



Community Services: Education

## **Psychological Service**

# VSE Exploration of Themes



**23 October 2015**

## Validated Self Evaluation

### Exploration of Themes

#### What have we achieved in relation to the national themes?

For the purposes of Validated Self Evaluation (VSE), the Educational Psychology Service (EPS) team considered interventions and key developments under the national themes:

- I. **Learning and teaching**, exploring EPS contribution to learning and teaching with a focus on raising attainment and achievement for all and closing the poverty-related attainment gap, and
- II. **Partnership working / Impact on the wider community** to capture Health and Wellbeing, Getting it Right for Every Child and partnership working.

Over the last five years the psychological service has worked towards key objectives that fall within these broad themes. Further information, with links to related documents, can be found in the service 'Self Evaluation Report'.

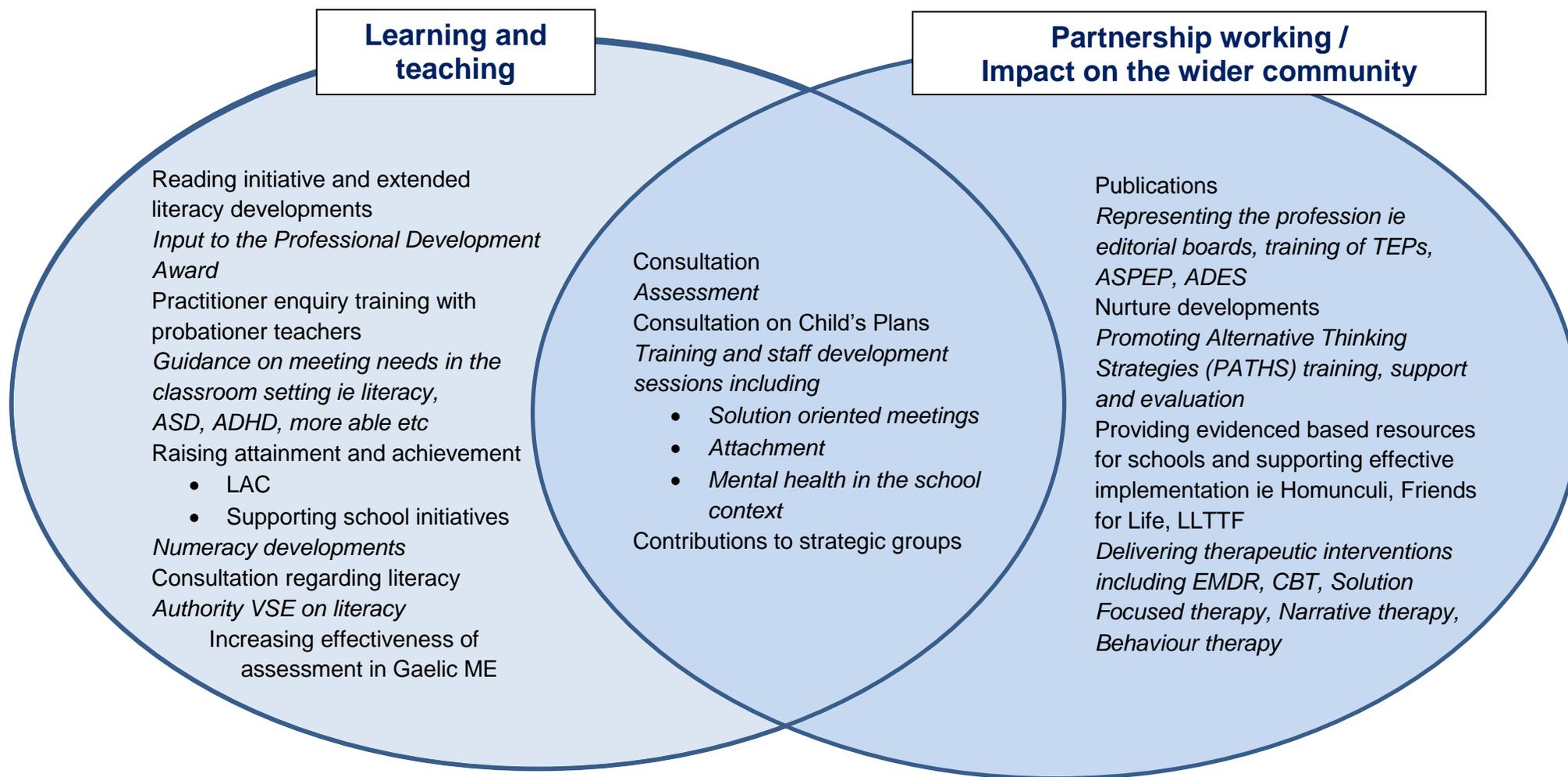
**Diagram 1** below highlights key areas of work organised under the themes, including those that cut across both themes.

