

SCHEME FOR THE COMMISSIONING OF PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSESSMENTS (SCPA)

Guidelines for SCPA Psychologists – 2023/2024

Purpose of the Scheme

The Scheme for the Commissioning of Psychological Assessments (SCPA) is provided by the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)/Department of Education (DE) to assist in the delivery of a psychological service to all schools. The scheme provides funding to schools to commission individual psychological assessments for students from psychologists working in a private capacity.

The scheme is not a substitute for a full educational psychological service of the sort provided by NEPS. It is an interim measure intended to supplement the NEPS service and meet current urgent needs for psychological assessment of children and young people. The operation of the scheme is reviewed on an ongoing basis by NEPS/DE.

The Panel of Psychologists

The SCPA panel of psychologists is compiled by NEPS. This list is regularly updated and is available on the DE website – Link to [Current Panel of SCPA Psychologists](#)

Any psychologist wishing to be placed on the 2023/2024 panel, and who was not a member of the 2022/2023 panel, is required to complete a **SCPA Application Form** and a **Garda Vetting Application Form**, both of which are available from the SCPA Manager.

The SCPA Manager may be contacted at scpa@education.gov.ie or by writing to:

SCPA Manager
NEPS (National Education Psychology Service)
Department of Education
2nd Floor, West Wing
The Herbert Building, The Park
Carrickmines, Dublin 18.
D18K 8Y4

New psychologists will be added to the SCPA panel, as private practitioners, when they have satisfied NEPS:

1. that they are a Registered or Chartered Psychologist (or the equivalent), with five years of relevant, supervised experience

OR

2. that they hold a professional post-graduate qualification in Educational Psychology recognised by the Psychological Society of Ireland (PSI) or have a Statement of Equivalence or have been deemed eligible to meet the criteria for a Statement of Equivalence in Educational Psychology by PSI

OR

3. that they hold a professional post-graduate qualification in Psychology, recognised by PSI, or have a Statement of Equivalence or have been deemed eligible to meet the criteria for a Statement of Equivalence in this area by PSI, plus two years of

relevant, supervised experience

OR

4. that they have previously been employed as an Educational Psychologist by the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)

AND

- that they are graduate members of an appropriate professional body (e.g. the Psychological Society of Ireland (PSI) or the British Psychological Society (BPS))
- that they receive relevant professional supervision for work completed as part of the Scheme for Commissioning of Psychological Assessments.
- that they adhere to the *PSI Code of Professional Ethics* (2011), and to the *PSI Guidelines – Confidentiality and Record Keeping in Practice* (2022)
- that they have successfully completed the Garda vetting process via NEPS
- that they have provided a Tax Clearance Access Number (obtainable from the Revenue Commissioners) and a PPSN
- that they have completed the 'Introduction to Children First' E-Learning Programme and accept their responsibilities as a mandated person under the Children First Act, 2015 .

Psychologists who were members of the 2022/2023 SCPA panel and who wish to join the 2023/2024 scheme are required to complete an **Acceptance Form**. This form will be emailed or posted to them in advance of the opening of the panel in September 2023. Membership of the panel only implies the eligibility of the psychologist to conduct assessments under the scheme and (provided the requisite terms and conditions are satisfied) to receive payment for such assessments. It does not imply an entitlement to do so.

Persons who are admitted to the 2023/2024 panel are eligible to conduct assessments under the scheme from 1st September 2023 until 30th June, 2024, subject to the terms and conditions laid down in these SCPA Guidelines for 2023/2024. Psychologists are obliged both to familiarise themselves with and to adhere to the following procedures, terms and conditions of the scheme.

Procedures to be followed by Psychologists in Implementing the Scheme

Psychologists are required to adhere to the following procedures, as laid down by the NEPS/DE:

- Ensure they are registered on the current SCPA panel (2023-24) before accepting a request for a SCPA assessment from a school
- Have some form of identification (e.g. Driving licence, passport) in their possession when conducting assessments under the scheme. In addition, the DE will provide all psychologists on the SCPA panel with a copy of their Garda vetting disclosure.
- In carrying out assessments under the scheme, psychologists are required to:
 - Ensure, before meeting a student, that they have a copy of the consent form and the referral form (form 2), completed and signed by the parents and the school.
 - Review previous reports and relevant school records.
 - Liaise with the parents/guardians, in advance of meeting the student to conduct the assessment, to ensure that consent was fully informed, to discuss background information and to clarify referral issues, as appropriate.
 - Administer individual tests of cognitive potential and of attainments and appropriate behavioural checklists as necessary and to engage in classroom or

playground observation as required or appropriate. (Note: the NEPS/DE expects that it will take most of a school day to complete an assessment under this scheme.

