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A developing educational psychology service work allocation model

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ABSTRACT

As UK Governments continue with the economic policy of deficit reduction from 2010, many Local Authorities' (LAs) Educational Psychology Services (EPSs) have begun to develop 'traded' models of service delivery in order to maintain jobs and secure services. Nevertheless, EPSs still provide a core service delivery to schools, settings and patches for statutory and pre-statutory work which need to be equitably distributed within the team to apportion demands and workloads. This article will provide a detailed description of how a work allocation model has developed in recent years, with reference to case studies from three diverse LAs.

KEYWORDS: Educational psychologist; traded services; work allocation model; local government – England; local government – Wales.

Introduction

The 2010 Spending Review of the Coalition Government set out a deficit reduction plan in an attempt to secure economic stability at a time of continuing uncertainty in the global economy (HM Treasury, 2010). This Review had a significant impact on budgets for Local Authority (LA) Educational Psychology services (EPSs) across the UK, so that many EPSs developed a variety of fully or partly traded models of service delivery to respond flexibly to the changing socio-political context (Stobie 2002a, 2002b; Fallon et al., 2010; AEP, 2011; Islam, 2013; Fallon, 2016; Lee and Woods, 2017). The continuing pressure on budgets and the financial sustainability of local authorities was examined by the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee in November 2016 (House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts, 2016). Nevertheless, EPSs still provide a core delivery to schools, settings and patches for statutory and pre-statutory work which need to be equitably distributed within the team to apportion demands and workloads.

Islam's (2013) thesis critically reviewed the literature to examine how EP service delivery has been defined and also to identify the most prevalent models of EP service delivery and identified two large scale extensive reviews of EP services in England, that have been completed in the past 17 years. The DfEE (2000) report aimed at evaluating the effectiveness of EP service delivery, followed by a further review in 2006 by Farrell et al., which ascertained the distinctive contribution of EPs in the light of the Every Child Matters agenda (DfES, 2003). The reviews determined that the most prevalent models of EP service delivery were time allocation, service level agreements and consultation, although these models are not mutually exclusive and exist in many different combinations (Leadbetter, 2000). The subject areas of service delivery, work allocation and/or time allocation have been a recurrent thread on the EPNET email discussion list since 1998 (JISCM@il). (EPNET is an email discussion list for the exchange of ideas and information among university research/teaching staff working in the field of Educational Psychology and among EPs throughout the UK and elsewhere). The challenges that have been highlighted include: lack of flexibility; loss of control and professional autonomy; a narrowing of the EP role so reducing opportunities for creativity and innovation practice and being more removed from the child (Islam, 2013). The DFEE Report (2000) stated that the model of service delivery adopted by EP services is often regarded as a significant barrier to providing an effective service to schools.

The past ten years has also seen a further evolution to Educational Psychology Services in the form of traded models of delivery. The primary drivers being the need to increase the marketability of the profession and to encourage schools and other commissioners to buy into services (Fallon et al 2010). A recent study exploring responses to trading, found that the impact had been positive in that there were "significantly more benefits and opportunities than drawbacks and challenges" (Lee and Woods p 123). Also identified were differences in the patterns of work in response to the changing needs of service users, such as: increased demand

for casework; decline in purchase of consultation and a substantial growth in large scale commissioners (Lee and Woods, 2017). However, this has also introduced further complexities in identifying effective, responsive and flexible systems that are equitable and manageable for those involved. Islam (2013) explored this with EPs working in two services that offered different levels of a traded service, with the need for flexibility, contingency planning and transparent, value for money service delivery model all emerging as factors to be addressed.

It is evident that the identification of a 'fit for purpose' model of service delivery, that can constantly be refined and adapted in response to changing needs and pressures, remains a challenge for those involved in the planning and delivery of EP services. This current article will focus on the development of a model, which has been successful in different LAs. This is a work allocation system as opposed to a time allocation model which remains controversial to some EPs. An earlier version of the model was proposed over twenty years ago and has been continually developed and modified in an attempt to accommodate the many different circumstances experienced by EPSs across England and Wales, (Marsh, Nelson and Webster 1989; Marsh, 1995). As it has evolved, the evaluations of service users and EPs have been increasingly positive, with particular emphasis on its strengths in terms of flexibility and responsiveness. This study aims to explore the features of the model using a case study methodology.

