



Community Services: Education

Psychological Service

Self Evaluation Report



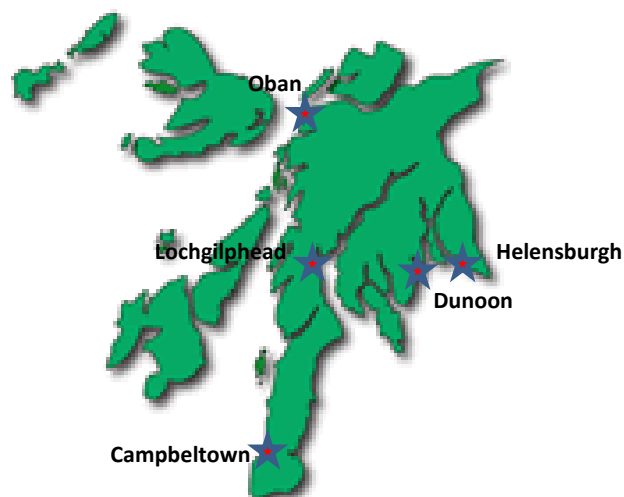
23 October 2015

Self Evaluation Profile

This document builds on existing self-evaluation information and provides the rationale and context for validated self-evaluation (VSE) activity. Throughout the document a number of hyperlinks provide the opportunity to consider further detail.

1. Local authority and service context

- 1.1 Argyll and Bute Educational Psychology Service (EPS) is located within Community Services: Education with the Principal Educational Psychologist (PEP) reporting directly to the Head of Service, Education. The PEP is a member of the Education Management Team, along with the Head of Service and the Education Managers for Performance and Improvement, Learning and Achievement and Inclusion and Integration ([Central Education Team Structure Oct 2015](#)).
- 1.2 The EPS staffing has remained at 7.4FTE, including the PEP, over the last five years ([EPS Team information August 2015](#)) with the service currently fully staffed. There have been some recent changes due to retirement and relocation. Vacant posts have been filled successfully. At present the EPS supports a second year trainee educational psychologist from the University of Dundee. The psychological service is not located in a centralised office but has psychological service bases in five separate locations across Argyll and Bute. These bases are located in Helensburgh, Dunoon, Lochgilphead, Oban and Campbeltown. There is one full time senior administrator for the service, based in Argyll House in Dunoon. There is administrative support available one day per week within the other bases.



1.3 The Scottish Government, Education Scotland and local authorities have a strong commitment to raising attainment for all and addressing barriers to learning. There is a clear focus on overcoming disadvantage and reducing the significant gap in educational attainment between the most and least deprived children and young people. The term *disadvantage* is used to describe children and young people who are experiencing barriers to learning caused by factors including:

- deprivation
- **rural isolation**
- additional support needs
- Looked After status

1.4 Argyll and Bute is geographically the second largest authority in Scotland. There are 84 educational establishments in total, comprising two ELCC establishments, 71 primary schools, four 3-18 schools, five secondary schools, one joint campus and one special school. The size of schools varies significantly across the authority with primary school rolls ranging from three to 398, and secondary school rolls ranging from 22 to 1328. There are currently 25 primary schools with a roll of under 20 pupils. Many children and families live in remote and rural locations, with Argyll and Bute having the largest number of inhabited islands in Scotland. Argyll and Bute has only one special school located in Helensburgh. The needs of most pupils, even those with significant and complex needs, are met within mainstream classes or in learning centres situated within mainstream schools. A very small, and reducing, number of children and young people are educated in day and residential schools outwith Argyll and Bute.

1.5 The EPS provides a named link educational psychologist to all schools across the authority including eight island locations. A number of issues arise from the diverse nature of the authority which impact on service delivery, including the following:

- There is a need for flexibility and responsiveness as schools with fewer pupils can still have a high level of need for support;
- The geography and economies of scale mean that specialist services cannot be delivered in central locations and therefore there is a high level of inclusion of children with severe and complex need in mainstream schools, requiring creative supports to be developed and delivered locally;
- Small schools frequently have had no previous experience of responding to particular additional support needs or child protection issues;
- Staff support and development, in its widest sense, is a key requirement to build skill and confidence in front line staff;
- Strong partnership working is of crucial importance, following GIRFEC principles, to deliver creative solutions locally, and
- It is important to learn from individual cases and local issues to inform strategic developments.

Argyll and Bute is a diverse local authority which offers exciting opportunities for the EPS to continue to build and develop effective services to improve outcomes for children and young people.

