

## PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICE

### Validated Self-Evaluation

#### National Themes

Learning & Teaching

Partnerships

October 2015





## Theme 1 - Learning and Teaching

How well do Psychological Service Support Educational Services Department raise attainment and help close the attainment gap?

### Where are we now?

- Initial training on Reciprocal Teaching (RT) delivered to all primary schools in the authority (as at August 2015);
- Follow-up coaching sessions delivered to 17 out of 33 Primary schools;
- All 5 Secondary Schools at various stages of implementation:
  - Initial training delivered to 3 Secondary English Departments;
  - Consultation with 2 Secondary Schools.
- Initial training delivered to all Heads of Centre of Early Learning Centres, Early Years Teachers and Network support staff;
- Development and Sharing of Practitioner's Guide on RT to all schools trained;
- Development of CPD pack for schools on RT methodology;
- Development of Assessment Pack for Head Teachers of Primary Schools;
- Development of RT website (our cloud) with support resources including video clips.

### How do we know?

- Collection and analysis of local improvement data including:
  - Bespoke pre and post measure of reading comprehension;
  - Standardised Assessment of sample of P3 & P4 children using York Assessment of Reading for Comprehension (YARC), 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. (Snowling et al, 2009) pre and post;
  - Metacomprehension Strategy Index (Schmitt, M.C. 1990). pre and post P3-P7 pupils ;
  - Focus groups with Pupils, Class Teachers and Head Teachers during pilot phase;
  - Primary Head Teacher Survey Monkey results (triangulated with 10 greatest improving schools on Bespoke measure);
  - Observation of approach in sample of schools.

### What are our strengths?

- Systematic delivery of training in Primary Schools with follow-up coaching sessions and tracking and monitoring built-in drawing on Implementation Science principles;
- The development of support resources based on evidence based good practice e.g. Practitioner's Guide;
- Local improvement data collection over 3 years involving over 2,800 pupils, using quantitative and qualitative data for triangulation;
- Working towards achieving consistency across the curriculum (3 – 18 years) and across the authority with all learning communities involved.

## **What are our challenges?**

- Monitoring of implementation fidelity in relation to instructional foundations in Primary and Secondary;
- Embedding of practice with secondary English departments and use of methodology in other subject areas as part of literacy across the curriculum;
- Supporting the implementation of an adapted RT methodology for Early Learning Centre practitioners.

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

- Further means of supporting and independently sustaining the RT methodology in Primary schools;
- How to improve the implementation of the four instructional foundations in Primary schools;
- Ensuring consistency and coherence of the Reciprocal Teaching methodology across transitions from Primary school to Secondary school and Early Years Centres into Primary;
- The monitoring and tracking of progress in secondary schools and the impact of the RT methodology on teaching and learning in secondary;
- How to adapt and implement the approach for Early Years Centres.

## *References:*

*Schmitt, M.C. (1990). A questionnaire to measure children's awareness of strategic reading processes. The Reading Teacher, 43, 454-461*

*Snowling, M.J., Stothard, S.E., Clarke, P., Bowyer-Crane, C., Harrington, A., Truelove, E., Nation, K. & Hulme, C. (2009). York Assessment of Reading for Comprehension: Passage Reading. GL Assessment*

## **Theme 2 - Partnerships**

How well do Psychological Services work in partnership to improve well-being and close the attainment gap?

### **Where are we now? (What has been achieved?)**

The Psychological Service's planning is aligned to the priorities as set out within the Educational Services Plan (2015 update) a key aim of which is to build the capacity of staff in delivering curriculum for excellence and the duties as identified in the Children's and Young People (Scotland) Act. In line with these priorities Educational Psychologists have devised and delivered training on GIRFEC to senior education staff with further roll out planned. Capacity building is further evident in the range of training delivered across authority wide initiatives and school specific requests. The delivery of this training seeks to use best practice as drawn from implementation science methodology. Multiagency training on the Solihull approach has been a key feature of the work of the Service. All pre-school centres have now been trained alongside health and social work colleagues. It is timely therefore to revisit the impact on the training specifically in relation to the outcomes for children and families.

The Psychological Service engages with a wide range of partners in the delivery of its 5 core functions and statutory obligations under ASL legislation including school staff, social work, parents and health colleagues. Partnerships with educational establishments are strong with all schools having a link EP to discuss, advise and plan action in accordance with the needs of a school or early years centre.

Collaborative work in taking forward support to parents is reflected in the annual parenting report which has shown an increase in successful parental engagement and a focus on staff supervision and mentoring alongside programme fidelity.

The Service drives and supports schools to deliver evidence based programmes and approaches as per the experiences and outcomes specified within the curriculum for excellence health and well-being. This includes Seasons for Growth; PATHS; nurture groups; roots of empathy; Cool Kids. Nurture groups operate within 8 primary schools and their development and progress is supported by the Psychological Service. A recently completed survey of staff working in schools with nurture groups continues to highlight the need for nurture alongside some suggestions for future developments e.g. nurture groups for older pupils. Within the context of closing the attainment gap it is appropriate to consider the role that nurture could play and to consider future developments closely.