Methodology

The research questions that were developed from consideration of the current literature and in response to the pressures identified by the authors working to identify an effective and equitable system for service delivery:

- *Can a work allocation model support an EP service in ensuring the most efficient delivery services for the maximum benefit of children and young people?*
- *What are the value sets that ensure the model is 'fit for purpose' in relation to varying local contexts?*

- *What are the aims, principles and assumptions to be used in a work allocation model?*
- *What are the factors and weightings that should be used to equitably distribute the demands and workloads placed on individual EPs?*

To address these questions a multiple case study approach was adopted based on three diverse UK Local Authorities (LAs). In each case, a partnership of the PEP and a small team of service EPs, developed the model based on the core framework described within this paper and adapted to address the individual context of each LA and EPS. It was then applied for an agreed period (usually a year but often modified in response to monitoring during this period) before being evaluated and reviewed. After which it would be refined for the following year to take account of feedback from stakeholders and the wider team of EPs, as well as changing priorities and pressures within the LA as a whole.

A case study methodology was chosen as it was considered to be most suited to exploring the research questions identified. “Case study research is an investigative approach to thoroughly describe complex phenomena” (Moore, Lapan and Quartaroli, 2012). As the literature has evidenced EPS delivery systems are complex, and an investigative approach was considered to be the most appropriate for this work.

Participants

The profiles for the three case study services are as follows:

	Local authority 1	Local authority 2	Local authority 3
Numbers of EPs (fte)	21.9	17.5	16.5
Number of schools	449	131	157
Pupil population 4-19 years	118,000	52,000	48,000
Area characteristics	A large shire LA composed of a mix of rural and urban populations	A major city with an ethnically diverse population	A federated service covering two LAs both with high levels of unemployment and social and economic disadvantages

Values

It was considered that the first step in the development of a tailored model that would meet the changing individual and contextual demands for an EP service would be to identify and agree the values that would be fundamental to the success of the model. These values were evolved through discussion and debate within each case study EPSs:

- The LA requires the EPS to help it fulfil a statutory role in relation to children with additional needs.
- The EPS should assist in the LA's role in championing the needs of the most vulnerable.

- The EPS should assist the LA in ensuring that first and foremost we have a system that is ‘child’s needs led’ rather than ‘school needs led’.
- The LA requires that the EPS works with children with complex needs. However, schools also have a responsibility to procure services to assist them in meeting the needs of all children with additional needs, and we must expect that they can use their delegated budgets to purchase some elements of the EPS. This would include some school needs driven casework, training and project/development work.
- The EPS has an increasing need to ensure income in order to maintain its size and scope.

Interestingly, although the intention was that these would be adapted to suit each individual context, in practice it was found that they remained consistent in all three LAs. The only variation was the addition of the final two bullet points which were added as the drive towards traded models of delivery took greater prominence in planning.

Aims and Principles

Once the values had been agreed, then the aims and principles needed to be clarified. The aims of the work allocation model are firstly to ensure that the service is consistent with the above values; secondly to ensure the most efficient delivery of EPS time for the benefit of vulnerable children and young people and those with special educational needs and disability (SEND) by providing an allocation model which uses established measures of need and agreed thresholds for involvement; thirdly to take into account requests from settings to commission educational psychology work and fourthly to provide an equitable distribution of the demands and workloads within the EPS.

The principles of the model are that:

1. It should be as simple as possible;
2. It should be as transparent as possible;

3. It should be fair;
4. It should lead to accountability of EPS time;
5. It should emphasise LA funded time towards those children and young people who are vulnerable and / or have SEND; and
6. It should take account of geographical and population variations.

Work allocation model – assumptions

The next step in the model development is clarification of the core assumptions in relation to time elements.

The following assumptions have been made in every application of the model:

- A. Total work days in a year = 261 days (i.e. 365-104 weekends)

Less annual leave (34), statutory holidays (8), sick leave (5)

and casework management days undertaken

during school holidays (14) = 200 days

- B. Total sessions available per year = 400 sessions or half days

Each half-day session delivered in schools has an equivalent half-day session, which may be not be delivered in the setting, in supporting direct service delivery such as phone calls with families and other professionals, analysis, report writing, research etc.