Self-evaluation activity to date has identified that the service has rigorously supported the implementation of a range of evidence based interventions, including high quality assessment and intervention, that have been shown to improve outcomes for children and young people. Strong partnerships with colleagues in the education service and with other agencies have strengthened the sustainability of interventions, for example working closely with class teachers and area principal teachers on developments such as *Living Life to the Full* and *Homunculi*.

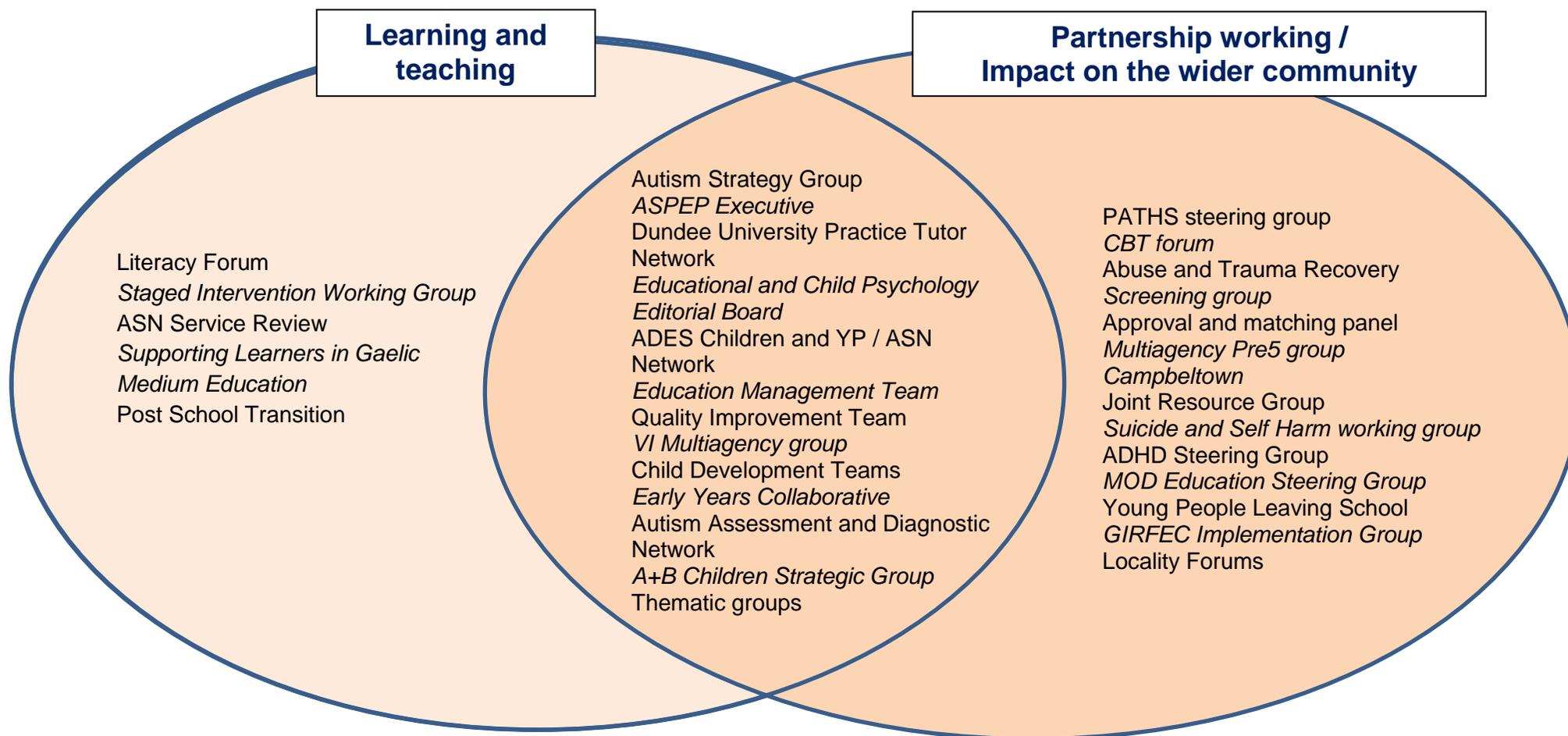
Attempts have been made to encourage schools to use the research skills of Educational Psychologists (EPs) to plan the implementation of interventions and evaluate impact, however, this type of engagement is still somewhat limited. The challenge of the geography, highlighted in more detail in the wider *Self Evaluation Report*, is a factor to be addressed when taking forward developments.