Working as part of multiagency teams Educational Psychologists contribute to the assessment of children with neurodevelopmental disorders and to their school planning thereafter. More generally the Psychological Service, in collaboration with schools, parents and other agencies, plays a key role in the identification and recommendation for support of children with ASNs. Multiagency working is a significant feature of the work of the Psychological Service within secondary schools and for children and pupils with complex social and emotional needs. With the implementation of GIRFEC and the duties under the Children's and Young People (Scotland) Act it is important to consider current structures and processes to determine whether they are in keeping with the spirit of the Act and also what role the EP should have within these contexts. It is important to consider the impact of these many multiagency forums for the children, young people and their families that they seek to serve.

## How do we know? (What is the evidence of impact?)

Evidence of impact comes from a wide range of sources. The Service has made conscious effort to move away from over reliance on one-of questionnaire surveys and uses mixed methods and data pulled from a variety of sources in order to improve triangulation and robustness. Evidence of impact:

- Nurture: Research methodology used to track progress using SDQs with annual and summary reports produced. Staff questionnaire; feedback and discussion at nurture twilight sessions; self-evaluation a theme for discussion and action at twilight meetings;
- PATHS: Pilot of evaluation method used with one school. Implementation tracked via business meetings with primary and early years staff. Schools supported to conduct their own audit of practice;
- Neurodevelopmental assessments: Feedback from parents following completion of assessment. Core group manage and monitor referrals, processes and outcomes. Multiagency training sessions where assessments are discussed to ensure consistency in diagnostic decision making;
- Service to schools: Service level agreement discussion and review of past year held at beginning of each new school year;
- Parent Groups / Parental Support: Research methodology used to gather evidence of impact across all parenting initiatives with annual report provided summarising findings and developing actions plan for next year. Input of EPS to parenting RIG; self-evaluation of this process has been undertaken with multi-agency partners. Mentoring system to ensure programme fidelity;
- Assessments by EPs: Casework evaluations undertaken twice a year in form of reflective discussions with PEP / DEP;
- Seasons for Growth: Evaluation data collected by schools; newsletter produced termly; reconnector sessions to ensure programme fidelity;
- Training to schools and partners: Evaluations collected and collated post-training, focus of questions on impact on practice. Planning of training informed by implementation science to ensure readiness and post-training support / coaching available;
- Feedback from schools: Focus group with HTs conducted to help inform changes to service delivery in future.

## What are our strengths?

- Planning is aligned to the strategic objectives as contained within Educational Services Plan;
- Contribution of Psychological Service to improving the health and well-being of pupils across WDC;
- Research perspective and methodology is used in measuring impact across initiatives where EPs have key responsibility;
- Positive relationships with large numbers of partners resulting in high quality assessments on children / young people and the formulation of support plans;
- Delivery of high quality training based on up-to-date research and psychological perspective;
- Coaching / mentoring support structures in place for staff in nurture, PATHS, Seasons for Growth and parenting initiatives;
- Input to parenting agenda within WDC.

## Where are our challenges?

- Continuing to deliver level and quality of Service within a reduced staffing;
- Ensuring that current multiagency practice is GIRFEC compliant with child and family at the centre of all planning and decision making;
- Measuring impact of health and well-being initiatives on attainment and the closing the gap agenda.

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

In relation to partnership working there are 3 key areas for focus: multiagency meetings, Solihull approach and nurture groups. In order to consider the impact and plan next steps in each of these areas, 9 activities have been planned. The planned activities have been designed to elicit impact and next steps at 3 levels: strategic, operational and individual. Specific areas to investigate further are summarised below:

- Multiagency meetings: Impact of the meetings and discussions on outcomes for children and families with specific reference to the role of the EP. This includes direct feedback from parents and children. What changes might be needed in light of Children and Young People (Scotland) Act?
- Solihull: Establish what the continued impact of Solihull training has been on staff, parents and children. Particular consideration needs to be given to the significance or not of the EP within this training. What needs to happen next to ensure Solihull practice is maintained?
- Nurture: Going forward how should nurture look? How is impact on attainment considered? What has been the impact of the involvement of the Psychological Service in nurture?

## **Service self-evaluation summary**

### **What key outcomes have we achieved?**

- Rolled out Reciprocal Teaching in all Primary Schools across West Dunbartonshire Council.
- Demonstrated impact in closing the attainment gap.
- Built capacity of Education Service staff to deliver the duties outlined in the Children and Young People's Act 2014 through training.
- Supported schools in developing the 4 capacities by training and supporting implementation of PATHs, Seasons for Growth, Nurture, Roots of Empathy, Cool Kids.
- Supported Integrated Children's Services in the delivery of the Parenting Strategy to ensure that our most vulnerable parents are provided with opportunities to give their children the best start in life.
- Provided assessment and support to schools, parents and young people affected by neurodevelopmental difficulties.

