



**ORKNEY**  
ISLANDS COUNCIL

# **Educational Psychology Service**

## **Validated Self-Evaluation Report and Action Plan**

**September 2016**

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## **Introduction**

Orkney Islands Council's Educational Psychology Service (EPS) is part of Education, Leisure and Housing and is aligned with the Pupil Support Service, both of which are managed by the Principal Educational Psychologist (P.E.P). The P.E.P. reports through the Head of Schools to the Executive Director.

The EPS consists of 2 FTE including the P.E.P. The Senior EP and main-grade EP share 1 FTE post. The Senior EP is retiring in September 2016.

The EPS provides a service to all children and families in Orkney predominantly by allocating time to the 2 senior secondary schools, 4 island junior high schools, 16 primary schools and 2 partner pre-school providers through a named link psychologist. Requests for involvement come not only from schools but also from parents and young people directly and from our partner agencies.

A number of issues arise within a remote authority made up from a number of small islands as well as the larger 'mainland' island. These issues require continual reflection on modes of service delivery as outline below:

- There is a need for flexibility and creative solutions in schools with small numbers of pupils but high levels of need.
- Specialist services for Orkney's children and families, e.g. clinical psychology, child and adolescent psychiatry and paediatric specialists are based on mainland Scotland, chiefly Aberdeen. This requires local services to work closely and creatively together to assess and meet needs.
- Building staff confidence and skills in an ongoing way is an essential part of the EPS work due to the factors mentioned above.

## **Education Psychology Service Approach to Self-Evaluation**

The approach to self-evaluation taken generally by the Orkney EPS has moved away from an over-reliance on one-off surveys towards an implementation science approach. Key to this is building in time for collegiate discussion and reflection on practice. This currently happens through:

- Annual review and planning meetings with schools and selected partner agencies. These meetings focus on how our work has impacted on key national and local priorities as well as individual stakeholder needs.
- Team meetings and supervision sessions allow time for reflective case discussions.
- Our recording and planning formats for consultation, individual case work and school visits highlight that a reflective approach underpins case and systemic work.
- At planned times, team meetings report on progress towards goals within the Service Plan as part of a plan-do-review-act cycle.

## **Recent Evaluation of Stakeholder Feedback on Service Delivery**

In preparation for our Validated Self-Evaluation (VSE) process, feedback on specific aspects of service delivery and impact has been sought from schools and partner agencies through questionnaires. The feedback tells us that:

- The EPS input to schools is valued and is seen as having a positive impact on pupils and staff.

- Schools feel it is helpful to have a named link psychologist and feel that the relationships built up over time with one person is valuable.
- The Service is valued by our partner agencies.
- EP input is seen to be making a valuable contribution to the work of others, particularly in relation to specific vulnerable groups and complex needs.
- The EPS makes a valuable contribution to the implementation of the processes of Getting it Right for Every Child.
- Generally the EP team is seen as easily accessible and quick to respond.

There were also statements in the feedback requesting more timely responses around case work but an acknowledgement also of the usefulness of more systemic work.

It was hoped that the VSE process would give support to the EPS belief that more systemic work is the most effective way for a very small team to have the greatest impact.

## **Validated Self-Evaluation in Educational Psychology Services**

In EPS VSE focuses on 2 key themes:

- Learning and Teaching.
- Partnership Working.

The themes reflect the Scottish Government's national priorities and relate to the contributions made by EPS in:

|                              |  |
|------------------------------|--|
| Raising attainment.          | Impact of early intervention and prevention. |
| Addressing disadvantage.     |  |
| Supporting Getting it Right. |  |

## **Key Outcomes Achieved in Relation to the National Priorities**

- Supported the Authority in implementing key aspects of Getting it Right for Every Child.
  - Promoted an outcomes framework across a range of agencies for Child's Plans meetings which are strengths-based and solution-focused allowing a focus on learning and teaching targets and ensuring duties in relation to the learning needs of looked after children are well met.
- Promoted wellbeing and resilience through projects and development work with Education and Care staff, children and young people.
- Supported school development plan priorities to increase confidence in meeting the needs of children with attention difficulties and children with attachment issues, using growth mindset principles.
- Played a pivotal role in robust identification, planning and provision for children with autism.
- Contributed significantly to the implementation of the Early Years Collaborative.

## **Theme 1 – Learning and Teaching**

The EPS strongly believes that emotional wellbeing and resilience is the foundation for good learning. To support achievement and attainment the EPS has focused on helping all children understand and manage their thinking and their feelings in order to develop self efficacy, form positive relationships and realise the 4 capacities.

A number of projects and focused inputs have been carried out over the last 5 years which have aimed at improving the wellbeing of children and young people and enabling staff to focus on their own wellbeing.

