

**Report for Argyll and Bute Community Services:
Social Affairs Thematic Group
9 May 2011**

1. Report Outline

1.1 This brief report aims to provide

- an overview of the HMIE report *Educational Psychology in Scotland: Making a Difference* as a context for the inspection of Argyll and Bute Psychological Service
- a review of the recent HMIE inspection of Argyll and Bute Council Educational Psychology Services
- an indication of the ways in which the psychological service contributes to local priorities to make a difference to children and young people in Argyll and Bute

2. Educational Psychology in Scotland: Making a Difference (HMIE 2011)

2.1 This recently published report is a review of all 32 local authority educational psychology services (EPS) which identified that Scotland has high quality provision. The many strengths detailed in the report include the expert and valued support which educational psychologists provide for highly vulnerable children and young people and their families, their contributions to building the capacity of other educational professionals, their role as key players with agencies and partners who support children and young people, and their contributions to shaping and evaluating policy and practice. The report highlights that there will be a challenge in sustaining and improving on these areas of strength while resources in local authorities become more scarce. As a result it is centrally important that decisions about how to achieve the greatest benefit from the contributions of educational psychologists are closely linked to the needs of the authority and national priorities.

2.2 HMIE identified five key areas where changes would, they believe, have the greatest impact on children and young people. These are as follows:

- Contributions to the development of Curriculum for Excellence beyond health and wellbeing, for example, improving learning and teaching or supporting transitions as part of the successful implementation of Curriculum for Excellence.
- Developing the research function of educational psychology services to contribute more directly to improving outcomes for children and young people.
- Evaluating and reviewing all aspects of educational psychology practice in relation to their impact on children and young people and on the adults who support them.

- Making processes of self-evaluation more robust including ensuring that children, young people, their families and other key stakeholders can contribute to the development and review of the service.
- Ensuring the structure and focus of each service is directed to addressing national and particular local needs and achieving Best Value.

2.3 HMIE have asked for a brief report on how each service is contributing to these key areas at present. This has been completed by Argyll and Bute Psychological Service and submitted to HMIE.

2.4 Following the launch of *Educational Psychology in Scotland: Making a Difference*, HMIE announced that there will be no further routine inspections of Educational Psychology Services. Instead, HMIE have appointed a link inspector for each service whose remit will include the gathering of intelligence from each service which will feed into the Shared Risk Assessment process for the Council. The Link Inspector for Argyll and Bute will be Douglas Hutchison and there will also be involvement with the HMIE District Inspector, Maureen Mallon.

3. *Inspection of Educational Psychology Services in Argyll and Bute*

3.1 Argyll and Bute Psychological Service was inspected by HMIE in the autumn of 2010. The web based report was published on 1 February 2011. Many strengths were identified within the report, including fulfilment of general statutory duties, impact on staff and partnership working, all of which are no longer formally evaluated by HMIE. The service was formally evaluated on 14 Quality Indicators. All areas were evaluated as satisfactory or above with **good** and **very good** evaluations in the following areas:

Good

- Impact on children and young people
- Impact on parents, carers and families
- Impact on the local community
- Provision of professional development and training
- Research and strategic development
- Policy development and review
- Participation of stakeholders
- Operational planning

Very Good

- Intervention

3.2 HMIE identified key strengths as follows:

The service had

- **shown high levels of commitment, professionalism and energy to improving outcomes for children and young people;**
- **developed a range of innovative approaches to change the lives of children; and**
- **developed strong partnership working with a wide range of agencies.**

The full range of stakeholders was surveyed during the inspection process with high levels of satisfaction across all groups. In particular, parents valued the knowledge and skills of the psychologists and felt they had been well supported during stressful periods. External partners and authority staff highly valued the individual work carried out by the psychological service and saw this making a difference to the lives of children, young people and their families. Many elements of positive practice are described within the HMIE report.