- 1.6 Through the Authority Service Choices process, a proposal to reduce the budget for the EPS by 7.4% is being considered. If this option progresses, this will result in a 0.6FTE reduction in EP staffing from April 2016 which will impact on the way in which services are delivered.

2. Improvement through self evaluation

- 2.1 The work of the EPS embraces all areas of the education service and engages with partners to support developments and projects as they emerge across the year. The Psychological Service Improvement Plan (PSIP) links directly to Education Service planning and the Integrated Children's Services Plan (ICSP 2014-17; Education Service Plan 2015-16; EPS Improvement Plan 2015-16). The EPS is committed to a rigorous approach to self-evaluation and improvement planning.

- 2.2 In the autumn of 2010 the psychological service was inspected by HMIE. The web based report was published on 1 February 2011 (HMIE Report Argyll and Bute Council EPS 1 February 2011). The HMIE team identified the following key strengths and areas for development:

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 young people; and
- developed strong partnership working with a wide range of agencies.

The service should

- build on existing good practice to increase the effectiveness of consultation and assessment;
- develop an effective management information system to track trends in performance and measure impact and outcomes;
- 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; and
- improve self-evaluation and establish more effective support and challenge within the service.

- 2.3 Following the inspection, these themes were addressed through the service improvement plan to ensure the information generated through this scrutiny supported the process of continuous improvement (EPS S&Q and Plan 2011 FINAL Oct 2011).

- 2.4 The service has a clear vision which has been developed collaboratively by all members of the team, taking in to account feedback from stakeholders.

The EPS vision is *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;
- following GIRFEC principles to work in close partnership with children, parents, schools and other agencies;
- raising attainment and promoting achievement through Curriculum for Excellence by delivering training and developing the skills of others;
- adopting a reflective and evaluative approach, and
- contributing to research and policy development.

2.5 Each year the improvement plan is reviewed following the Plan, Do, Review, Act cycle. There is a focus on impact and outcomes to support continuous improvement. There is also an emphasis on being able to answer the ‘so what’ question. Every effort is made to meaningfully involve and engage stakeholders. This requires ongoing reflection and review to ensure that the approaches being taken are effective.

2.6 The approach taken to service improvement is detailed within the Quality Management guidance document ([EPS Quality Assurance policy revised Feb 2015](#)) which highlights activity relating to:

- arrangements for quality assurance and improvement;
- support and challenge;
- evaluating outcomes and feedback from stakeholders;
- planning for improvement and monitoring progress, and
- reporting progress to stakeholders.

3. What key outcomes have we achieved?

3.1 During 2014/2015 the service worked to deliver the actions below with associated outcomes linked directly to wider authority planning ([EPS Service Improvement Plan 2014 2015](#)). The PSIP is directly linked to objectives within the Education Service Plan 2014 – 15 and the Integrated Children’s Services Plan 2014 - 17.

3.2 The PSIP has been evaluated by the team on an ongoing basis to identify those actions that have been **completed**, those where **progress has been made** and those that remain at an **early stage of development**. The team has identified where we are in relation to these objectives, how we know and what needs to be done next ([Educational Psychology Service Plan evaluation August 2015 vs4](#)). This review of the PSIP, along with consideration of authority data and stakeholder feedback, has informed the development of the PSIP for 2015 – 16.

Safe	
Contribute to the development of an authority pathway for supporting children and young people in relation to self-harming and suicidal behaviour	
Review the outcome of the self-harm questionnaire to schools and develop a training plan for education staff	
Healthy	

Undertake self-evaluation work on the delivery of therapeutic interventions by this service	Orange
Achieving	
Support schools to assess effectively the literacy skills of Looked After children at the primary stage	Green
Improve processes for identification of additional support needs of children in Gaelic Medium Education classes	Orange
Work with partners in schools and other services to evaluate the transition process from primary to secondary school for pupils with Autism Spectrum Disorder	Red
Evaluate the Homunculi approach for supporting effective transition, including children with Autism Spectrum Disorder	Green
Achieving	
Share the information from the Reading Initiative with head teachers and centralised staff and consider next steps to raise literacy skills of those identified as underachieving in reading	Green
Continue to lead the PATHS developments across the authority including evaluation of impact	Green
Nurtured	
Evaluate the current nurture provision across the authority and generate next steps for extending nurture approaches in schools and ELCC establishments	Orange
Active and included	
Provide ongoing support to GIRFEC advisors and Lead Professionals on leading Solution Oriented meetings	Green
Respected and responsible	
Extend the pilot of <i>Living Life to the Full</i>	Green
Link with the Opportunities for All team regarding young people educated outwith Argyll and Bute as they move to the transition phase	Red
Continuous improvement	
Evaluate psychologists' contributions across strategic groups linked to key authority initiatives and developments	Green
Review processes for evaluating training delivered by psychologists on an ongoing basis to identify impact	Green