In 2013, the Service, in collaboration with CAMHS and to self-selected schools, commenced work on a 3 year Emotional Resilience Project. Now in year 3, this has created opportunities to work on a wide range of resilience projects tailored to the needs of individual contexts all in the broad area of coping with challenge and change and encompassing:

- Cognitive behavioural perspective.
- Growth mindset.
- Nurture principles.
- Solution oriented approaches.
- Restorative practice.
- Mindfulness.

These projects and sets of development work have involved children, young people and teaching and care staff in primary and secondary schools and residential settings. They have been evaluated in varying degrees and have been shown to have had positive impact.

The EPS wanted to use the VSE process to further scrutinise the overall impact of these inputs and examine how the work of the EPS can become more embedded in an authority strategic approach to wellbeing.

During the VSE week the activities (shown below) were set up involving a range of partners to allow the following questions to be answered:

1. What impact is the EPS having in the areas of health and wellbeing?
2. What is the potential of using the EP team for reflecting on and planning for wellbeing across the authority?

## **Activities undertaken for Theme 1**

### **Action Research involving young people.**

- Following feedback from wellbeing project with S5 pupils, reflection with younger pupils to inform future intervention.

### **Discussion with staff from Papdale Primary School, Papdale Halls of Residence and Kirkwall Grammar School.**

- What was effective?
- What are the barriers to embedding approaches and how can these be overcome?
- What support do staff need from EPS and others?

### **Review with Education partners, the evaluation of training delivered so far.**

- What is it telling us about the role of the EP?
- How could EP impact be greater?
- How can the key effective elements become embedded in authority planning around the wellbeing agenda?

## **Theme 2 – Partnership Working**

The School Service Plan 2014-16 had as an outcome “our systems work to support changes in practice and culture so that children and young people get the right help at the right time in the right way”. To support this outcome, the EPS Plan 2014-16 aimed to support implementation of Getting it Right for Every Child through developing Child’s Plan format and guidance for multi-disciplinary practice.

The EPS led a series of meeting and workshops with partner providers over a 12 month period to update our GIRFEC documentation and processes. Existing Solution Oriented record of meeting forms were used as the starting point and incorporated the emerging requirements of the Child’s Plan. The process involved discussions, trialling and feedback to evolve an agreed, shared set of documents and procedures to raise a Child’s Plan under the new Children and Young People Act, firmly embedded in local ‘Getting it Right’ principles.

Draft documents were consulted upon by a range of partners leading to a further series of ‘inserts’ which cover specific requirements of social work (e.g. risk assessments, social background report, LAC review) and CSPs.

Educational Psychologists took a lead role in the launch of the Child’s Plan on a multi-disciplinary day of training and workshops, including a semi-staged case-work presentation with audience participation.

Previous self-evaluation data indicated that there were key strengths in the EPS’ contribution to building capacity in schools and other agencies to apply Getting it Right for Every Child and to meet the needs of children and young people with young people and parents reporting that they benefitted from seeing the construction of the plan and contributing to the process.

Inconsistencies in practice at an operational level led the EPS to want to use the VSE process to answer the following questions:

1. How well do people understand Getting it Right?
2. How can the EPS support practice firmly embedded in Getting it Right principles?

## **Activities Undertaken for Theme 2**

### **Focus group of parents and children.**

- How well do we hear the voice of the child?
- What was the process of assessment and creating a Child's Plan like?
- What worked well and what could be improved?

### **Workshop and appreciative inquiry (with Stromness Primary School staff (Head Teacher, Support for Learning Teacher), Physiotherapist and Social Work) looking at examples of Child's Plan.**

- What does a good Child's Plan look like?
- How has good practice been developed?

### **Look at existing GIRFEC guidance with Social Work Manager.**

- What should be kept?
- What should be changed?
- How could this guidance be brought to practitioners' attention and widely implemented?
- How could the EPS be involved in this process?

## **Key Strengths**

Over the course of the VSE week a range of partners from Education and Orkney Health and Care along with parents, children and young people engaged with the EPS and Education Scotland in rich and honest dialogue.

The process highlighted the following overarching strengths:

- The EPS is well integrated into authority planning structures and supports the vision of Education, Leisure and Housing very well, taking very good account of local and national authorities.
- The EP team know their schools well and respond effectively to meet identified needs:
  - Strengthening links with other agencies.
  - Ensuring successful transitions for all pupils.
  - Maximising impact and developing capacity to meet needs through promoting reflection and planning for improvement by Appreciative Inquiry across a range of learning contexts.

## **High Order Messages Emerging**

### **Theme 1: Learning and Teaching - Wellbeing**

The EPS has had an identified positive impact on wellbeing of staff, children and young people.

