



Community Services: Education

Educational Psychology Service Standards and Quality Report 2012 - 14

Introduction

Educational psychologists promote child development, learning and emotional wellbeing, mainly with children and young people aged 0-24 years, through the application of psychology. The psychological service in Argyll and Bute is part of Community Services: Education. As such the service operates within the wider aims of Argyll and Bute Council Education Services.

A review of educational psychology services across Scotland was completed by Her Majesty's Inspectorate, Education (HMIE). The report states:

'This review of all 32 local authority educational psychology services (EPS) has identified that Scotland has high quality provision..... It is likely that the calls on EPS will increase while resources may become more scarce. This makes it even more important that decisions about how to achieve the greatest benefit from the valuable contributions of educational psychologists are closely linked to the needs of individual councils as well as Scotland as a whole. Maintaining the steady state is not an option.'

Educational Psychology in Scotland: Making a difference (HMIE March 2011)



Through self evaluation, consultation with stakeholders and the delivery of services in line with local and national objectives, Argyll and Bute Psychological Service is working creatively to meet this challenge.

Argyll and Bute Community Services give a commitment to *“working together to achieve the best for children, young people and families”*.

Education Service Vision

Argyll and Bute’s Education service is forward looking and ambitious, continuously improving the quality of provision through self- evaluation. Achievement, raising attainment and inclusion is at the heart of all we do. We recognise the importance of involving the whole community in educating a child. We will ensure that views are listened to heard and acted upon, and make sure that every child and young person has an effective and appropriate education led by top quality head teachers, class teachers and support staff.

The Education service aim is to work together to create a community, with a culture, where our young people are included, successful, ambitious and creative and where they can aspire to be the best they can be.

Psychological Service Vision

To promote the wellbeing and development of all children and young people using the knowledge and evidence base of child psychology

In accordance with statutory obligations the service aims to fulfil this vision by:

- undertaking high quality assessment, intervention and consultation
- working in close partnership with children, parents, schools and other agencies following GIRFEC principles
- raising attainment and promoting achievement through Curriculum for Excellence by delivering training and developing the skills of others
- adopting a reflective and evaluative approach
- contributing to research and policy development

Key achievements

This section summarises progress from the Service Improvement Plans 2012-13 and 2013-14

Literacy

The authority Reading Initiative, set up and supported by the psychological service, comes to an end this session. The final set of data is currently being collected from primary schools. 5 years of data based on Suffolk reading assessments will be analysed to consider trends over time. The desired outcome is that reducing numbers of children at the primary stage will be identified as in need of support for literacy skills as a result of a range of strategies implemented over the last 4 years. A full report will be written and disseminated to inform next steps in relation to ensuring children and young people in Argyll and Bute have well developed literacy skills.

Last session, reading and spelling assessments, and the *Myself as a Learner* questionnaire, were administered with primary age children who were Looked After. As a result of staff absences, children in the Cowal area were not assessed. To support schools with this process on an ongoing basis, YARC assessment materials have been provided to all primary schools with EPs providing support to schools regarding administration and interpretation as required. The data over two years will be analysed and fed back to schools to support increased attainment and achievement for Looked After children.

Training took place in the Helensburgh and Lomond area in relation to dyslexia over the last session. This will be rolled out to Oban and Cowal next session. The practice around literacy and dyslexia is being reviewed through the authority Literacy Forum, which is now being led by a Depute Head Teacher, with ongoing involvement from the psychological service. The desired outcome is that there will be clearer pathways for the assessment and support of literacy difficulties, including dyslexia, across all schools.

Impact of exercise of attitudes towards physical activity

The prevalence of obesity in childhood is on the increase. This is probably due to a range of factors such as poor diet, lack of exercise and the tendency of parents to keep their children indoors because of worries about perceived dangers in the community. There is medical evidence that obesity in childhood is a risk factor for a range of health concerns later in life. While there has been considerable research into children's diet there have been fewer studies looking specifically at the role of exercise. The health psychology model proposes that attitudes influence intentions which, in turn, influence behaviour. This study was set up to investigate whether or not it is possible to influence children's attitudes towards physical activity.