3.3 The EPS considers authority data to inform improvement planning and measure impact, in addition to considering trends over time. This data includes:

- Profile of pupil need: Secondary and primary pupils with a Universal Child's Plan or Coordinated Support Plan;
- Attendance: trends over the last 3 years for primary and secondary;
- Exclusions: data over the last 3 years across both primary and secondary ([School Exclusions report 2012-2015](#));
- Requests for centralised support assistant and support teacher time;
- Pupils educated outwith Argyll and Bute: 22 pupils in total representing a 53% reduction since August 2010 ([Specialist day and residential placements summary July 2015](#));
- Attainment: P4 Suffolk reading assessment data over the last 5 years ([Reading Initiative draft Report August 2015](#));
- Attainment: Literacy skills of learners who are Looked After at the primary stage, and
- Requests for support from the EPS: there has been a significant increase in the number of children and young people being identified as in need of intervention

from an educational psychologist, with a 93% increase over the last 4 years (EPS referral trends over 4 years to June 2015). Behavioural and emotional issues continue to represent a significant proportion of the reasons for a request for a consultation meeting.

- 3.4 Overall, service performance is measured against objectives within the PSIP, alongside wider authority planning to ensure that, year on year, appropriate objectives are set and achieved.

4. How well do we meet the needs of our stakeholders?

- 4.1 Through a MORI poll, five key drivers, in addition to perceived value for money, were identified that contribute to stakeholder satisfaction with services.



These features are reflected in questionnaires for stakeholders and areas for discussion with focus groups. The methodology and rationale for gathering stakeholder views is detailed in the service Quality Management guidance referred to above.

- 4.2 Children/young people and parents/carers
Over the last three years feedback has been sought from parents and children through questionnaires (Parent feedback FINAL January 2014; Young person feedback FINAL January 2014). The return rate has been below 30% despite including stamped addressed envelopes for return of questionnaires. The feedback from parents and children is included in the service Standards and Quality Reports (EPS S&Q report 2012 -14).

Over 80% of parents responding found the meeting with the EP helpful and over 90% felt that their views had been listened to. 86% of parents responding believed that the EP had a good understanding of their child's needs and over 90% felt they had been treated fairly. 86% of parents responding were happy with the actions taken. Less than half the parents reported that they had been provided with a leaflet about the service in advance of a consultation meeting with the EP, and half the parents responding reporting not knowing what to expect before meeting the EP. Where

parents were provided with a leaflet, all parents reported this to be helpful. Parents responding were able to comment specifically about the positive impact resulting from involvement of the EP including qualitative changes for the child / family, provision of additional or more effective support and improved understanding of their child's needs.

78% of young people said they understood why they were meeting with an educational psychologist while 70% said the EP had explained clearly to them how they may be able to help. 93% said the EP had listened carefully to them and all young people responding felt the EP had been polite and friendly. Fewer young people, 60%, felt that they had been involved in the plan to support them.

Action now needs to be taken to review processes used to seek feedback from parents / carers and young people to inform service delivery. In addition, there is a need to consider how to ensure that parents / carers and young people are provided with information about the service in advance of any consultation meeting taking place. Consideration also needs to be given to how to improve the extent to which young people feel involved in planning to support them.

Improving outcomes for children and young people is at the heart of all service delivery. A wide range of interventions are directed to ensuring the needs of children and young people are met. Interventions are directed at raising attainment or improving social skills. These include work in relation to self harming behaviour as well as universal and targeted interventions such as Living Life to the Full, Friends for Life, the Homunculi and Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies. Schools are supported to gather good quality information to identify the impact of interventions for children and young people. Further detail is reported through EPS Standards and Quality Reports and service newsletters.

4.3 School staff and Area Principal Teachers (APTs)

In June 2014 focus groups of head teachers and APTs were held to provide an opportunity to review how schools, support teachers and the EPS can most effectively work together to make a difference to children and young people. The outcome of these discussions is detailed in the 2012-14 Standards and Quality Report. There is clear guidance in place to guide joint working underpinned by the GIRFEC practice model. 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 has been updated on the website, highlighted at the conference for newly appointed head teachers and was circulated to all schools.