EPs are contributing to key strategic groups. These have been organised under the themes as detailed in **Diagram 2** below. Analysis has taken place to ensure that EPs are contributing to strategic groups that are central to the delivery of education and wider council objectives to improve outcomes for children and young people. The strategic groups are directed at meeting the key objectives of the Education Service Plan and the Integrated Children's Services Plan.

**Diagram 1: Educational Psychology service delivery across the national themes**



**Diagram 2: EPS Contribution to Strategic Groups across the national themes**



While parents generally report positively about the involvement of EPs in assessment and planning to meet the needs of their child, and the numbers of requests for involvement with individual children has increased, it is clear that the vision of the service cannot be met by targeting individual need alone. There is a wealth of research that highlights the detrimental impact on life chances of being unable to read and / or being unable to understand your own emotions and build relationships with others. The vision of the service is to promote the wellbeing and development of **all** children and young people using the knowledge and evidence base of child psychology. As a result, early interventions aimed at increasing emotional literacy, self-awareness and effective interpersonal skills and focused work around supporting the reading skills of learners, have been key features of the Psychological Service Improvement Plan (PSIP) over the last five years. At this time, within the context of potentially reducing resources, the need for robust early intervention is even greater.

As a result of the large number of very small schools within Argyll and Bute, there is not the capacity for EPs to support each individual school to deliver on their improvement plan objectives each session. As a result, it is necessary to identify themes in improvement planning across schools to help inform the EPS, and other central support staff, as to where intervention should be targeted to maximum effect. This analysis is currently being undertaken to inform both themes.

The Scottish Attainment Challenge has a focus on improving literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing in primary schools with the clear objective being to give all primary school age pupils, regardless of background, the best start in life. Both themes identified for further exploration through VSE link directly to the objectives of this challenge.

The information below expands key areas of the PSIP to explore where we are now, how we know and what we need to do next.

## National Theme 1: Learning and teaching

### Where are we now, how do we know and what is the evidence of impact?

#### Inward: knowing yourself well and improving through effective self-evaluation

While Argyll and Bute Council is not one of the seven challenge authorities as part of the Scottish Attainment Challenge, significant work is being undertaken to raise attainment across literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. The EPS is directly involved in the Authority's attainment challenge around literacy, both in relation to head teacher development sessions and in supporting schools to implement and evaluate interventions. The EPS has been instrumental in the Authority wide use of *Toe by Toe* at the mid primary stage and the use of the *Baseline Assessment* at the early years and early primary stage. More work requires to be undertaken to ensure that EPs are supporting developments within and across schools to contribute to improved literacy outcomes for learners.

Evidence of impact comes from a wide range of sources. There has been a move away from questionnaire surveys towards a greater range of evidence being gathered to identify impact. Summary information is detailed below.