- C. 70 per cent of total available time or 280 sessions out of 400 to be allocated for direct support / casework / consultation with schools, early years, special schools / units and for local authority time.

- D. 17.5 per cent or 70 sessions out of 400 are allocated for project work, to act as a contingency for unpredictable events and for additional Local Authority strategic tasks. Therefore, an educational psychologist working full time has a total tariff of 350 sessions within the allocation model (see Table 1).

Table 1. Tariffs and overall service delivery based on 12 full time equivalents in different sectors

	Early Years	Primary	Secondary	Special	LA time Project Contingency	CPD Team meetings	Total
1.0 full time equiv. (fte)	20 (5%)	180 (45%)	60 (15%)	20 (5%)	70 (17.5%)	50 (12.5%)	400 (100%)
Totals for 12.0 fte	240	2,160	720	240	840	600	4,800

Note : Percentages may not add up to 100 because of rounding errors.

- E. 12.5 per cent or 50 sessions out of 400 is retained for continuing professional development (CPD), support and supervision, team meetings and general service maintenance.
- F. Work is allocated to ensure equitability between individual EPs and fair delivery across school patches. There will be a defined time amount for each school for LA core work who subscribe to the LA's base package. In addition, schools may purchase further sessions as a top up, this would be achieved through the use Associates or locums as required.
- G. Allocations for senior management time and specialist EP work are subtracted from the overall service full-time equivalent (fte) to calculate a core fte total. The total sessions for the service can then be calculated by multiplying 350 by the core fte, for example 12.0 (also see Table 1).

Work allocation model – factors and weightings

Factors have been chosen which relate to EP service delivery and provide a balance between need and demand and between pupils with Education Health and Care plans (EHCs) or statements. One of the strengths of the model is that LAs can tailor the choice of factors to individual priorities or pressures. For example, an LA may wish to prioritise CLA (Children Looked After) for one particular year and that factor could also be included. LAs may also wish to compile a separate list to allocate new requests for 16-25 EHC needs assessments on a pro-rata basis, as there have been significant increases in this age range (DfE, 2017).

The factors and weightings are the same in both primary and secondary sectors and can be selected from data obtained from the centrally held records submitted to central government and from the LA's section 251 budget statement (Education Funding Agency, 2016). To adhere to the principle of simplicity, there are three selected factors from the following list for each of the model options (see Table 2):

- number on roll (NOR) (January Form 7)
- notional SEN budget allocation for each school which is the non-hypothecated amount of the schools' block funding received through an LA SEN formula,
- percentage of pupils eligible for a free school meal (FSM),
- the three year average for the percentage of pupils or the delegated budget allocation for pupils with EHC plans or statements for each school.

Table 2. Possible weightings and factors used in the work allocation model

	Model A	Model B	Model C
Number on roll		40%	30%
Notional SEN Budget	60%		
Eligibility to free school meals	20%	40%	50%
EHCPs/statements or delegated budget	20%	20%	20%

Table 3 shows a worked example for each of the three models for primary schools. The coefficients for each of the factors are calculated by taking the primary sector total sessions of 2,160 (see Table 1), and multiplying by the percentage weighting:

$$\text{EHC plans/Statements } 20\% = 2,160 * 20\% = 432$$

$$\text{Number on roll } 30\% = 2,160 * 30\% = 648$$

$$\text{Number on roll } 40\% = 2,160 * 40\% = 864$$

$$\text{Eligibility to FSM } 50\% = 2,160 * 50\% = 1,080$$

$$\text{Notional SEN Budget } 60\% = 2,160 * 60\% = 1,296$$

The spreadsheet formulae for the primary school allocations for each of the models shown in Table 3 are:

Model A = (C2/5392318)*1296+(D2/5459)*432+(F2/393)*432

Model B = (B2/30330)*864+(D2/5459)*864+(F2/393)*432

Model C = (B2/30330)*648+(D2/5459)*1080+(F2/393)*432

Table 4 displays an allocation summary based on 12 fte (see also FAQ 2). The worked example shows that there needs to be total work allocation reductions for EPs: CC, HH and KK and increases for EPs: FF, LL and MM.