Primary 6 children from Rockfield Primary School (including the Gaelic Medium Unit and the Learning Centre) and St Columba's Primary School were randomly allocated to a study group and a comparison group. The children in the study group were offered three lunchtime sessions each week over the course of a month comprising a range of games that were designed to be engaging and enjoyable. The study group and the comparison group both completed pre test/post test questionnaires designed to assess their attitudes toward physical activity. Analysis of the pre test/post tests results showed a small change in a positive direction for the study group. This piece of work was carried out in conjunction with the Active Schools coordinator.

The increases in children's attitudes towards physical activity were relatively modest, but this could be attributed to their relatively positive attitudes at the outset. The Olympic Games of 2012 and the approaching Commonwealth Games could have had an influence in this regard.

The positive changes in attitudes towards physical activity were encouraging and would seem to be worthy of further study. This could be taken forward through discussion and planning within the Argyll & Bute Children's Primary Thematic group.

Living Life to the Full

There is some evidence that young people from remote and rural locations moving to further and higher education placements post school can have difficulty sustaining these positive destinations.

In the early part of session 2013/2014 Living Life to the Full was delivered to all sixth year students in Tobermory High School. Living Life to the Full is a course based on cognitive behaviour therapy principles that is designed to be delivered over an eight week period. It is generally used with clinical groups of patients suffering from depression but it is also has wider applicability including the prevention of psychological/emotional difficulties.

It has been observed that students from island schools such as Tobermory and Islay have a disproportionately high dropout rate when they move on to college/university. This does not appear to be due to academic reasons but more to do with a minimal experience in managing independently and a lack of resilience when times become a little more challenging. It was for this reason that the sixth year group was chosen, that is, to attempt to bolster their emotional resilience before moving away from home to further/higher education.

The students attended the course on a weekly basis in place of their Personal and Social Education class. Attendance was good although it was noted that the students' willingness to participate varied from session to session. On exploring this further many of the students were under the misapprehension that they were being offered Living Life to the Full because they were viewed as having emotional problems. As they did not see themselves as having any particular problems they questioned the relevance of the course for them. It was helpful in this regard that there was some additional support from a former student of Tobermory High School who had gone on to university to take a psychology degree. She was able to provide an account of the challenges she faced on leaving Mull to attend university away from home.

On conclusion of the course the students' feedback indicated that had been happy to participate in the course and had enjoyed elements of it, but they remained to be convinced of its benefits in the longer term.

The plan, as far as Tobermory High School is concerned, is to continue to deliver the programme to successive sixth year cohorts and to track dropout/success rates as the students move on to further/higher education. The next delivery of the course will take place in session 2014/2015. More careful consideration will need to be given as to how to present the LLTTF course to the students next time around – in order that they can see its relevance.

Living Life to the Full is currently being delivered to a group of S4 to S6 students in Oban High School who are experiencing a range of emotional difficulties. Consideration is also being given to offering and supporting the programme in Islay High School and Hermitage Academy.

Homunculi evaluation

The Homunculi programme was published in 2013 by Jessica Kingsley Publishers. Evaluation of the implementation of the programme has been carried out with children and young people drawn from schools in the Helensburgh and Lomond and Oban areas. There have also been excellent reviews of the materials from public forums. The research on *The Homunculi* has recently been published in the *Good Autism Practice* Journal ([click here](#)) and poster presentations have been made UK wide. The lesson delivery within Hermitage Academy has also been matched to Curriculum for Excellence.

Within Argyll & Bute evidence for the effectiveness of the approach has been obtained from single case studies, group studies and ongoing work with whole classes and school year groups to build resilience, extending the application of the programme beyond the autism spectrum to wider populations. One study provided mental health measures for 20 young people in Hermitage Academy, of whom half had Asperger's Syndrome/high functioning autism while the others had emotional and behavioural difficulties. There were significant improvements in scores for anxiety, depression anger and stress. Overall, *The Homunculi* has been shown to be an effective programme for supporting children and young people in Argyll & Bute schools and will be extended to explore the impact of implementation to support primary secondary transition.

Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS)

Three years ago, following engagement with West Dunbartonshire Council Psychological Service, the PATHS materials were piloted within Argyll and Bute, led by the psychological service and members of the Early Years Team. PATHS is a preventative educational programme for developing children's emotional and social competence and wellbeing. A central focus is to facilitate the early development of emotional awareness, social understanding and resilience. The programme was piloted in educational establishments across Argyll and Bute. Staff and parental feedback was very positive and was used to support training of the next round of participants.