### **Overarching strengths**

- Psychological Services is embedded within Educational Services and work collaboratively with Educational Services colleagues to deliver the department's key objectives particularly in raising attainment and implementing curriculum for excellence
- We work closely with partner agencies to develop and support the delivery of outcomes through the GIRFEC Child's Planning process.
- We support the health and well-being of children, young people and their families in collaboration with schools and multi-agency partners.

### **Key Challenges**

- Economic climate has resulted in reductions in core staffing which has impacted on the capacity of the Psychological Service team to meet the demands arising from all our stakeholders.
- Supporting consistency of practice across partners and across the different areas in the delivery of the duties of the Children & Young People's Act.
- Increasing impact of the economic situation on the lives of young people and their families in West Dunbartonshire Council which means that many more young people have additional support needs particularly, emotional and behavioural needs.
- Demonstrating impact on wellbeing of young people who receive a service from the Psychological Service

### **Areas of strong practice**

- Bringing psychological knowledge, skills and research perspective to the gathering of impact data in literacy and health and well-being.
- Strength of the partner relationships at strategic or management level which facilitates the development of joint work.

## **What do we need to find out during our self-evaluation activity week?**

Can we find additional evidence that the work we have selected to look at more closely is having an impact on wellbeing/attainment and contributing to closing the gap?

We need to ask if the involvement of the Educational Psychology Service has added value and check if the outcomes and impact could have happened without Educational Psychology involvement. This will help decision making going forward in terms of our improvement plan.

We need to find out how we can ensure that the work undertaken by our Service in partnership with others is sustained both in terms of building in mechanisms for continually improving the capacity and skill of staff and keeping momentum and enthusiasm for the approaches so that they are well embedded in practice and continue to contribute to raising attainment and improving wellbeing.

### **Core Questions for Learning & Teaching and Partnership Working**

1. What is the evidence that this approach is having an impact on wellbeing/attainment and closing the gap?
2. What difference has it made that Educational Psychologists have been involved?  
and  
Could this have happened without Educational Psychology involvement?
3. How can we keep improving the capacity and skill of staff?
4. Within the current ever-changing economic climate, how do we keep up the momentum for this approach?

## Validated Self Evaluation Summary

During the activities week where Education Scotland joined us to validate our self-evaluation we identified additional strengths and key features of our service delivery as outlined below.

There was strong evidence of the work of WDC EPS impacting on both on raising attainment and closing the gap in literacy and in addition the work on raising attainment also impacted on the Health & Wellbeing of children:

Evidence of the impact of the work included:

- Children were noted to be more confident, outgoing and self-assured in many aspects of school life. They were more engaged in learning. Teachers felt this was a direct result of their participation in reciprocal teaching.
- Clear evidence emerged for the Reciprocal Teaching approach promoting inclusion.
- Teaching staff reported improvement in their own professional development in terms of their enjoyment and commitment and in their skill development in teaching higher order thinking skills.
- Improved partnership working with our quality improvement team in learning and teaching.
- Acknowledgement of the Educational Psychologists' key strength in using research methodology to drive initiatives that result in changes to practice that are systematic and consistent and that can be sustained.
- Evidence that the training and coaching provided by Educational Psychologists contributed to building capacity across the authority in the delivery of the key strategic objectives.

In terms of partnership working there emerged clear evidence of impact on children and families in terms of their health and well-being: for example nurture and Solihull delivered key support to very vulnerable children and families at the early level which supported children to remain and flourish in their local school.

Evidence of the impact of the work included:

- The impact of training in Solihull was evident in the skills of a range of professionals working in the pre-five area. Parents reported feeling contained and listened to.
- The model of training and coaching adopted by Educational Psychologists to support staff skill in delivering nurture was having an impact of the professional development of staff.

- The communication and relationships of Educational Psychologists with parents and partners was strong and contributed to the positive outcome for children and families.
- The joint approach to evaluation of multi-agency working has provided a very good foundation to go forward together and implement the principles and practices of GIRFEC.

## **Next Steps**

- With regard to implementation of Reciprocal Teacher there is clear enthusiasm to embed the approach in early years and secondary school. The Educational Psychologist role will be to build on lessons learned in the primary sector. Going forward a key task will be for Educational Psychologists to work to build capacity in other education staff to sustain and progress improvements in the longer term.
- There is a clear role for the Educational Psychologists to work with colleagues to find the best ways to involve parents in their children's development of higher order literacy skills.
- There is a clear role for the Educational Psychologists to help the authority explore how to gather impact data that cuts across learning and teaching and health & wellbeing and thereby support the Scottish Raising Attainment Challenge.
- We now need to make stronger strategic links between the quality improvement framework and the tracking and monitoring supported by Educational Psychologists in Nurture and Solihull.
- We need to build on the start made during the Validated Self Evaluation activity week to develop good multi-agency understanding and practice regarding the implementation of GIRFEC principles.
- We need to explore how best to take forward Solihull principles into the primary sector in order to achieve consistency of practice at transition.