### Reading Initiative

The EPS is committed to enhancing learning and teaching and working with others to raise the attainment of learners across the authority. The EPS guided the work of the Reading Initiative in Argyll and Bute, beginning in 2009. At the end of last session, five years of data was analysed by the service to consider the profile of reading skills of Primary 4 children across the authority over time. The P4 Suffolk results obtained through the Reading Initiative have been reported to schools through head teacher meetings. Most learners in Argyll and Bute are achieving either expected levels or beyond in relation to reading skills. There has been an emphasis on encouraging schools to work with the EPS to consider effective interventions for those children identified as underachieving in reading.

#### *How do we know?*

Data analysed over 5 five years and results produced Presentations made at HT meetings to inform practice in schools  
Consideration of results through Literacy Forum  
Increased focus on primary children underperforming in reading with the aim of improved practice in schools  
Analysis of data gathered from primary HTs on current interventions  
Thematic analysis of interventions carried out and fed back to HTs  
Implementation of improved assessment protocol to gather increased data centrally

#### *Data / evidence*

Reading Initiative documentation  
Slides from HT meetings  
Reading initiative results  
Literacy forum meetings  
Revised protocol for assessment based on staff feedback  
Data from HT table top discussion  
Literacy forum minutes  
EP Development day minutes  
Pyramid reporting

### Gaelic Medium Education

Within Argyll and Bute there are seven schools that have classes designated for the delivery of Gaelic Medium Education (GME). The EPS had identified that requests for involvement

with the service were regularly made around the P5 stage, frequently to contribute to assessment of literacy needs. Analysis of these requests demonstrated less formal tracking and monitoring of progress than would normally be available for learners being taught in English. In part, this has been shown to be a result of there being significantly fewer assessment tools for use in GME, particularly those that are norm referenced. The EPS has set up a short life group including school staff, to consider enhancing the assessment and reporting processes for learners in GME.

*How do we know?*

A short life working group has been established leading to dialogue around children's needs  
 Information on currently available Gaelic assessment materials has been collated to inform practice  
 An action plan has been developed to guide work in this area and improve practice around tracking and monitoring

*Data / evidence*

Notes from discussion with HTs and Education Officers  
 Emails with Western Isles Group membership and invites\*  
 Meeting minutes

**Looked After Children**

In line with the requirements of the Education (Additional Support for Learning) Scotland Act 2009, the EPS developed a screening tool for use by schools to ensure that the wellbeing needs of all looked after children were considered. This tool is used to establish whether looked after children have additional support needs, and to support planning to meet those needs. Given the research on the poorer outcomes of looked after children, the EPS has supported schools to carry out reading and spelling assessments with all primary age children who are looked after, as well as exploring their views of themselves as learners. This information has supported effective planning to meet the needs of this potentially vulnerable group and has been built in to the Authority assessment strategy.

*How do we know?*

The Looked After children literacy assessments have now been embedded within the wider authority assessment protocol around literacy to ensure consistent practice across schools  
 All schools are identifying literacy needs of LAC by routinely assessing the literacy skills of LAC at the primary stage  
 Assessments are used to inform planning by schools for LAC

*Data / evidence*

Pupil files  
 Data analysis and reporting  
 SHANARRI assessment form  
 Emails and information to schools  
 Authority assessment spreadsheet  
 Presentation to HT meetings  
 Pyramid reporting

**Collaborative assessment**

The nature of requests for intervention from the EPS has been analysed over the last five years. Through this analysis and discussion at team meetings, it was clear that some school staff lacked confidence analysing and reporting to parents the assessment information available in school, where there were identified difficulties with literacy. As a result, EPs have collaborated with school staff to create clearer profiles of strength and need for individual children. This has reduced the need for EPs to carry out direct assessment to confirm what school staff already know. This work has included the development of brief guidance on the identification of literacy difficulties / dyslexia including the role of the EP. Training and workshops for education staff have also been provided within local areas.

