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Introduction

- There is limited research into equity of access to Educational Psychology Services (EPS) for marginalised groups.
- The academic outcomes of some minoritised groups can be lower than the average student e.g. **Looked After Children (LAC), Pupil Premium (PP), Free School Meals (FSM)** and some ethnically minoritised groups.
- Therefore, this study aimed to address the following research questions:

Question: How do minoritised group referral rates to the EPS compare to the local community population data? Is there any under-or-over representation in those accessing the traded EPS?

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: There will be a significantly higher proportion of FSM, PP and LAC students in the prioritised population than in the Local Authority (LA) population data.

Hypothesis 2: There will be a significantly lower proportion of EAL students in the prioritised population than in the LA population data.

Hypothesis 3: There will be a significantly lower proportion of students from minoritised ethnic groups (Black, Asian or Mixed) in the prioritised population than in the LA population data.

Hypothesis 4: There will be a significantly higher proportion of male students than female students, in the prioritised population than in the LA population data.

Method

All mainstream primary and secondary schools in one LA

Asked to provide anonymous data on all students who accessed traded EPS

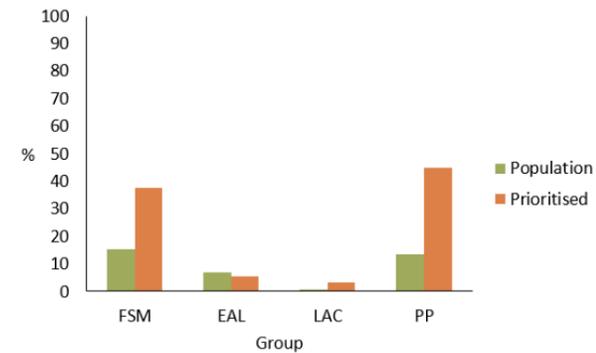
Pupil gender, ethnicity, EAL, FSM, PP and LAC were recorded

SENCOs/ School Leaders completed an online Qualtrics survey for data April 2020 - April 2021

Percentages were analysed to compare corresponding groups in LA population data and prioritised students

Results

115 responses, 55 included in analysis



Chi-Square analysis showed there were significantly higher percentages:

- FSM students within the prioritised group than within the LA population group $\chi^2(1) = 11.32, p = .001$.
- PP students within the prioritised group than within the LA population group $\chi^2(1) = 23.1, p < .001$.
- Male students within the prioritised group than within the LA population group $\chi^2(1) = 4.02, p = .045$.

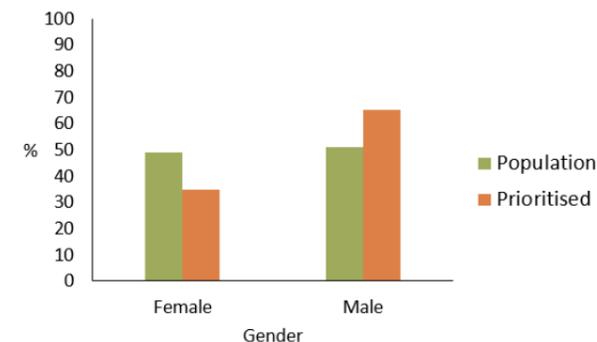


Table 1

The percentage of individuals in each ethnic group within the general population of the Local Authority (Pop) compared to the percentage of individuals in each ethnic group being prioritised by the educational psychology service

	Percentage in LA population	Percentage in prioritised population
White	89.22	93.78
Mixed	4.35	3.83
Asian	3.62	1.44
Black	1.35	0.48
Other	0.59	0.48

There were no significant differences for ethnically minoritised groups. Data for LAC students was too small to be analysed and the sample size for EAL students was too small to draw conclusions.

Discussion

- Students with high levels of vulnerability and additional barriers (PP, FSM & LAC) were prioritised for EP support. Research shows these groups have lower attainment and face greater disadvantages. Also, they were disproportionately negatively affected by COVID. Therefore, providing them with additional support may be more equitable.
- Consistent with previous research, more boys than girls accessed EP support, however, research is divided about whether this over-representation is equitable or not.
- The small numbers of EAL and ethnically minoritised students being prioritised for EP support, may be explained because these students were possibly being supported by the LA's specialist EAL and ethnic minority support service. Also, research shows that factors, such as English fluency, mediates their need for EP support so not all EAL students would benefit from EP support.

Limitations

- There was a lack of diversity in the LA population and students prioritised by the EPS
- Relatively small sample size
- Data was collected retrospectively, during COVID 19 pandemic
- No accurate data for Young Carers or Gypsy, Roma and Traveller students
- No data for EP statutory involvement

Food for thought

- This research provides a model for EPS to collect and analyse data on minoritised groups in their LAs
- Prompts discussion about equitable access to EPS for minoritised groups
- Asks the question of whether equal prioritisation is the same as equitable access
- Helps EPS to identify which groups are missing in their prioritisation and who is under-represented
- Future research could investigate barriers to accessing support from EPs perhaps using a qualitative design