Three particular aspects of service delivery were identified as features of good practice:

- Effective therapeutic interventions supporting the mental health and wellbeing of vulnerable children and young people
- An innovative approach called *Homunculi* to support children and young people with autism spectrum disorder
- A creative use of the *Friends for Life* programme to support children moving from island schools to a large mainstream secondary school

HMIE also identified areas for improvement. These are detailed below along with the steps being taken to address these issues.

- **build on existing good practice to increase the effectiveness of consultation and assessment;**

The EPS has reviewed assessment and consultation practices to consider where this is working well and build on this practice. Guidance for EPs and for schools has been developed around consultation, including how such work is recorded.

- **develop an effective management information system to track trends in performance and measure impact and outcomes;**

The PEP has undertaken SEEMIS training to consider how the database can be used to help provide management information in a helpful form. As a result SEEMIS will provide input to the whole team in August of this year to ensure the right information is logged on to the system to allow useful data to be generated. Ways in which such information

supports continuous improvement are now detailed in the service Quality Management Policy.

- **continue to build on the positive start made by the head of education and PEP to enhance the impact of the service at strategic levels;**

The PEP is now part of the Education Management Team and meets with the Head of Service: Education and Quality Improvement Managers on a regular basis. The PEP and increasingly other psychologists, contribute to key strategic groups within Community Services. There are regular discussions to ensure the service is targeting support to the correct areas to make a difference to children and young people.

- **improve self-evaluation and establish more effective support and challenge within the service**

Regular team meetings are in place to review practice on an ongoing basis and feed in to service evaluation and development. To inform this process, a systematic approach to accessing the views of stakeholders is now in place. A stakeholder reference group is being set up to provide a forum for consulting on psychological service developments which will also be used to consider approaches to address additional support needs more generally.

The service has developed a specific action plan to address all issues raised in the report.

- 3.3 In all HMIE reports, the inspection team makes a statement that reflects their confidence in the service's capacity for improvement. The Argyll and Bute EPS inspection report states - 'There are some important improvements needed, but because the EPS has a good understanding of its strengths and areas for improvement, and is performing well we have ended the inspection process at this stage.' HMIE also acknowledged the high quality support and vision of the Head of Service: Education.

4. *Making a difference to children and young people in Argyll and Bute*

- 4.1 To ensure the most effective use is made of Argyll and Bute EPS, service planning is linked to wider planning within the authority. At present key developments are targeted at supporting Education Service Outcomes as follows: Curriculum for Excellence; supporting learners in their personal development and embedding GIRFEC in schools; supporting skills for life and skills for work through partnership working; raising attainment and promoting achievement; enhancing performance management systems.

4.2 Educational Psychologists promote child development and learning mainly with children and young people, aged 0-24 years, through the application of psychology. The aims of the service are to:

- Undertake high quality **assessment, intervention and consultation**
- **Work in close partnership** with parents, schools and other agencies such as social work and health
- Help children and young people to **reach their potential in school**
- Work with others to help children and young people **individually**, within their **family** and within their **community**
- Reflect on and **evaluate** its own work
- Contribute to **research** and **policy development** in education
- Fulfil its **statutory obligations**

4.3 Psychologists work in schools and local communities to make a difference to outcomes for children and young people in Argyll and Bute. Every educational establishment has a named educational psychologist who works along with school staff and colleagues in other agencies to consider effective approaches to learning as well as meeting the needs of individuals and groups. Some examples of this work are detailed below.

- Therapeutic work with individual young people
- Working with families to support parenting
- Contributing to multiagency autism assessment teams
- Working with the authority on policies and practice to support children and young people for example autism, transitions, reading, disability etc, including carrying out research
- Contributing to the assessment of a very wide range of additional support needs
- Improving health and wellbeing with individuals, groups and classes for example Friends, Homunculi
- Training colleagues in education and other agencies for example around new legislation, attachment, approaches to learning etc.

4.4 The Educational Psychology Service is fully committed to working along with others to ensure that practices are as effective as possible to make a difference to the lives of children and young people in Argyll and Bute.

Roslyn Redpath

Principal Educational Psychologist