Last session, building on the pilot and in conjunction with the Early Years Collaborative (EYC) group, a number of establishments were identified to take forward PATHS. Over last session two awareness raising / training sessions were delivered to members of the establishments' senior leaders and staff. This included information on the materials, nurture and valuable input from staff who had already implemented PATHS through the initial pilot. A model for supporting establishments implementing PATHS and a readiness checklist for establishments has been developed to support implementation in August 2014. Through the EYC tests of change are being built in to the implementation. The plan is to have an ongoing, supported roll out to increasing numbers of early years and primary establishments.

Educational psychologists have supported the ongoing implementation of PATHS through ensuring effective implantation including training with both managers and front line staff. There is also ongoing involvement with the EYC to consider impact questions. This work will continue in to the next session.

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD)

Through the Autism Support and Development Team, an educational psychologist, area principal teacher and head teacher continue to work together with school staff to address the needs of children and young people with autism spectrum disorders. This includes assessment, delivering

proactive approaches including staff awareness training, the introduction of specialist support strategies for learning and classroom management in addition to the evaluation of approaches implemented. These strategies often address the specific needs of individual children and young people within the contexts of their home and school. All educational psychologists continue to support the diagnostic process for children and young people who are assessed for ASD, through providing contextualised assessment information and offering support to families and schools post diagnosis. There is frequent direct involvement in the multiagency diagnostic process along with colleagues from health services. The psychological service team will continue to contribute to meeting the objectives detailed in Argyll and Bute’s Autism Strategy, and those within the Integrated Children’s Service Plan. This will include supporting evaluation of primary / secondary transition planning for children with an ASD diagnosis.

Adoption and fostering

Psychologists provide a valued contribution to the membership of approval and matching panels. There has been a request for additional time to be given to this activity. Within this multidisciplinary forum educational psychologists are able to bring a psychological perspective to this important decision making process.

Getting it right for every child

The Educational Psychology Team has supported the professional development of GIRFEC advisors who have been identified from health, social work and education across Argyll and Bute. A full day training on Solution Oriented Meetings was delivered to all GIRFEC advisors last session with a follow up session next term. Solution oriented practice is a way of working that helps people develop goals and solutions rather than becoming stuck on exploring and analysing current problems. It is anticipated that with increased confidence the GIRFEC advisors will be able to support staff in schools and other agencies, who have the role of lead professional and may be involved in leading Child’s Plan meetings.

At the start and the end of the training, participants were asked to rate their confidence in leading solution oriented meetings on a scale of 1 - 10

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Pre	2	3	3	4	1	1	-	-	1	-
Post	-	-	-	-	3	2	3	8	1	-

All participants reflected that this training would have an impact on their day to day practice. The participants were asked to note one thing they would do differently as a result of this training. The responses are summarised below:

- Use and review solution oriented principles regularly to embed in to practice / meetings
- Spend more time at Child Plan meetings / reviews talking about solutions
- Remember I don’t have to provide a solution
- Share the approach more confidently with colleagues at meetings including supporting the chair
- Heightened awareness that communications with colleagues, managers and service users remain solution focused
- Have an increased focus on strengths, skills and remain solution / outcome focused

In the coming session, further training will be offered to staff across agencies through the GIRFEC training calendar.

Responding to critical incidents

Guidance and resources to be used in responding to “Critical Incidents” have been produced by psychological services in collaboration with colleagues from education and clinical psychology. Critical incidents are usually defined as overwhelming events, which can involve: destruction of property; include injury or loss of life; affect communities; and can impact upon many children and families. In addition, they are viewed as being out of the realm of “normal” human experience and as such are viewed as traumatic, meaning that they can lead to or result in stress reactions.

It is recognised that such events can often occur without warning; therefore there is not normally time to prepare in terms of action or gathering appropriate resources. The time following an incident can be characterised by confusion, anxiety and lack of information; it was felt therefore that it was important that a resource be produced that mediated these issues as far as possible by supporting staff members in responding to incidents and supporting others, both adults and pupils.

The guidance includes practical actions and information pertaining to different phases of an incident and also resources that can be used by both adults and children. These are intended for use by employees throughout Argyll and Bute council, and can be used by staff to provide information and support to parents and children. There are also links to appropriate resources, for example from Cruse Bereavement Care. The guidance aims to provide a framework that can be used to coordinate a flexible, timely and sensitive response.