Case Studies

The following section now details how the work allocation model has been used in three very different local authorities.

Table 3. Work Allocation Model for Primary Schools based on 12.0 fte

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
Primary Schools	NOR	Notional SEN £	FSM %	EHCs / Stmts Nos	EHCs / Stmts %	Model A	Model B	Model C	EP
1	186	31,250	23.2	4.2	2.2	12	11	11	CC
2	144	25,797	28.4	4.2	2.9	12	12	12	CC
3	140	31,703	28.1	6.5	4.6	15	14	14	GG
4	107	23,968	38.9	1.0	0.9	10	10	11	FF
5	120	34,981	36.4	4.5	3.8	15	13	14	AA
...
...
...
186	207	27,075	4.2	3.0	1.4	8	8	7	DD
187	119	14,804	4.2	0.0	0.0	4	4	3	DD
188	200	47,389	24.8	5.0	2.5	16	12	12	BB
189	289	42,106	8.1	2.5	0.9	12	10	9	EE
190	212	29,250	4.2	2.0	0.9	8	8	6	HH
Totals	30,330	5,392,318	5,459	849	393	2,160	2,160	2,160	
Average			18.3%		2.8%				

Table 4. Work Allocation Model spreadsheet summary based on 12.0 fte

EP	Core fte	Early Years	Primary	Secondary	Special	LA time Project Contingency	CPD Team Meeting	Total	Adjustment
AA	1.0	22	171	55	22	70	50	390	+10
BB	1.0	25	175	61	10	70	50	391	+9
CC	0.9	20	162	52	35	63	45	377	-17
DD	1.0	18	183	60	20	70	50	401	
EE	0.4	8	78	22	6	28	20	162	
FF	0.9	12	160	30	22	63	45	332	+28
GG	0.8	16	134	59	6	56	40	311	+9
HH	0.6	15	149	37	4	42	30	277	-37
II	0.5	8	89	37	15	35	25	209	-9
JJ	1.0	22	177	65	22	70	50	406	-6
KK	1.0	24	181	60	26	70	50	411	-11
LL	0.7	16	119	42	6	49	35	267	+13
MM	1.0	12	165	61	18	70	50	376	+24
NN	0.5	6	91	34	10	35	25	201	
OO	0.7	16	126	47	16	49	35	289	-9
Totals	12.0	240	2,160	720	240	840	600	4,800	4,800

Local Authority 1

One of the first years where the model was utilized was for a large Shire authority, that covered a considerable area geographically, and a significant population of economic disadvantage including several ex- coalmining villages. Prior to the introduction of the work allocation system, the annual process of allocating EP workloads had traditionally been a fraught and unpleasant period. The frustrations and concerns of the EPs included strong feelings of inequality between individuals and teams; lack of transparency and limited opportunities for development and, the more satisfying, project tasks. At the same time from the LA senior management there was dissatisfaction about how EP time was allocated, concern about the summer holiday period being a ‘down time’ and the driver of needing to provide for the wider Children Service.

To successfully introduce the system against this backdrop, a change team of representative EPs was formed led by the two authors; one in her role as joint PEP and the other as the developer of the system. The change team could influence all the key decisions such as the agreement of the percentages to the different work areas and the factors and weightings that would determine the number of sessions to each setting.

A key feature for the model was a weighting for each school for severe and complex pupils based on the percentage of existing statements of SEN and rolling three-year averages for permanent exclusions and Looked After Children. This was in response to EP concerns about inequality of demands from school and the LA requesting that the service prioritises the challenges of permanent exclusions. Another unique feature of the model for this service was an allowance for travel time which for a geographically extensive authority had been a long-standing issue between EP teams.

Much time was devoted to developing a component of commissioned time whereby each EP had a pro rata allocation for developmental, specialist or project activities. For a fulltime EP, this was set at 56 half day sessions, to be used between September and August. All work was agreed in advance and relevance to the service or LA had to be proven. At the end of the year a stringent evaluation system was used to ensure the time had been used appropriately. For the service, this led to the introduction of many lasting and valued projects such as a training and support interventions for parents of children with autism and the introduction of Restorative Approaches to settings across the LA, neither of which would have been achieved without this system. The LA managers were also able to input to key decision points ensuring their active support for the changes. They also valued being able to identify commissioned areas of work such as consultation support for social workers and targeted time for strategic Early Years work.

