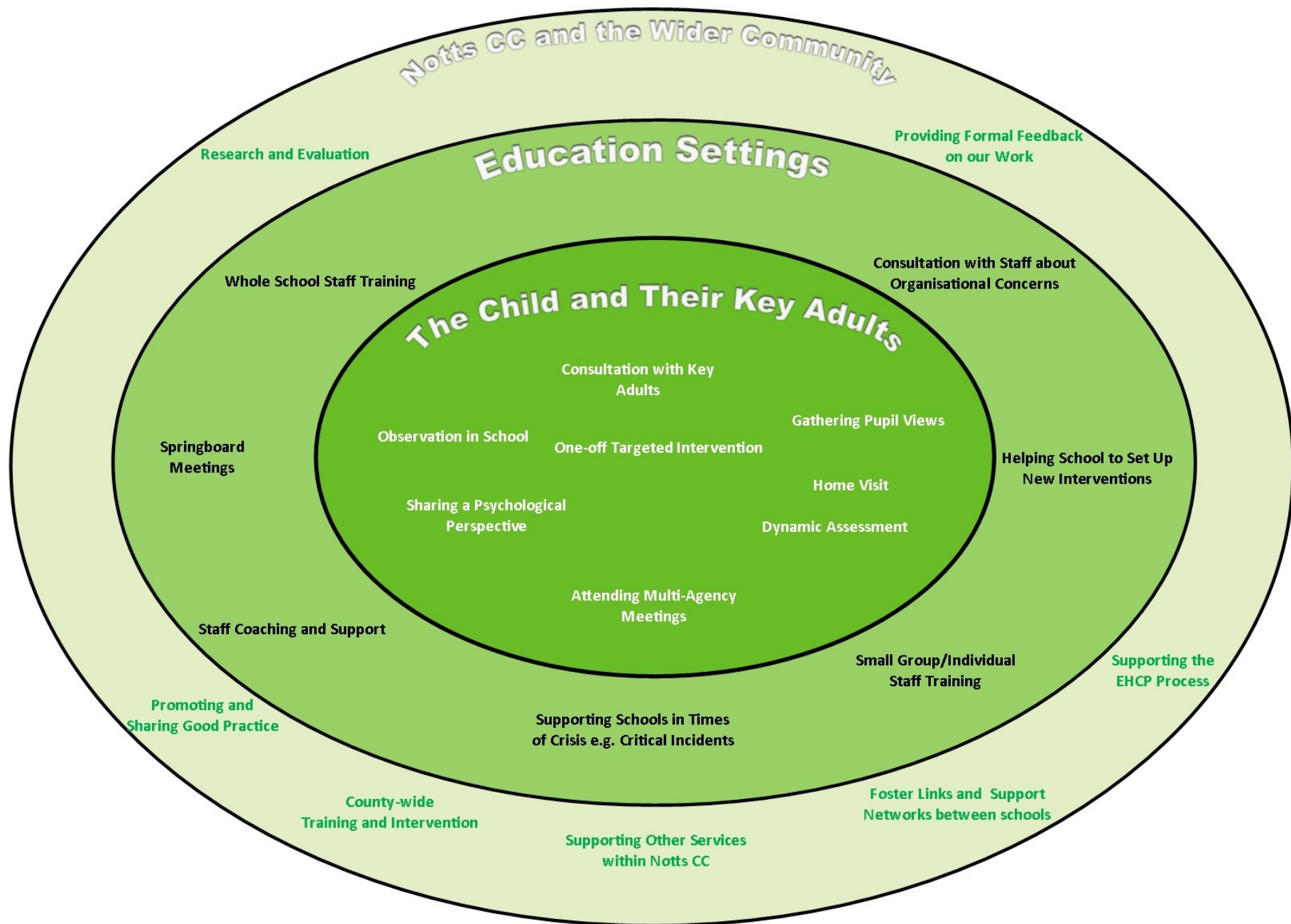
EPs in Nottinghamshire Educational Psychology Service (EPS) are all employed by the Local Authority. Someone training to become an EP is required to undertake a three-year doctorate programme of study in applied psychology. All EPs are registered with the Health & Care Professions Council (HCPC) which is the body which oversees professional and ethical standards.

What do Nottinghamshire EPs do?

EP work can be thought of as happening at three levels, sometimes at more than one level at the same time:

- The child and their key adults
- Education settings
- Nottinghamshire County Council and the wider community

The work can involve a range of different activities, for example consultation, assessment, intervention, training, research and development; a bespoke service as deemed appropriate. The following diagram outlines examples of the range of different activities EPs in Nottinghamshire undertake.