4.4 Staff development

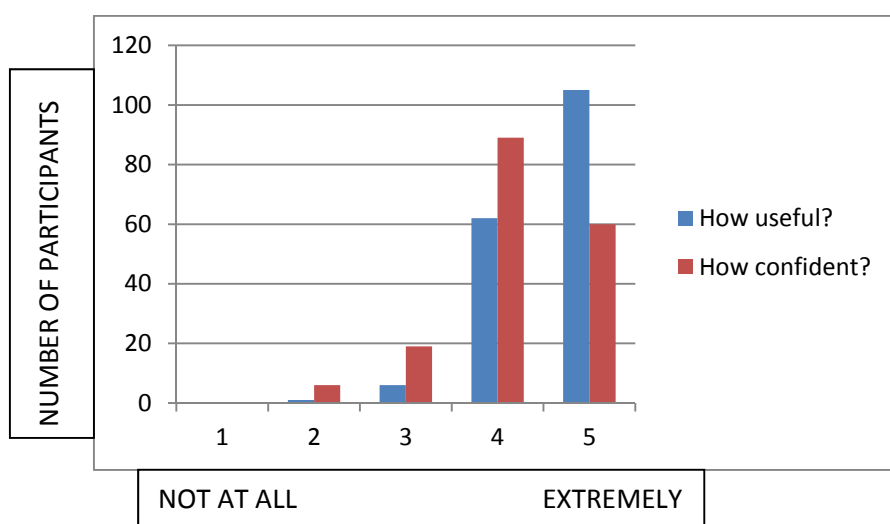
Over the last year, the method of gathering evaluation information following staff development session provided by the service has been reviewed, to bring an increased consistency of approach ([EPS training evaluation template FINAL March 2015](#)). Core questions have been generated which can be supplemented as required. In addition, a pilot of a follow up evaluation has been put in place. A wide range of staff development is delivered to increase staff skill and confidence to meet

the needs of children and young people in an effective way. The staff development activity delivered this session has included:

- Contribution to the launch of the Suicide and Self-harm Prevention guidance;
- Attachment in the early years;
- Attachment theory;
- Autism awareness;
- Autism Spectrum Disorder – An introduction;
- Bereavement in the school context;
- Professional development award for support staff;
- Child development; Role of support staff in support ASN;
- Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS);
- Cognitive Behaviour Therapy and Homunculi approach;
- Health and Wellbeing: A view from Health Psychology;
- Homunculi approach – introduction;
- Leading solution oriented meetings;
- Mental health in children and adolescents in the school context;
- Nurture group training;
- Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS) Solution Oriented approaches;
- The autism spectrum: The current state of knowledge and practice, and
- Working with children with additional support needs.

More detail on the evaluation of staff development delivered by the service can be found in the Standards and Quality reports.

The results below are based upon the responses of 174 respondents over ten different training sessions who answered the following questions. The questions asked were: 1. **“How useful did you find this training?”** and 2. **“How confident are you that you will apply what you have learned from this training session?”** Participants were asked to mark their response to this using a Likert scale (1 – not at all useful/confident, 5 – extremely useful/confident).



Many positive comments were received, particularly on the interesting and informative content of the session. Participants also reported on the utility of the training content, e.g. “[it] gave me good ideas for working with young people”, “I have lots of children with whom I could use this programme”. In addition, participants talked about specific actions that they would be taking following the session, e.g. “... I now need to read the book to get some more ideas”, “[I will]...explore creating Homunculi characters to deal with difficult emotions and situations with a group of P4-7 pupils”. Suggestions for improvement were largely around the practicalities of the session, including the room layout and the length of the session. In addition, one participant expressed a preference for an interactive training approach, while regarding the session content, several participants noted potential difficulties in implementation, e.g. “I would like to [apply in my practice] however I don’t think I could fit into my working day/routine”.

Both quantitative and qualitative data present a positive picture regarding the interesting and informative nature of training sessions provided by the EPS; training appears to be valued and seen as useful. Next steps include the following:

- The pilot of post training impact evaluation should be extended;
- Barriers to implementation are reported by training participants in terms of taking forward new approaches. As such, it may be helpful to consider how the EPS negotiates training with establishments to ensure that there is adequate time set aside for any further work required following training sessions, and
- Consideration should be given to the most effective way to feedback analysis of evaluation responses to the EPS team and individual EPs to support reflective practice and improvement in the service’s delivery of training.

- 4.5 To provide feedback and information to stakeholders, newsletters are produced by the service twice a year. These are sent directly to schools to display on notice boards and in open areas, to social work managers across area offices and are also available on the website ([EPS Newsletter March 2015 Final](#); [EPS Newsletter Aug2014](#); [Newsletter December 2013 FINAL](#); [EPS Newsletter Aug 2013](#)). This information is provided in addition to the Standards and Quality reports to share practice and provide feedback to stakeholders in an accessible way.