The model was a success with all stakeholders: LA managers liked the transparency and the response to their current needs and priorities; EPs appreciated being listened to and having their concerns addressed, they were particularly pleased with the commissioned time component of the system as this increased work satisfaction hugely; settings commented on the fairness in terms of allocations of time and again valued the transparency. Since its introduction, the model has continued to be developed annually, taking account of changing needs such as the drive to a more traded service and the feedback of stakeholders.

Local Authority 2

The second development of the work allocation model was for a large city based EP service. Prior to the introduction of the model, allocations were made termly, based on tasks rather than settings. So, each EP would get an allocation of statutory assessments to complete; setting visits to make; early years' cases and additional tasks such as annual reviews and transition assessments. There were several difficulties to address, not least the fact that one EP might be working with a school for standard visits but then they would go to another setting to do statutory assessment for a child they didn't know. Again, the frustrations of the EP were high, there was an urgent need for a model that demonstrated equity, was transparent and which they could trust.

Once again establishment of a 'change group' was central to the successful application of the model so that the views of the team could be represented, were listened to and addressed at all stages of its development. One of the major elements that not only the EPs wanted to have addressed, but which had been raised by many of the settings, was the lack of fairness in the amount of EP time allocated to them and with only minimal consideration of size and need. There was a strong view that the more settings requested statutory assessments the more time they received so there was no incentive for high demand settings to change their practice.

As a response three factors were identified: numbers on roll, percentage of eligibility for free school meals and the three-year average of numbers of statemented pupils. Four options of variable weightings for each factor were then considered by the Change group before a final decision was made. This was very important as the EPs had to talk settings through new allocations and ensure they understood why changes had been made. It took a while for the more demanding settings to understand and recognise that the 'pot' of EP time allocated was all that there was, and that statutory assessments would come out of this but by the end of the first year the balance was being redressed.

Historically there had always been a tension between the EP team and other SEN teams locally about the amount of time allocated for service maintenance elements such as CPD, team meetings, supervision and corporate tasks. Therefore, this component of time was broken down into its sub elements so that there was 100% transparency.

As this was an area where travel between schools was not an issue and the EP team were very keen to highlight new and diverse ways of working with schools and settings as part of the total process of change, allocations were not just in terms of sessions but also given in hours. This was a minor item but one which had quite a significant impact on how EPs and schools worked together and helped enormously in encouraging settings to value different EP activities and innovative ways of working together.

Again, the model was a success. Two years after its introduction the LA experienced some significant problems, not just financially but in terms of its performance and leadership. Senior leaders moved on and external consultants were brought in to make changes to the Education Service as a whole. The EP service came under scrutiny, but the work allocation model clearly outlined (year on year) in the annual document, specifying the details of service delivery and use of the time resource, was central in proving the efficiency of the service. Most

importantly the annual end of year evaluation process showed how positively the changes that had been viewed by schools and settings.

Local Authority 3

The third example of successful, flexible use of the time allocation model was for a federated EP service, covering two LAs with different challenges and priorities and also different SEN systems. Geographically one LA is a medium sized town with huge social and economic challenges, the other covers a large area composed of several different valleys which had seen a lot of industrial activity but now has relatively elevated levels of unemployment.

The service operated as two teams located at different bases within the respective LAs although for most aspects they were managed as one service, for example for CPD, team meetings, service delivery systems and work allocation. At the time of introducing the model there were challenges that needed to be addressed:

- Allocations to schools were based on a historical level of allocation that schools had become used to and expected but with many anomalies in terms of demands and levels of need;
- There had been a reduction in staffing levels overall and there needed to be some reduction in the overall allocations;
- The senior management in one LA were demanding change in EP practice that could only be achievable if there was some movement in the allocation of the overall amount of time to settings;
- Tensions between the two LAs about the equitability of EP time, in particular the smaller of the two felt that they were disadvantaged by the much larger EP numbers in the other LA. Also, they wanted their own priorities addressed not just those of the other LA; and

- The EPs expressed a lot of frustration about the ways in which time was allocated feeling it did not fairly address a number of additional activities.