The resource can be accessed on the HUB using the Learning and Guidance tab. The information is under the Guidance section.

Provision of training and support to staff groups

Providing training is one of the core functions of Scottish educational psychologists, and in Argyll & Bute the team is keen to promote this role to help build capacity in front line staff to enhance inclusive practices. It has also been highlighted by Education Scotland that the skill level and confidence of staff is central to effectively meeting learners’ needs.

Over the past two years a wide range of training events have been effectively delivered. The training has covered the following subject areas and extends from delivery of sessions at whole school inservice days, intervention with multiagency groups, small group sessions including parents as well as less formal one to one sessions to support staff in schools.

- Attachment
- Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS)
- Theories of child development
- Introduction to cognitive behavioural therapy and Friends for Life
- Standardised administration of literacy and numeracy assessments
- Living Life to the Full
- The Equality Act 2010 and exclusions
- Meeting additional support needs at the Early Years
- Nurture
- Asperger’s Syndrome
- Cognitive behavioural therapy and the autistic spectrum
- Solution oriented approaches
- Brain development and attachment
- The role of the educational psychologist
- Social stories

- from school
- Solution Oriented meetings
- Restorative approaches
- ASD and the criminal justice system
- Literacy development and dyslexia
- Visual support structures and classroom routines
- Additional support needs tribunals
- Relaxation techniques / mindfulness meditation
- Managing ADHD in the classroom
- The more able child

Staff trained over the last two years include:

- Early years staff within establishments and cross authority
- Parents
- Newly appointed head teachers
- Depute heads support secondary
- Primary and secondary support staff
- Primary and secondary teachers
- Newly appointed area support staff
- Support staff undertaking the Professional Development Award
- Additional support needs assistants
- GIRFEC advisors across health, education and social work
- Colleagues in health and social work
- Child and adolescent mental health (CAMHS)
- Educational psychologists

A more systematic and consistent approach to the evaluation of training being delivered will be explored and implemented over the coming session, with a focus on identifying the impact of these interventions.

Stakeholder feedback

This valuable stakeholder feedback is used to inform service planning and ensure continuous improvement. A systematic approach to engaging with stakeholders on an ongoing basis is detailed in the service Quality Management policy.

Feedback from parents

Below is the summary of responses to questionnaires for sessions 2012/13 and 2013/14. Feedback from questionnaires was received from 43 parents in total.

	Yes	No	Partly	No response
Were you provided with leaflet?	35%	58%		7%
Was leaflet helpful?	100% of those parents who received a leaflet reported it to be helpful			
Did you find the meeting with the educational psychologist about your child helpful?	77%	0	14%	9%
Did you know before the meeting what to expect?	52%	16%	26%	6%
Do you feel that your views were listened to?	84%	0	5%	11%
Do you feel that the educational psychologist had a good understanding of your child and his/her needs?	84%	2%	12%	2%
Do you feel that you were treated fairly by the educational psychologist?	88%	0	2%	10%
Are you happy with the actions taken?	84%	5%	7%	4%

Summary of open questions from sessions 2012/13 and 2013/14

- 'What has changed for you or your child as a result of contact with this service?'

The responses to this question fell within three themes.

Theme 1: Qualitative changes in the child or young person

Many parents commented that involvement with the Educational Psychology Service had led to positive changes in their child's psychological wellbeing. For example, showing improved self-confidence, being happier, feeling calmer or showing increased sociability.

"She is much happier and more confident child"

"..... is much more self-confident, less distressed and more sociable. It was evident how low he felt and I'm delighted with the improvement in his outlook"

Theme 2: Provision of support

Parents also highlighted the practical, observable changes that had occurred in receiving help and support from both within and outwith the school setting. For example, changes in the support received within class, referral to other services or the implementation of various support strategies. This also included receiving a formal diagnosis.

“My daughter is now receiving the extra support in class that she requires. Her teacher is very supportive to the needs of my child and it was helpful to get some direction from the psychologist”

Theme 3: Understanding

Some parents also reflected that involvement with the service had led to changes in their understanding of their child's needs.

“Things have improved greatly, we have a much greater understanding of [child's] need and these are now being met very well!”

“More understanding of ways to cope with his challenging behaviour”

A few parents felt that nothing had changed following their involvement with the Psychological service. Two parents noted that it was too early to report on changes and another felt that the advice by the Educational Psychologist had not been actioned within the school setting.