<p><i>How do we know?</i></p> <p>Enhanced collaborative assessments within schools around literacy skills  A guidance document has been produced to support collaborative assessment of literacy / dyslexia  Reduced requests for direct assessment relating to literacy</p>	<p><i>Data / evidence</i></p> <p>EPS database  Case files  Team meeting minutes  Literacy / dyslexia document</p>
<p><b>Outward: Learning from research, others and best practice to inform improvement actions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research findings around effective acquisition of literacy skills have been explored, disseminated across schools and informed guidance. Lessons from West Dunbartonshire Council informed the Reading Initiative developments at the early stages.</li> <li>• EPs have attended a range of national conferences on addressing literacy difficulties, including sessions on the development of the Scottish Attainment Challenge, which have informed practice.</li> <li>• Links have been made with the psychological service in the Western Isles to support A+B developments regarding GME. Contribution was made to the national research on approaches to identifying and supporting additional support needs in GME.</li> </ul>	

### **What are our strengths?**

Psychological service planning is in line with wider Education Service and Authority planning leading to collaborative approaches to delivering on core objectives.

The EPS has been involved in literacy developments at a strategic level, as well as with individual schools and children, enhancing the understanding of what is needed to improve outcomes for learners.

The effective use of quantitative and qualitative data to identify vulnerable groups where additional focused intervention is required in address the reduction in the attainment gap.

A high level of research skill and experience across the team that ensures high quality intervention.

### **Where are our challenges?**

Working with others within a climate of significant financial constraints and reducing resources, in order to continue to deliver the level and quality of service with potentially reduced staffing.

Measuring the impact of EPS intervention on attainment and taking action to help reduce the underachievement of children and young people affected by deprivation.

Ensuring, through robust self-evaluation, effective approaches to meeting the range of needs arising from schools of significantly difference sizes and demographics.

**Forward: exploring what the future might hold for today's learners and planning how to get there**

**What do we need to find out more about?**

Six years of data show that most P4 children attain expected, or beyond, reading levels by the mid primary stage. This has been a consistent picture over time. In addition, most children have continued to make the expected progress as they move from P4 to P7.

There is a lack of evidence that schools are consistently making effective use of data already available in each establishment to plan to meet individual needs and consider the requirement for wider developments within the school and to improve attainment.

Further evaluation now requires to be undertaken to inform next steps towards increasing the reading skills of learners who have been identified as underachieving, and identify the specific role for EPs. There is a need to consider how we ensure that developments arising from the Reading Initiative and Literacy Forum are contributing effectively to the Scottish Attainment Challenge, and lead to improved outcomes for learners.

## National Theme 2: Partnership working / impact on the local community

**Where are we now, how do we know and what is the evidence of impact?**

**Inward: Knowing yourself well and improving through effective self-evaluation**

The EPS has strong working relationships with partners within education services and beyond. As a result of the geography, professionals across agencies work effectively in local teams to ensure the needs of children and young people are met within their local schools and communities, whenever possible. EPs are involved in collaborative assessment of individual needs, contributing to multiagency assessment processes for example through Child Development Teams and Autism Diagnostic Teams, supporting the delivery of group and class interventions in schools and contributing to strategic developments. There has been significant support and involvement in the development of the GIRFEC practice model in Argyll and Bute.

### Nurture

A number of schools across the authority have been working to develop a nurturing approach to meeting the needs of children at the primary stage. These developments have arisen in response to individual children's needs, and as a result have progressed in a range of ways and do not follow a particular model. The EPS has brought together staff from these schools to discuss models of nurture, examples of good practice, methods for identifying and assessing need, effective implementation and evaluation of impact. Ongoing support will be offered to schools for implementing nurturing approaches to improve outcomes for learners.

#### *How do we know?*

Effective support offered to establishments to implement nurture approaches leading to improved outcomes for children  
 Richard Rose input to the full team leading to enhanced understanding of approaches to addressing attachment difficulties.  
 Heather Moran input to full team re attachment and ASD – lessons learned picked up the local SALT and multiagency autism assessment team  
 Staff development on nurture and attachment built in to the PATHS training raising awareness of the roots of this approach  
 Increased knowledge of nurture approaches research following service development days 2015  
 Training on nurture and attachment delivered across the authority based on an assessment of need to raise awareness of approaches  
 Establishments delivering some form of nurture approach identified to enhance consistency of practice and rigorous implementation of approaches  
 Publication on nurture and attachment to inform national research  
 One school achieving the Marjory Boxall award