One of the major strengths of the application of the model to this context was the ability to vary components to suit different LA needs whilst adhering to core principles and aims of the overall service. Each had a LA specific version of the annual document, allowing them to make their own decisions about various aspects such as the percentages of service delivery to different sectors or use of commissioned EP time for various LA initiatives.

Operationalisation of the work allocation model

The following section will address a number of questions which have been asked at team meetings or within the JISCM@il EPNET discussion group.

How the total days worked in a year been calculated?

The work allocation model uses 200 work days as the complement in a full year and lists the assumptions made in section A above. The transparency of the model enables a service to perform a ratio analysis of external to internal activities (Drury, 2015). External activities are those which hypothetically could be ‘traded’, including all work in schools. Internal activities, are those which could not be ‘traded’ including CPD, annual leave, management time, etc. Using the total annual work days of 261 as the denominator from Table 1, the external: internal ratio is 67:33.

Each of the assumptions is open to challenge and individual EPSs may wish to adopt different methods of calculation. For instance, if annual leave is less than 34 days then this would be an overestimate and the additional time could be recycled into LA time (see Table 1). The case study Local Authorities to be described later in this article, used a range of total work days from 197 to 216 as their total time available, by using a different set of assumptions

in section A above mainly relating to the number of casework management days undertaken during school holidays.

Also, EPSs may wish to adjust the unit of time to be used from the base model, for example half days which have been used in the examples in this article, could be amended to quarter days as a better approximation of actual time incurred.

How work might be allocated between the different sectors?

The weightings and overall service delivery percentages used in the work allocation model have been obtained from Educational Psychologist time logs and are meant as a guide only and to include an error factor of + or – 10 sessions out of the total of 400. Table 1 illustrates the ‘hydraulic’ nature of the allocation model so that an increase in one sector would require a decrease in another sector. In this respect accountancy principles are paramount so that all rows should add up to 400 and all columns should add up to the sector totals in Table 1. The methodology means that additional time to one sector or setting must involve a reduction in time elsewhere. So, if diary records indicate or there is a team view that EPs should be spending more than the 20 sessions (5%) allocated to early years or to special settings, then there needs to be an equivalent total decrease in sessions from other sectors. There is no algorithm for the early years and special sectors which is more dependent on team discussion and work diary records.

How the factors and weightings are selected?

Table 2 shows three selected factors with different weightings for each of the Models A, B and C. The factors have been chosen which relate to Educational Psychology Service delivery and provide a balance between need and demand. The choice of factors may lead to much debate within individual EPSs and trialling of various models. However, it should be noted that the correlations between the three models are high, between 0.91 and 0.98 (see Table 5) for both primary and secondary schools.

Table 5. Correlations between Work Allocation Models

Models	Primary	Secondary
A v B	0.96	0.94
A v C	0.91	0.91
B v C	0.98	0.98

Allocation of time for continuing professional development?

The Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC, 2015) guidelines for practitioner psychologists suggest about a day per month should be spent on a mixture of continuing professional development (CPD) activities. The work allocation model assigns 25 days or 50 sessions for the combination of CPD, support and supervision, team meetings and general service maintenance. Table 4 illustrates how the sessions are calculated on a pro-rata basis for part time EPs.

If supervision for experienced EPs is set at once per month how does that work for part time and newly qualified EPs?

Newly qualified EPs are given a reduced allocation of 0.9 fte for their first year so the overall EP service total would be reduced by 0.1, with the effect that the multiplier in Table 1 would be 11.9 instead of 12.0 fte.

Allocation of time for service development work?

The work allocation model provides 70 sessions for service development or project work, for additional Local Authority strategic tasks and to act as a contingency for unpredictable events. It is suggested that these sessions are allocated on a pro-rata basis for part time staff.

Would attendance at team meetings be pro-rata for part time employees?

The allocation for attendance at team meetings is subsumed under the CPD heading and Table 1 indicates a total of 50 sessions again to be pro-rated for part time EPs (see Table 4).

Discussion

Table 6 summarises the factors chosen and weightings selected by the three case study Local Authorities. The modelling process often led to lengthy debate about which factors should be preferred and could be viewed as a team building exercise. However, it should be noted already that each version of the model has a high correlation with each other (see Table 5) which is reflected in the similarity of the individual school allocations across Models A to C (see Table 3).