- ‘How could the service be improved?’

Twenty-two parents did not identify any improvements to be made to the service.

Comments from the remaining parents indicated that they would appreciate:

- More resources
- Guidance on what to expect
- Single point of contact
- More parental contact with the psychological service
- Provision of written summary/feedback following meeting
- More communication/integration with health services

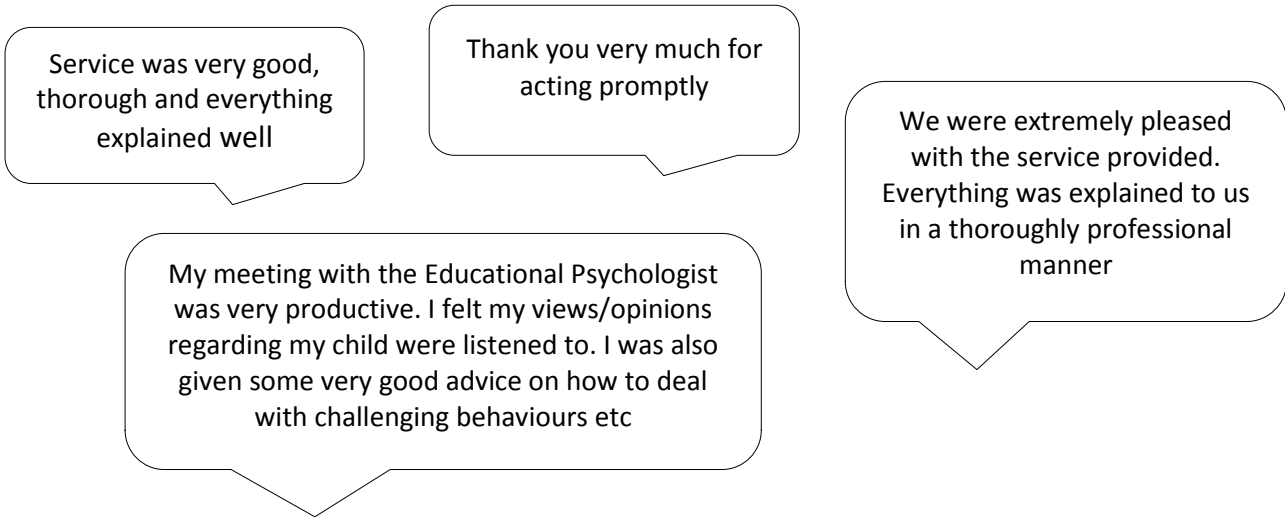
Finally, one parent felt that more naturalistic observation should have been carried out.

- Any other comments

Thank you for helping on our journey and we look forward to being discharged

These actions will greatly assist our son with start of school. We are very grateful to all concerned

Very impressed so far with the understanding and way things have progressed over the year



Feedback from children and young people

Below is the summary of responses to questionnaires for sessions 2012/13 and 2013/14. Feedback from questionnaires was received from 22 young people in total.

	Agree	Disagree	Don't Know
I understood why I met with an educational psychologist	77%	5%	5%
The educational psychologist explained clearly to me how he or she might be able to help	64%	14%	23%
The educational psychologist listened carefully to what I had to say	91%	0	5%
The educational psychologist respected my views	73%	0	27%
The educational psychologist was polite and friendly	100%	0	0
I was treated fairly by the educational psychologist	95%	0	5%
I was involved in the plan to support me and help make things better for me	64%	14%	23%
I would ask to see the educational psychologist again if I needed to	64%	18%	18%

Summary of open questions from 2012/13 and 2013/14

- Have you any suggestions for how the educational psychologist could improve the help he or she gave?

None of the children/young people surveyed identified any changes they would like to see happen with the Educational Psychology Service. As with the 2013 questionnaires, the children/young people struggled to identify any improvements to the service.

- If you can, complete this sentence.
My contact with the educational psychologist made a positive difference because

The responses to this question fell within three themes.

Theme 1: Understanding

The majority of young people answering this question reflected that their involvement with the psychologist had helped them understand themselves better.

“I understand why I struggle with work at school”

“I understand more about me”

Theme 2: Positive changes

Some young people also commented that they were now happier or more confident and that this had led to changes in their behaviour or feelings about situations.