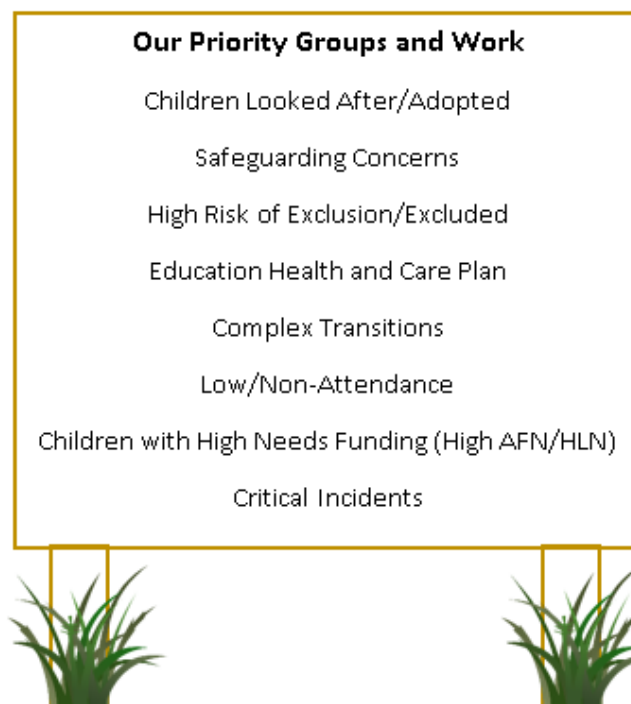


How does an educational psychologist become involved?

Nottinghamshire EPS have termly planning meetings with Families of Schools which are called 'Springboard meetings'. At these meetings collaborative discussion and moderation enable the EP to agree the priority and level of their involvement which takes into account the presenting needs and the capacity of the service. The document *Family Springboard meetings & Springboard meetings in secondary schools (22.07.16)* outlines this in more detail.

In addition to being the process by which the majority of EP work is negotiated, the Springboard meetings are designed to facilitate the graduated response. The graduated response process involves looking at the skills and resources already in place within and between schools to see what could be utilised to support the child. School staff are highly experienced and knowledgeable and will often be able to resolve difficulties themselves. However, if further advice and support is needed, the Springboard meeting helps professionals to ensure the right children get the right support at the right time.