Table 6. To show factor weightings used by the case study LAs

	Local Authority 1	Local Authority 2	Local Authority 3
Number on roll		40%	40%
Notional SEN Budget	50%		
Eligibility to free school meals	30%	40%	40%
Statements / EHCs or delegated budget	10%	20%	20%
Travel	10%		

Table 7. To show sector allocations for the case study LAs

	Early Years	Primary	Secondary	Special	LA time Project Contingency	CPD Team Meetings	Total
LA1	3%	48%	15%	3%	19%	12%	100%
	Not attached to a school	Primary	Secondary	Special	LA time Project Contingency	CPD Team Meetings	Total
LA2	10%	36%	13%	8%	21%	12%	100%
	Cross-city specialist work	Primary	Secondary	Special	LA time Project Contingency	CPD Team Meetings	Total
LA3	10%	35%	12%	8%	23%	12%	100%
Core Model	5%	45%	15%	5%	17.5%	12.5%	100%

Table 7 illustrates the work allocation sector percentages for each case study Local Authority and includes as a comparison, the tariffs from the core model described in Table 1.

The variations within the primary sector are large ranging from 35% to 48%, but are much closer within the secondary sector, 12% to 15%. There is also a large variation within the special sector across the LAs, from 3% to 8% which reflects the ability of the model to allow for services to place a greater emphasis on allocation to particular areas as required and appropriate. This could be of relevance to traded services, allowing them to develop and extend proportions allocated to those activities that are more sought after by schools, and others, that purchase services.

Each year the respective EPSs evaluated the services they provided through seeking the views of different stake holders including the EPs themselves and schools and settings. Responses highlighted the success of the model. For EPs, the overall outcome was greater job satisfaction generally which was linked to many factors but included the ‘elastic’ that came from the contingency component that reduced the pressure of feelings of work overload; the positive outcomes from completing the innovative and research tasks that were commissioned and the overall feeling of equitability that resulted from the transparency. Schools and settings commented on greater fairness and flexibility, for example in one LA when asked ‘*To what extent have we been accessible, approachable and flexible?*’ 100% (n = 123) of the respondents rated the service as satisfactory or better, with 62% saying they were completely satisfied. In another LA one of feedback comments was ‘*We like the flexibility of hours and in how we can utilise EP support e.g. for training. Please do not change how you are working!*’

The extant findings indicate that previous systems for delivering EP services had limits because of factors such as lack of flexibility (Imich 1999), a dearth of opportunities for innovative work that is so often desperately needed to help systems and services to move forward (Mackay 2002) and an over-emphasis on consultation which restricted the autonomy of the EP to offer the most appropriate service for a CYP in a particular situation (Imich 1999). These are attended to within the model described as flexibility, commissioned activities and

being ‘child led’ are fundamental in how it has been constructed. Recent findings around traded services have noted the many positive aspects (Lee and Woods 2017), however the need to take account of factors such as: the inclusion of contingency time; the need to evidence ‘value for money’ through having a system that demonstrates accountability in terms of its activities and time; ensuring clarity and transparency and that is flexible in meeting changing needs has also been reported (Islam 2013). Again, these are addressed through this model and were variously highlighted as strengths in different evaluations.

Conclusion

The work allocation model has developed over the years to accommodate changes to special educational needs policy and to changes within Local Authority practice (e.g. BPS, 2015; Buck, 2015; Fox, 2015). The authors acknowledge the limitations of case study methodology and that there may be criticisms about some of the assumptions. However, the work allocation model has many strengths whilst reaffirming the principles of transparency and accountability. These strengths include:

- clarity on an annual basis in terms of use of the EP Service (time and efficiency)
- the ability to adapt and vary components of the service work allocation model to suit different needs of an LA on an annual basis
- transparency for client users and more equitable use of resources.
- provides the basis for further research on the effectiveness of this model in terms of evaluating impact.

Dessent’s article, written over twenty years ago, is still very much relevant in 2018:

Services should be prepared to be transparent in their work, and demonstrate accountability.

They will also need to improve awareness of what they do, demonstrate their cost effectiveness

and articulate how the educational psychology service enables the local authority to provide cost effectively for children with special needs (Dessent, 1994).

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