- Meet with the student's parents/guardians and teachers, following the formal part of the assessment, to provide verbal feedback on the assessment outcome, explaining findings and their implications..
- It is expected that the identified concerns of the parents and teachers will be addressed, and that relevant, related and useful recommendations will be provided.
- Take note of the 'Report-Writing Guidelines' provided, which SCPA psychologists are respectfully asked to follow. A report writing self-reflection questionnaire is also provided for your convenience. Guidelines and checklist may be amended from time to time in the context of regular reviews of the scheme.
- Provide, within one calendar month, a psychological report with recommendations for the parents/guardians and the school, bearing in mind that the style, content and format of the report should be appropriate for the recipients and in line with NEPS requirements in this area.
- Submit a completed and signed original copy of Form 3 to the principal, accompanied by a copy of the assessment report. The school principal then certifies that the work has been fully completed and makes the submission for payment to NEPS. Please note that SCPA forms, psychological reports or any other documents containing information that is personal to a student should never be sent electronically or by email.
- Reports submitted to NEPS should be printed on one side of the page only (not back to back)
- Psychologists and school principals must ensure that pupil details on the report supplied are consistent with the details supplied on Form 3
- Psychologists on the SCPA panel should inform NEPS when no longer accepting commissions under the scheme, so that arrangements can be made to notify schools.
- It is strongly recommended that all psychologists on SCPA have Professional Indemnity Cover.

Terms and Conditions of the Scheme

The following terms and conditions apply to all psychologists who carry out assessments under the scheme during the 23-24 school year

- SCPA psychological assessments must be conducted between 1st September 2023 and the 30th June 2024.
- SCPA sanctions are valid only for the year in which they are issued and may not be carried over into a new year.
- In general, the commissioning of psychological assessments, by schools, under SCPA, will be agreed and arranged in collaboration with the NEPS psychologist providing a service to the school. In some instances, schools that are awaiting the assignment of a NEPS psychologist or whose assigned psychologist is on leave may be permitted to commission some assessments, on receipt of written approval from the local NEPS Regional Director.
- An individual psychological assessment, in its entirety, must be wholly and exclusively carried out by the psychologist whose name appears on the current SCPA panel and who has been commissioned and remunerated for the assessment.

- SCPA psychologists must work within their areas of competence, keep abreast of relevant developments and comply with DE policy at all times.
- The NEPS/DE expect that all psychological assessments will be completed in a professional manner, with reasonable care and diligence and with adequate time given to the student, as well as parent and teacher consultations. The NEPS/DE expect that it will take most of a school day to complete an assessment under this scheme.
- SCPA psychologists are required to supply their own appropriate, up-to-date test materials and meet their other expenses out of the fee for the assessment.
- SCPA psychologists are required to familiarise themselves and comply with circulars and documents relevant to special educational needs that are produced, from time to time, by the NEPS/DE and by the National Council for Special Education (NCSE). These are available on the DE website – www.gov.ie and on the NCSE website – www.ncse.ie
- SCPA continues to be a school based service that requires the administration of test materials in the student's school during school hours. Therefore, neither teleassessments nor office based assessments are currently compliant with the SCPA scheme.
- It is expected that all psychologists on the panel will complete no more than 180 assessments in a school year and not less than three assessments each year. If a psychologist completes three or more assessments in a year, they will be automatically invited to renew their membership of the new SCPA panel, for the following year. If a psychologist completes less than three assessments, and wishes to renew their SCPA membership, they should write to the SCPA Manager, clearly indicating how they can contribute to the new SCPA panel, and the renewal will then be considered on that basis.
- Payment for assessments carried out under the scheme must be made from SCPA funds and from such funds alone. Psychologists who accept commissions under the scheme may not seek or accept payment from any other source in respect of such commissions and will be required to certify that they have not done so, as a condition of receiving payment. Seeking or accepting payment from any other source in respect of an assessment under the scheme will constitute grounds for removal from the SCPA panel.
- The personal data of the individual student gathered for the purpose of a SCPA assessment may not be used for any purpose other than the conduct of the SCPA assessment.

Fees for Psychological Assessments Conducted under the Scheme

There is no charge to parents/guardians or to schools for assessments carried out under the scheme.

From February 22nd 2021 the fee payable by NEPS to psychologists conducting psychological assessments under the scheme is €550.00 per assessment, which is subject to withholding tax @20%. This will result in a net fee of €440.57. The psychologist will be responsible for the payment of any additional tax due. This payment includes all expenses (including travel and subsistence) incurred by the psychologist carrying out the assessment.

Psychologists seeking extra payment for SCPA assessments from parents/guardians or from schools may be removed from the panel.

Where it is determined that a psychologist has accepted an additional payment, from a parent/guardian or from a school, for work carried out under the scheme, the NEPS/DE reserves the right to withhold the standard fee from that psychologist.

Procedure for Payment under the Scheme

The payment process will be initiated upon receipt, by NEPS, of a Certificate of Completion of Assessment Form (Form 3) in respect of the individual assessment, together with a copy of the psychological report.

Form 3 must be fully completed and signed by the psychologist and by the school principal. The original (not a copy) is submitted to NEPS by the school principal within three calendar months of the date of assessment.

Payment may be withheld or refused until the NEPS/DE is satisfied that the terms and conditions of the scheme have been complied with.