- Staff, children and young people have reported the importance of understanding their own wellbeing.
- There has been an observed increase in the use of a shared language to understand and discuss emotion.

- There is an increase in staff confidence in the use of the family of approaches to wellbeing as promoted by the EPS.
- There is evidence of positive change in pupil behaviour and relationships.

Effective research and analysis of data has enabled the service to consider impact but scaling up data collection and its distribution would enable the maximising of impact and allow the service to effectively focus input where it clearly adds value. Looking at the overlaps of Pupil Support team input in the area of emotional wellbeing may help skills to be deployed in a way that ensure geography does not impede equity.

## **Theme 2: Partnership Working – Getting it Right**

- The EPS bring methods of enquiry that enable the development of shared understanding and creative solutions.
- EP team members use attuned interactions to maximise effective partnership working leading to continuous improvement in the implementation of Getting it Right.

Clear evidence was accumulated through this VSE week that professionals, partners, children and young people in Orkney have a good understanding of Getting it Right principles and effective use is made of the Child's Plan framework. However, further evidence should be sought concerning the impact of these processes on children, young people and families.

## **Reflections**

The EPS found the VSE process to be effective and useful. It was enhanced greatly by the willing, open and honest participation of colleagues and partners which supported meaningful and stimulating dialogue providing the EPS with useful feedback pointing to specific actions for improvement.

During the VSE fieldwork week key strengths were highlighted across both themed areas. These included effective preparation and leadership of activities and good ability to face challenge and to reflect whilst remaining solution focused.

Furthermore, it was recognised that processes developed for recording VSE activities facilitated the synthesis of information and enhanced the identification of high level themes and actions.

## Action Plan

To ensure systems support changes in practice and culture so that children and young people get the right help at the right time in the right way.

| Area for Development.  | Outcome.  | Actions.   |
|--|---|--|
| <p>Optimising impact of Educational Psychology and Support for Learning Services.</p>  | <p>EP time and resources are prioritised to work which adds most value.</p>   | <p>Use review and planning approaches to question reasons for EP direct involvement and look at capacity building.</p> <p>Examine data gathered to evaluate impact – e.g. ‘what is this telling us about EP input?’</p> <p>Establish clear entry and exit points in relation to EPS interventions based on self-evaluation information relating to embeddedness.</p> |
|  | <p>Input from Support for Learning Services (including the Pupil Support Team) is attuned to need and effectively and efficiently overcomes barriers to learning in an equitable way.</p> | <p>Carry out research to answer the question: “How good is our support for learning?”</p> <p>Analyse data on supporting learning with colleagues and use a transformational change model to inform continuous improvement at an authority level.</p>   |
| <p>Further development of research and data gathering to embed implementation science in professional practice in EPS and its partner professionals.</p> | <p>Implementation science informs strategic planning.</p>   | <p>Forms links with Support for Learning network, Tapestry group, etc. to identify a format for research exchange.</p> <p>Harness wider school service data, e.g. exclusions, attainment, wellbeing outcomes.</p>  |

| Area for Development.  | Outcome.  | Actions.  |
|--|---|---|
| Promoting further understanding of the EPS and building on strategic links across children's services.                     | Integration of EP work at a strategic level to promote positive relationships and wellbeing and reduce disadvantage.  | <p>Use person-centred planning pathway with Education and Leisure team to work towards collaborative planned work 80% of the time.</p> <p>Maintain strong EP involvement in Young Person's Community Planning Partnership, PACE programme and other strategic groups.</p> <p>Strengthen existing partnerships (e.g. monthly meetings with Service Improvement Officers) to embed the evaluated classrooms suite of wellbeing approaches across a range of contexts.</p> <p>Extend practice exchange forums with Paediatric Team, Support for Learning Teams and Community Learning and Development.</p> |
| Promoting a growth mindset in partners and practitioners.  | Creative solutions are sought leading to better outcomes for children and young people through interdisciplinary collaboration.   | <p>Promote person centred planning and Appreciative Inquiry across authority planning forums.</p> <p>Ask colleagues to fill in growth mindset questionnaires. Follow up with reflection session.</p> <p>Use growth mindset memes and posters.</p>   |
| Evaluating the impact of Getting it Right processes, e.g. the Child's Plan at an individual and children's services level. | The impact of current Getting it Right procedures is understood in order to inform continuous improvement planning and increase child input into assessment and planning. | <p>Work with Support for Learning staff to pilot the use of the wellbeing indicator web with individual children.</p> <p>Engage with a cluster of schools around the National Task in relation to the online Wellbeing Evaluation Tool.</p>   |

## Next Steps

What is denoted in the previous table represent high level action points. These actions will be described in greater detail and allotted timescales as other plans are developed within Education and across Children's Services.