5. How good is our leadership?

- 5.1 The professional leadership of all EPs has continued to grow and strengthen the overall impact of the EPS in line with the service aims and objectives.
- 5.2 All members of the team have a responsibility for taking forward elements of the improvement plan, with the plan being developed by the service as a whole during team meetings and service development days. Over the last number of years self-evaluation has increasingly become a responsibility that is meaningfully shared across the EPS team. Individual psychologists take responsibility for progressing and reviewing objectives within the PSIP as well as reviewing data and planning for

improvement. As a result, the PSIP is now a working document that meaningfully guides and shapes the work of the service.

- 5.3 Given the financial constraints within local authorities and the requirement to consider how services could be delivered to ensure continued impact for stakeholders by a smaller team, the EPS has been involved with the Council's Service Choices process. This has involved considering risks, and balancing these against potential benefits arising from alternative means of delivering services ([EDUC12 - SERVICE PACKAGE OVERVIEW Vs 5](#)).
- 5.4 Strong collaborative working, both within and across the team, has continued to grow and develop. There is a good range of opportunities for EPs to work together on service developments and staff training which has allowed sharing of expertise and enhanced leadership capacity. The service is structured to build upon the collective knowledge and experience of all staff and provide the opportunity for staff to lead projects and development. All psychologists within the team now have a responsibility to contribute to strategic groups taking forward both service and authority objectives. There has been an increase in the number of psychologists involved in strategic groups over the last three years ([EPS Summary of strategic groups 19 May 2015](#)). The contribution has been evaluated to consider how this intervention links to key developments across the authority to ensure involvement of EPs is directed to the right meetings for maximum impact. In addition, a partner agency focus group took place in June of this year in an attempt to investigate further the perception of the added value of educational psychologists to strategic groups. For a number of reasons relating to availability of invited staff, most participants were unable to comment specifically on EP involvement in groups. Very helpful information was however obtained on service delivery. The partner agencies represented included Speech and Language Therapy, Community Child Health, Child and Adolescent Mental Health, Community Learning and Development, Social Work and Youth Services. There was also representation from Choose Life, a third sector organisation. The outcome of this group discussion is detailed in the 2014-15 Standards and Quality report. The focus group provided helpful information about the nature of engagement with the service and the impact of EPs on a range of stakeholders. Partners reported that the involvement of an EP tends to lead to improvements in staff confidence with a resulting impact on staff morale. In addition, there was general agreement that parents feel acknowledged and supported as central members of the Child's Planning process. The group appreciated that educational psychologists have a wide range of knowledge and experience. They did feel, however, that there should be more clarity in terms of the areas of specialism of individual psychologists. It was the view of the group that psychologists are generally attuned, empathetic and responsive, particularly when working individually with children/young people and their parents/carers. A number of issues emerged that will be taken forward through improvement planning. Points that require to be addressed include wider circulation of information on psychologists linking with particular schools, the provision of training to partner agencies and wider distribution of the service newsletter.

6. Strengths and areas for development / key challenges

6.1 Strengths

- There is evidence of strong skill, knowledge and expertise across the team.
- EPs are delivering well considered interventions that are linked directly to key authority objectives.
- EPs have continued to deliver effective interventions to individual children and families with an impact on learning and wellbeing, whilst also making a significant contribution to staff development and key strategic groups across the authority.
- Services are directed at meeting the needs of children and young people based on a clear assessment of need.
- EPs are delivering a wide range of approaches to address the mental health and wellbeing needs of children and young people through high quality staff training, and support for the delivery of evidenced based universal and group interventions.
- EPs are providing effective therapeutic interventions directly to children and young people delivered by skilled and confident psychologists.
- There are strong partnerships within and beyond education services to deliver improved outcomes for learners and maintain children in families, local schools and communities.

6.2 Areas for development / key challenges

- Continue to identify the key areas, linked to wider planning, that will have the greatest impact on children and young people.
- Respond creatively to financial constraints, shrinking resources and ongoing rural isolation of schools in order to continue to improve outcomes for children and young people.
- Consider how to gather further information from schools in a way that is helpful to guide service development and ensure continuous improvement.
- Address the low response rate from parents through considering how the views of parents and young people can be more effectively sought and acted upon.
- Consider a more focused approach to staff development around key authority priorities in order to make most effective use of the resource available.

7. Capacity for improvement

The service's capacity for improvement will be considered more formally through the process of VSE, taking in to account the overall self-evaluation journey.