When satisfied that the terms and conditions of the scheme have been fully complied with, NEPS will arrange for payment to be made directly to the psychologist.

Audit & Quality Assurance:

NEPS is obliged to complete an annual quality control exercise on reports submitted under the SCPA scheme. This involves a small group of NEPS psychologists reviewing a sample of redacted SCPA reports and completing a quality control questionnaire on each. This questionnaire is based on the '**SCPA Report Writing Self Reflection document**' with which SCPA psychologists are already familiar.

Feedback is used to inform revisions of the guidelines in the first instance. The panel is also alerted by email to any particular issues that NEPS need to draw to your attention. If the quality of any report is of specific concern, NEPS may contact the individual psychologist concerned. For this purpose, NEPS reserves the right to access to test protocols and other documents.

When schools or parents make complaints to NEPS about psychologist, NEPS encourages local resolution in the first instance, i.e. between the school principal/parent and the psychologist. Where informal efforts to resolve difficulties have failed, complainants may invoke the formal DE Complaints Procedure, which may be accessed using the following link

- [DE Complaints Procedure](#)

Grounds for Removal from Panel

The grounds on which a psychologist may be removed from the panel or suspended (pending investigation) include the following:

- failing to fully comply with the terms and conditions of the scheme
- failing to conduct an assessment in a professional manner, with reasonable care and diligence, or giving inadequate time to the student and/or teacher/parent consultations
- engaging in conduct that falls short of what would be expected from a professional psychologist
- seeking or accepting payment from a source other than the scheme in respect of an assessment conducted under the scheme

- failing to personally conduct the assessment in its entirety (including writing the report and providing feedback)
- providing false or misleading information in a psychological report or in Form 3
- providing false or misleading information in an application to be placed on the panel
- being convicted of a criminal offence for which the penalty is a term of imprisonment of 1 year or more
- representing themselves in an inaccurate or inappropriate manner, e.g. as employees of the National Educational Psychological Service
- An allegation of serious misconduct against a psychologist on the SCPA panel may result in suspension from the panel pending investigation of the allegation and the outcome of any such investigation.

Further Information

Queries should be submitted to NEPS in writing, either by e-mail scpa@education.gov.ie or by conventional mail to:

SCPA Manager
NEPS (National Education Psychology Service)
Department of Education
2nd Floor, West Wing
The Herbert Building, The Park
Carrickmines, Dublin 18.
D18K 8Y4

Every effort will be made to respond to queries as soon as possible.

Complaints should be dealt with at point of service, between the school principal and the psychologist. Where informal efforts to resolve difficulties have failed, complainants may invoke the formal DE Complaints Procedure, which may be accessed using the following link - [DE Complaints Procedure](#)

Scheme for the Commissioning of Psychological Assessments (SCPA) General

Disclaimers

- Terms and conditions of the scheme are subject to ongoing review. They may be changed or updated at any time and without notice by the Minister for Education.
- The SCPA panel is not a register of psychologists. Membership of the panel is not to be confused with eligibility for statutory registration of psychologists.
- In accepting a psychologist as a member of the panel, the DE is not entering into any contractual arrangement with the psychologist. SCPA psychologists are not employees of the NEPS/DE.
- Membership of the SCPA panel confers no particular rights on psychologists and does not provide any guarantee of being commissioned to administer psychological tests in schools.
- In any given year, unless otherwise stated, membership of the SCPA panel is generally valid from the date of appointment until the end of that school year only.
- The NEPS/DE reserves the right to remove a psychologist from the panel at any

time. The scheme may be discontinued at any time by the Minister for Education.

- The NEPS/DE is not a disciplinary body for psychologists. Such matters are more properly the remit of the particular psychologist's professional body.

Links

SCPA –Scheme for the Commissioning of Psychological Assessments

Guidelines and Relevant Documents:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/service/5ef45c-neps/>

DE Complaints Procedure

<https://www.gov.ie/pdf/71632/?page=null>

Children First E-Learning Programme

<https://www.tusla.ie/children-first/children-first-e-learning-programme/>

National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) Resources and Publications :

<https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/97aa18-national-educational-psychological-service-neps-resources-and-public/>

Behavioural, Social and Emotional Difficulties (Primary and post Primary):

<https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/97aa18-national-educational-psychological-service-neps-resources-and-public/>

Literacy Resources:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/97aa18-national-educational-psychological-service-neps-resources-and-public/>

Guidelines for Primary Schools on Exemptions from the Study of Irish

<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/7028e-exemptions-from-the-study-of-irish-guidelines-for-primary-schools/>

Psychological Society of Ireland. (201). *PSI Guidelines – Confidentiality and Record Keeping in Practice*. Dublin: Author.

<https://www.psychologicalsociety.ie/footer/Guidelines-Policies--Papers>

Psychological Society of Ireland. (2011). *Code of Professional Ethics*. Dublin: Author.

<https://www.psychologicalsociety.ie/Article/Code-of-Ethics-1>