“Ever since I have met with them I have been able to apply the stuff I learned and understand what's going on more”

Other comments made by children and young people included



86% of the parents who returned a questionnaire found this to be a helpful way of getting their views.

77% of the children and young people who returned a questionnaire found this to be a helpful way of getting their views.

This method of seeking the views of parents and young people will continue in to the next session.

Head teacher focus group

Last term a focus group discussion with 6 head teachers was conducted by our research assistant. Preschool, primary and secondary sectors were all represented from geographical areas across Argyll and Bute.

The group was asked to consider the psychological service values and aims, the guidance document for schools and a discussion was led on the strengths and challenges of schools and the psychological service working collaboratively to make a difference to children and young people.

- What is the role of an educational psychology service?

“to support staff, developing strategies to deal with children in their classes...meeting with parents to help advise on the strategies”

There was overall agreement that the value statements of the service align closely with expectations of the psychology service delivery. The group recognised that involvement can occur at a variety of levels, for example, advice for working with the pupil in class and supporting parents to implement strategies at home. The group regarded assessment and identification of need provided by the service as critical for authorisation of additional support provision. There was recognition that intervention can be both direct and indirect. Direct work with pupils where the situation is particularly complex was valued. Participants disagreed about the nature of this work with some recognised that time demands necessarily limited how this could be realised.

- Working together with the educational psychology service

“the psychologist has met with the support assistants one to one so that they can be really honest about actually I really don’t know what to do when this happens...so that team work has been key”

Participants agreed that involvement of the psychology service was particularly successful when the knowledge and advice was extended to all those who work directly with the pupils. One participant described a situation where a newly arrived pupil to the school was presenting with particularly challenging and aggressive behaviour. The school contacted the psychologist who worked in collaboration with the education support officer, parents and school staff to devise effective strategies. The success was attributed to all individuals working together as well as the speediness of the response which was believed to have been influenced by the parents.

The group also reflected that the involvement of the psychology service can lead to “empowerment” for the school or school staff to recognise that a pupil has particular difficulties that need to be addressed. The psychology service was recognised to have a level of authority which was supportive. Finally, the group noted that involvement of the psychology service has helped ensure there is consistency in applying strategies at home as the psychologist is able to work closely with parents.

- Contributing to staff development

“...what is requested is needs driven...”

The group reflected their experience of a range of training inputs including solution oriented approaches which could be delivered to those working with the pupils, for example, support assistants or implemented with a group of vulnerable pupils in the school. Participants also recognised that the psychologist could help advise on effective training or interventions to use within the school.

- Enhancing collaborative working

“...without increasing staffing you can’t provide the service that any of us would want and we understand that, it’s a very limited resource”

Participants recognised the limitations of time for both partners but at the same time would value the opportunity to engage in proactive discussions about pupils. One participant drew on an example of practice with another agency which involved monthly “check-in” meetings to review active cases and discuss other pupils where concerns are starting to be raised.

Some participants articulated the desire for the psychology service to be continually involved with monitoring/evaluating the progress of pupils, rather than closing files, whereas other participants felt that this would obscure where the responsibility lies in ensuring strategies/interventions continue to be implemented. The group reflected that they would feel more comfortable about the case being ‘closed’ if they believed it would be easy to re-engage the service.

Participants noted that the psychological service can become involved as a result of direct contact from parents rather than the school initiating the engagement. Some participants sought clarification on how this information is then shared with the school. Similarly, some identified a need for clearer protocols on the responsibilities of school and psychologist about updating parents on progress and outcomes.

There was a suggestion that improved administrative integration between the school and the psychology service would help facilitate a more joined up approach, whilst minimising the impact on the psychological service time. At a basic level, this could involve access to information about meetings that have taken place between the psychologist and others regarding a pupil. A further suggestion was that this could involve access to a central list of active cases and progress updates.

- Guidance for schools

The guidance document was reviewed by the group and a range of very helpful suggestions made to help clarify procedures, enhance collaboration and increase consistency in approach. The group also reflected that, despite the fact this information is available on the Argyll and Bute website and had previously been circulated to schools, it was not a document that was generally familiar to head teachers. The suggestions from the discussion included:

- Greater clarity around when psychologists could become involved with a desire for flexibility rather than the service engaging at the end of a staged intervention process.

