

Introduction

Raising a child with unique needs is a journey of both joy and complexity. You might be in search of further understanding regarding your child's distinct needs and the thought of exploring additional support may be on your mind. The choice to commission a private Educational Psychologist (EP) can be costly. The purpose of this leaflet is to provide information to help you make informed decisions about whether private Educational Psychology support is right for your family.



Understanding your child's needs

If you need help understanding your child's needs, you can reach out to your local Parent Carer Forum, [Bristol Parent Carers](#). They can provide you with a chance to connect with fellow parent carers, engage with professionals, and gain insights from families in situations similar to yours.

The forum is run by fellow parent carers who genuinely understand where you're coming from, they can provide crucial information and direct you to local services and other organisations that can offer valuable support to your family.

Accessing the right support for your family

Local services have a legal duty to meet your child's needs, even without a formal SEND diagnosis. For instance, your child can benefit from [activities](#) via the council's short breaks program that are adapted to meet their unique needs. Schools also have a legal '[best endeavours](#)' duty to consistently support your child, making sure necessary [reasonable adjustments](#) are in place, such as adapting uniform policies for sensory or other needs.

Bristol City Council's [Ordinarily Available Provision](#) document also outlines potential school support under this duty. If existing support isn't effective, the school's SENDCo may involve an Educational Psychologist (EP), funded through the school's budget. Schools can access [EP services from Bristol City Council](#) or other providers and, if necessary, this advice can be used to develop a [school-based support plan](#).

What is an Educational Psychologist?

Educational Psychologists (EPs) work in a variety of ways with schools and educational settings offer support to help them meet the learning and development needs of all children and young people aged between 0-25 years. EPs do not diagnose autism or ADHD, but they can help build an understanding of a child's strengths, needs and barriers to learning. They can work with individual children and young people who might be experiencing difficulties in a range of different areas, including mental health and well-being. For further information about the EP role, please see [here](#).



Seeking the advice of an EP

If you'd like your child to be seen by an EP, it is a good idea to have a conversation with the school SENDCo or class teacher first. They might want to explore options and school staff can help you navigate the most effective way forward. Sometimes parents and carers decide to seek the support of an EP privately. This can help with building an understanding of your child's strengths and needs, as well as finding out about effective sources of support and strategies. It is important to be clear about what it is you are hoping to gain from EP support.

How to find a private EP

If you're thinking of seeking the support of a private EP, it is important to review their experience and interests to check that they can provide the kind of support you are after. It's also crucial to ensure they are registered with the [Health and Care Professions Council \(HCPC\)](#). It may also provide reassurance if the EP you contact is chartered with the [British Psychological Society \(BPS\)](#), although this is not a requirement. In Bristol, report costs range from £800 to £2000, plus travel expenses, depending on the services needed. Wait times vary from 2 to 12 months. It is good practice to ask for an anonymised sample report before commissioning an EP so that you can see the style and level of detail provided.

Working with a private EP

The EP will discuss the scope and cost of their work which will help you decide how they can best assist your family. The assessment format isn't fixed but generally involves:



- 1 Reviewing historical documents and reports from schools, health services, or other agencies before meeting the child and family
- 2 Meeting with the family to chat about the child's strengths, interests, dreams, and areas of need. It's important to understand both the child's and family's perspectives
- 3 Collaborating with the school (for example the school SENDCo and/ or class teacher), to understand their perspective and gain information about what has been tried already
- 4 Conducting at least one observation, preferably in school but alternatively at home. Face-to-face observations are preferred so that context can be considered
- 5 Carrying out a range of evidence-based assessments which may explore a child's learning skills, amongst other things, and to identify strategies that might help them at school and at home
- 6 Writing a report which is clear, easy to understand, and provides specific recommendations about how best to support your child
- 7 If an Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment (EHCNA) is being carried out for your child, an EP from Bristol City Council (BCC) will always contribute and this service is provided without cost to parents, carers or schools.

Families can also commission a private EP report. If the private EP meets the family before the BCC EP, the EPs will coordinate their activities to avoid duplication and prevent the child from repeated assessments or undue stress. Both reports can contribute evidence to the EHC needs assessment process. Any recommendations should be clear, specific and quantified wherever possible.

Further support and information

Key Contacts

Bristol Parent Carers Click for website [here](#)
Email: info@bristolparentcarers.org.uk

Bristol Local Offer: Click for website [here](#)

Sirona Care and Health Click for website [here](#)

SEND and You Click for website [here](#)