#### *Data / evidence*

Marjory Boxall Award  
 Pupil files  
 Planning and notes from development session  
 Details on training delivered and those trained  
 Evaluations of training  
 Team meeting minutes  
 Notes from development day discussions  
 Invitations to focused day  
 List of schools involved  
 Presentation materials

## **PATHS**

The EPS leads the implementation of the PATHS programme, including training and support for establishments. This work has been undertaken in partnership with the Early Years Collaborative group and supports children's wellbeing at the early years. It had been noted through review of EPs' individual work that increasing time was being spent supporting the needs of young children with significant emotional and behavioural needs. EPs, in conjunction with the early years' team, identified PATHS as a potentially effective programme to target at ELCC and primary schools to enhance the social and emotional development of children in a systematic way. The programme has now been running in a number of establishments for three years and evaluation has been initiated, with a particular focus on engagement with parents.

### *How do we know?*

Increased numbers of establishments have attended the PATHS training and can implement the material  
Training has been positively evaluated and used to inform further training  
Evaluation information has been gathered in relation to implementation and parental engagement identifying effective practice and next steps for intervention  
Input from the EPS will continue with a further training day planned for February 2016 with potential attendees identified

### *Data / evidence*

Training days, dates and evaluations  
List of schools involved  
Steering information on implementation  
EYC notes  
Team meeting minutes  
Development day discussion notes  
Group minutes  
Establishment based tests of change

## **Interventions in schools**

A range of evidence based interventions have been delivered in educational establishments aimed at improving the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people. These programmes have been implemented based on a clear assessment of need and evaluated for effectiveness.

### *How do we know?*

*Living Life to the Full* delivered in two secondary schools to aid transition post school  
Implementation improved following evaluation and feedback from young people  
Group delivered to a targeted small group of pupils to address effectively issues of self-harming behaviour  
*Homunculi* delivered with P7 class to support transition from primary to secondary school  
Thorough evaluation carried out to identify impact

### *Data / evidence*

Feedback from participants  
Write up report of evaluations  
Standards and Quality Report

## **Training to schools and partners**

A wide range of staff development sessions have been delivered to, and with, partners to increase the skill and confidence of staff working directly with children and young people.

### *How do we know?*

### *Data / evidence*

<p>A wide range of training has been delivered and evaluated  Core questions for evaluation of training have been developed and are now in use  Methods for follow up evaluation have been developed and piloted  Training delivered links to local and national objectives</p>	<p>Training topics  Evaluation questionnaires  Analysis of responses  Follow up pilot  S&amp;Q report</p>
<p><b>Feedback from schools and partners</b></p> <p>Focus groups have been held to consider how the EPS can work in the most effective way, along with others, to improve outcomes for children and young people.</p>	
<p><i>How do we know?</i></p> <p>Focus groups with Head Teachers, with Area Principal Teachers and with Partners conducted to inform changes to future service delivery and allow consideration of service information</p>	<p><i>Data / evidence</i></p> <p>Reviewed service documentation  Analysis of feedback  Standards and Quality report</p>
<p><b>GIRFEC training and resource material development</b></p> <p>The GIRFEC practice model is well developed in Argyll and Bute and it has been recognised that the effectiveness of Child's Planning meetings is a key component to improving outcomes for children and young people. EPs have been instrumental in bringing a solution oriented approach to the practice model through staff training and contributions to DVD and written support material for use with partners across the authority.</p>	
<p><i>How do we know?</i></p> <p>Awareness raised amongst practitioners as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GIRFEC advisors trained including follow up session to seek evaluation and identify further support needs</li> <li>• Lead professional training delivered centrally with a further event planned</li> </ul> <p>Evaluation material available with very positive responses received so far  Follow up evaluations sent out June 2015, awaiting results of analysis</p>	<p><i>Data / evidence</i></p> <p>Training dates, materials and attendees  Evaluations of training and follow up  Meetings pack and DVD  GIRFEC implementation group notes  Team meeting minutes</p>
<p><b>Delivering therapeutic interventions</b></p> <p>Self-evaluation work has been undertaken on the delivery of therapeutic interventions by this service. A gap in services had been identified within the council resulting from the long waiting times for consideration of assessment by Child and Adolescent Mental Health team. The Abuse and Trauma Recovery Service was commissioned, however, it too now has considerable waiting times. The EPS identified the importance of high quality assessment of mental health needs at an early stage. As a result, skills and confidence of EPs have been considered, with further training identified, to ensure the EPS supports vulnerable children and young people to access the right support at the right time.</p>	
<p><i>How do we know?</i></p>	<p><i>Data / evidence</i></p>