- Increased clarity around psychologist involvement in review meetings

The group reflected that psychologist attendance at review meetings can be helpful even in instances where the review is assumed to be relatively straightforward. There was concern that lack of involvement of the psychological service at meetings would impact on the quality of the information shared and the actions agreed as psychologists are able to offer a wealth of expertise. Attendance at reviews was often perceived to be a source of support to both staff and parents.

- A clearer 'referral' pathway

The group recognised that although guidance around engaging the psychological service exists it is not always clearly realised in practice. Participants spoke about being unclear how the involvement of the service fits with the other processes, planning documents and the education service staged intervention model, where there also appeared to be lack of clarity about process.

- Linking objectives of direct involvement of psychology service to the objectives within the child's plan

The content of the head teacher focus group has been used to review and revise the guidance document for schools as well as providing valued feedback to guide service improvement. The guidance document will be updated on the website, will be highlighted at the conference for newly appointed head teachers and will be circulated to all schools in the new term.

Working together with Area Principal Teachers

The psychological service team works collaboratively with Area Principal Teachers (APTs) to make a difference to children and young people. This joint working can be with individual children and families, through the development of early intervention approaches or implementation of evidence based interventions and through delivering staff development to individuals or groups.

As part of a review of the effectiveness of this joint working, a focus group was led by our research assistant in June of this year with 7 of the 8 APTs attending.

From this focus group it was clear that there was a wide range of joint working with educational psychologists. This included

- Joint training with support assistants in learning centres, delivered through twilight sessions on a regular basis
- Home visits for children following a diagnosis of autism
- Working together to encourage parents and schools to form a team to support individual pupils with additional support needs
- Advice and support from psychologists on how to monitor and evaluate the impact of pieces of work
- Involvement in local multiagency diagnostic and assessment services
- Problem solving through verbal discussion
- Pre-school roll out of PAThS

- Attendance at multi-agency meetings
- Supporting all aspects of the Reading Initiative
- Providing input to the Professional Development Award for support assistants
- Meeting to discuss the allocation of support assistant hours to individuals and schools

The APTs were able to identify a number of ways in which this joint working was effective including

- The opportunity to learn from the psychologists and then make use of that learning when working with other establishments
- Training with support assistants was successful because there was an effective negotiation of time
- The joint working creates a network of effective communication about young people who are causing concern
- The ability to involve the psychologist indirectly through consultation means support could still be provided with reduced impact on resources
- The level of expertise and depth of knowledge within the psychological service team is highly valued

The APTs were asked to reflect on how this joint working made a difference to the school, child/young person, parent or family.

- Support was needed to help staff with some difficulties they were experiencing and this was a successful opportunity to share experiences and access advice on action to take
- It helps to build confidence in school staff that they are working in the best way possible
- Gives schools/staff advice and new ideas for support
- Parents feel well supported when the educational psychology service is involved
- It has been found that being able to form a team of support around the pupils is more effective as it empowers school staff to move towards implementing strategies on their own

The APTs were asked to consider if there were ways in which the joint working / collaboration with psychological service could be improved.

It was recognised that some approaches to joint working, however valuable, do take up a considerable time and may impact on the ability of the service to be involved in other ways. The APTs were keen that psychologists continue to copy them in to reports and emails where there is joint involvement as this helps to join up information and is especially helpful as the psychologist can have limited time, and information from others may not always be forthcoming. The group reflected that vacant posts have impacted on the support parents have felt they have needed from others, especially during transition times for young people.

In terms of possible joint ventures for the future, APTs would value further training from the psychology service to help to raise awareness around a variety of different issues. The recent training on Solution Oriented Meetings was given as a positive example. They would also value continued involvement of the educational psychology service when considering the allocation of centralised support to pupils and schools.

Through shared team meetings educational psychologists have also reflected that joint working with area principal teachers is very effective and can have a significant impact on outcomes for children and young people, as a result of the range of skills and experience available to help generate solutions and provide valuable support to children, families, and schools.

Summary

This has been an exciting and successful year for the educational psychology service in working with a range of partners to deliver on the objective of the Education Service and the wider council. The programme of self-evaluation activity and the information contained within this report has been used to inform the revision of our Service Improvement Plan 2014 – 17 to ensure we are contributing effectively to delivering improved outcomes for children and young people in Argyll and Bute.

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