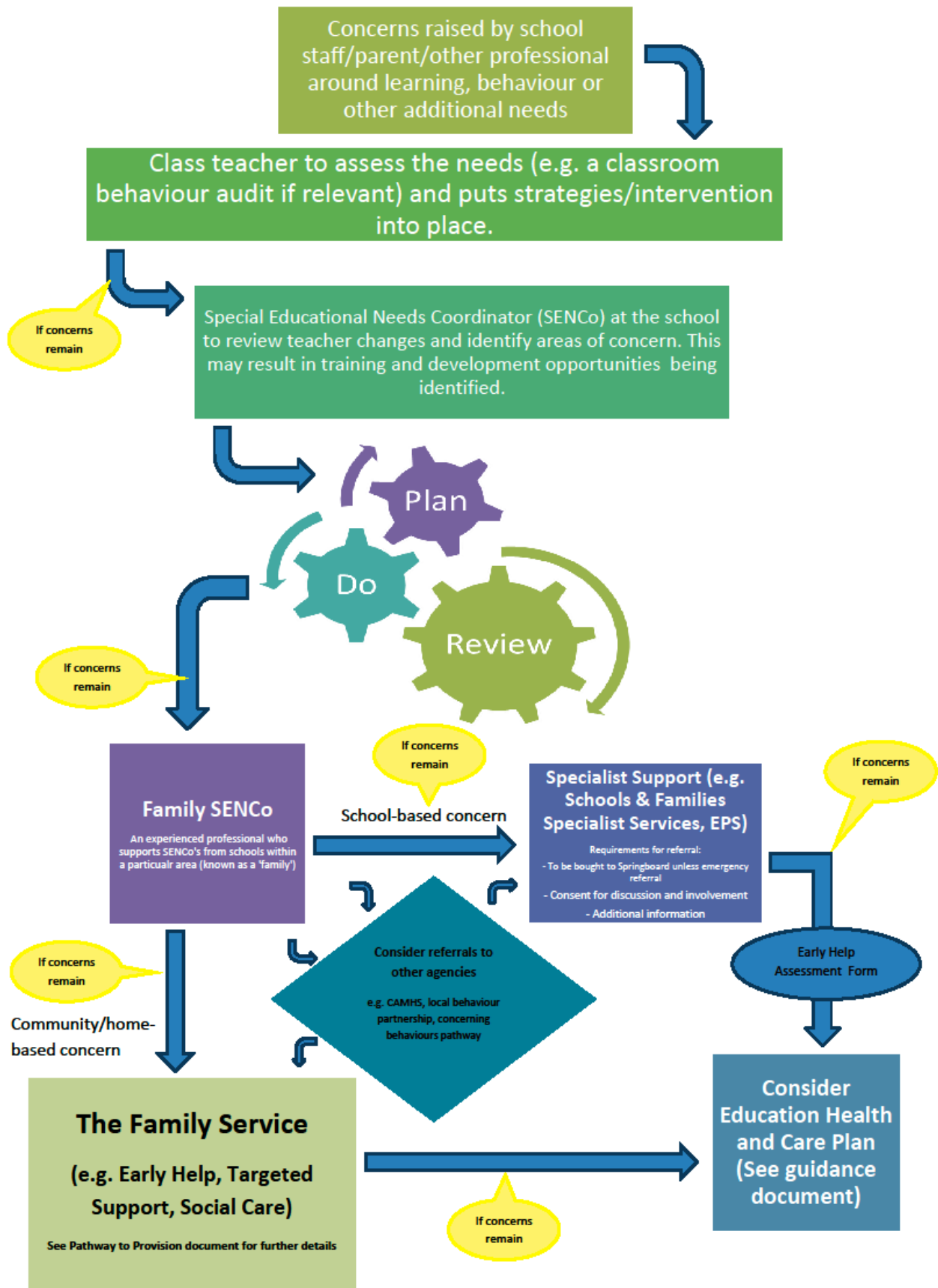
Before an EP undertakes any work, the EPS requires informed consent for EP involvement with any child, using our written consent form. See the document entitled *Gaining Consent in Our Work (20.04.16)*. There are occasions when EPs are consulted outside of the Springboard meeting process. The EPS prioritises working with groups who are in the most vulnerable situations. The document entitled *The Process for Working with an Educational Psychologist (25.11.14)* explains this in more detail.



It is recognised that children who are looked after are often in vulnerable situations. In light of this the EPS works closely with the Virtual School team who may request involvement outside of Springboard meetings. This is described in the document entitled *Children in Care (16.04.15)*

EPS Traded Offer

Nottinghamshire Educational Psychology Service can offer a range of traded training courses to any organisation supporting children and young people's learning, development and well-being (age 0-25). Our training courses are designed to help adults to recognise and understand children and young people's needs and develop effective support strategies. We also offer evaluation research and project services to schools and other organisations. Full details are provided on our website www.em-edsupport.org.uk/EPS



How does the EPS move forward?

In order to maintain a consistent standard of service delivery, and in line with its values and principles, the EPS is committed to continuing professional development (CPD). CPD keeps EPs up to date with current psychological thinking, changes to legislation and ensures EPs meet statutory responsibilities. CPD ensures that our practice is evidence based. EPs regularly receive training, some of which is delivered by EPS colleagues, others from within the LA and/or external providers. EPs also have the opportunity to attend other training events that will benefit the wider service. EPs read widely round topics of individual interest.

In Nottinghamshire EPs have half-termly support and supervision from a Senior EP and belong to a district team which meets fortnightly to share information and offers peer support. Trainees and colleagues new to the service are entitled to enhanced support and supervision.

The EPS has protected capacity for all EPs to work together in small groups to develop new resources and ways of working not only for the service but also for the benefit of the wider community. This work supports the consistency and maintains the quality of practice. This also enables the service to become involved in research and development projects commissioned by the local authority. Recent examples include solution-focused coaching for the Family Service, developing an educational pathway and resources regarding anxiety-related non-attendance.

The EPS is committed to the future of the profession and welcomes trainee educational psychologists on placement. This strengthens the links with local universities and informs the service about the latest developments.

The definition of an intelligent organisation is one which reflects on its own practices to inform the direction in which it needs to develop. Nottinghamshire EPS is designed to enable this to happen. EP work which begins at an individual child level can lead to work aimed at effecting change at a wider systems level. The practices and principles of Nottinghamshire EPS enable it to deliver a service which is flexible and responsive to individual or organisational needs.