<p>Evaluative discussions over the delivery of therapeutic interventions have taken place within the team</p> <p>Evaluation methods are embedded within the casework delivery</p> <p>Questionnaires have been completed by all EPs to consider skills, confidence, supervision, training and evaluation Information has been analysed to inform future developments</p>	<p>Initial position paper</p> <p>Notes from team meetings</p> <p>Development day notes</p> <p>Presentation materials</p> <p>Questionnaire results and analysis</p> <p>EP presentations</p>
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### **Contributing to the development of authority policy and guidance**

<p><i>How do we know?</i></p> <p>EPS contribution to the development of an authority pathway that aims to support children and young people in relation to self-harming and suicidal behaviour</p> <p>EPS contribution to the launch of the guidance on supporting children engaging in self-harming or suicidal behaviour</p> <p>Analysis of questionnaire information from schools to inform training plan</p>	<p><i>Data / Evidence</i></p> <p>Guidance document</p> <p>Minutes of strategic group meetings</p> <p>Evaluation of launch event</p> <p>Self harm questionnaire results</p> <p>Training plan</p> <p>Team meeting minutes</p>
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### **Outward: Learning from research, others and best practice to inform improvement actions**

The development of the PATHS intervention and nurture approaches have been informed by work undertaken by West Dunbartonshire EPS, Glasgow City Council and Shetland EPS.

The breadth of research on nurture has been carefully considered within the EPS team and shared with partners.

### **What are our strengths?**

Psychological service planning is in line with wider Education Service and Authority planning leading to collaborative approaches to delivering on core objectives.

The use of evidence based interventions with a clear focus on ensuring effective implementation to maximise impact as shown through, for example, improved transitions, reduced anxiety, improved relationships.

Effective partnership working to meet the needs of children and young people with complex and challenging needs within their home, local school and community.

### **Where are our challenges?**

- Working with others within a climate of significant financial constraints and reducing

resources, in order to continue to deliver the level and quality of service with potentially reduced staffing.

- Measuring the impact of EPS intervention on attainment and reducing the underachievement of children and young people affected by deprivation.
- Ensuring, through robust self-evaluation, effective approaches to meeting the range of needs arising from schools of significantly difference sizes and demographics.

### **Forward: exploring what the future might hold for today's learners and planning how to get there**

#### **What do we need to find out more about?**

The PATHS programme has been implemented in establishments across Argyll and Bute over the last three years. Some evaluation activity has been carried out however there is now a need to reflect more systematically on the effectiveness of the EPS in taking forward these developments and in identifying the impact for children and families.

Through the VSE process the EPS will evaluate the service's existing role in working with partners to support authority policy and practice in relation to health and wellbeing.

It is now necessary to explore how the EPS further support the implementation and evaluation of the PATHS programme across the authority to improve outcomes in relation to children and young people's health and wellbeing, through early intervention. In addition there requires to be exploration of how the EPS can support schools and establishments to improve early parental engagement.

## **Engaging with Validated Self Evaluation**

In order to ensure that the VSE process helps us to close the gap between where we are now and where we want to be, and assess our capacity for improvement, we aim to ensure:

- the commitment of the team to processes of self-evaluation is reflected throughout
- an appropriate range of activity is planned
- a full and appropriate range of stakeholders are involved
- a wide range of evidence is explored
- strong evaluative questions are asked
- there is appropriate challenge
- there is a sustained focus on outcomes for children and young people

At the end of both activity days the following should be considered, to allow further activity / questions to be planned:

- Has the activity been successful in meeting its aims?
- Were the questions helpful?
- Did we meet with the right people?
- What do we still need to find out?
- Can we confidently assess our capacity for improvement?