

From mountain to sea

Aberdeenshire Educational Psychology Service Review and Planning Analysis

Session 2020-2021

Aberdeenshire Educational Psychology Service (EPS) engage in review and planning meetings with their schools during three key points within the academic year. The purpose of these meetings is to allow the EPS and schools to jointly reflect upon and evaluate their work together over the given period. This enables them to consider where things have gone well, what improvements could be made and to identify next steps to provide a focus for their future work together.

This summary report draws together the key points derived from the collated May/June 2021 review and planning meetings.

Analysis process

A thematic analysis was used to identify key themes emerging from the review and planning meetings

Participating Schools

Responses were received from 123 of the 172 schools. The analysis that follows therefore reflects a **total response rate of 72%** from schools. This was an increase from the 61% response rate recorded from the 2018-2019 session.

What has gone well in our work together this year?

Responses to this question were summarised within 5 themes this year (4 remained the same and one (virtual working) is new:

Collaborative working: mentioned 126 times by 90 schools (in comparison to 73 schools in 2018-19)

- This theme included the increased availability of EPs this year (53 mentions), support in FCs/Child's Plan meetings, offering a different perspective, helping with complex or difficult situations, cluster involvement, parental involvement in addition to the informal support/check-ins/listening ear that EPs have provided to their link school colleagues.

Capacity Building: mentioned on 86 occasions by 75 schools (in comparison to 73 schools in 2018-2019)

- The most mentioned example this year was informal consultations with many recognising the capacity building element of this and feeling it had been used

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much more (40), following by virtual training and the sharing of resources and strategies.

Direct Work: mentioned on 14 occasions by 14 schools (in comparison to 50 schools in 2018-19)

- This theme this year focused more on pupil-centred work as opposed to direct interventions by EPS with pupils. Comments focused around support with individual pupil planning, support in designing individual pupil interventions and in the support in developing clear and measurable aims and actions points.

Organisation: mentioned on 42 occasions by 35 schools (in comparison to 46 schools in 2018-19)

- This theme included comments which focused around the benefits of both forward planning and flexibility allowing for timely follow-ups but also timely responses to arising concerns; consistent links and existing relationships and knowledge were also mentioned alongside having clear understanding of role of EP and the process of involvement. 4 schools mentioned support in the Organisation of transition planning as specifically helpful.

A new theme arising this school year has been:

Virtual Working mentioned 75 times by 48 schools

- Schools commented consistently on the key benefit of EP virtual working was the ability to be flexible, timely and responsive. There was increased access to class teachers virtually for informal consultations in addition to virtual meetings resulting in increased attendance (of all agencies involved) which allowed meetings to be more responsive and inclusive and as a result more effective. Virtual training was felt to have gone well and was easier to organise and more accessible to all staff. Online and virtual supports were also mentioned often: family nurture leaflets, website, EPS videos and the phoneline.

The main themes have remained relatively consistent with previous years with the main change being a shift in comments from direct work to new ways of virtual working and the benefits that have been seen. Comments related to collaborative working increased in comparison to previous years with availability/accessibility and informal support and advice being mentioned more. Number of overall comments related to capacity building remained consistent (but informal consultations were mentioned more than training this year). Comments related to organisational factors remained consistent with previous years.

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Thinking about all the work we have done together this year, what has had the greatest impact? What evidence do we have of that impact?

Responses were summarised within 5 main themes.

Nurture training: (15 schools mentioned this) schools commented that the training has supported them in thinking about embedding nurture as a whole school approach in helping to have a clearer understanding around behaviours; more conscious around attunement; daily emotional check ins have also been implemented. Many schools mentioned that evidence of impact is not yet available as schools are still embedding the approach. Many have nurture on their development plan.

Emotion coaching training: (9 schools mentioned this). This included how the training has helped to develop understanding around emotional regulation and the ongoing discussions with the EP reinforcing the message is impactful. Good evidence of EC approach being used in school by many staff.

Informal Consultations: (19 schools mentioned this) the comments included the accessibility of the EP, regular ongoing dialogue, impact on staff confidence and development, early intervention through informals having impact (9 schools mentioned this). Another impact mentioned was a reduced number of formal consultations due to the discussions in the informal.

Formal Consultations: (13 schools mentioned this) the comments included the collaborative way of working, virtual meetings being more time efficient and less stressful for some parents, EP insight into seeing the bigger picture, depth of questioning, relationship building for the parents, parents feeling valued and giving positive feedback, positive transitions as a result of consultations, discussions led to useful ways ahead and made a positive impact for the child.

Sharing of resources and links: This was mentioned in respect of the EPS website in particular and the family nurture leaflets. It was felt that the website has helped the EPS to be more accessible to parents. HT's also mentioned that sharing resources and links has been helpful to go back to and has reduced the need for an informal consultation on occasions.

EP attendance at MAAPMs: (mentioned 8 times). Included depth of questioning from EP and supporting lead professional; EP asking the difficult/thought provoking questions; EP provides an informed perspective and summary of the situation for the parents; good explanations are given when the EP thinks something different should happen.

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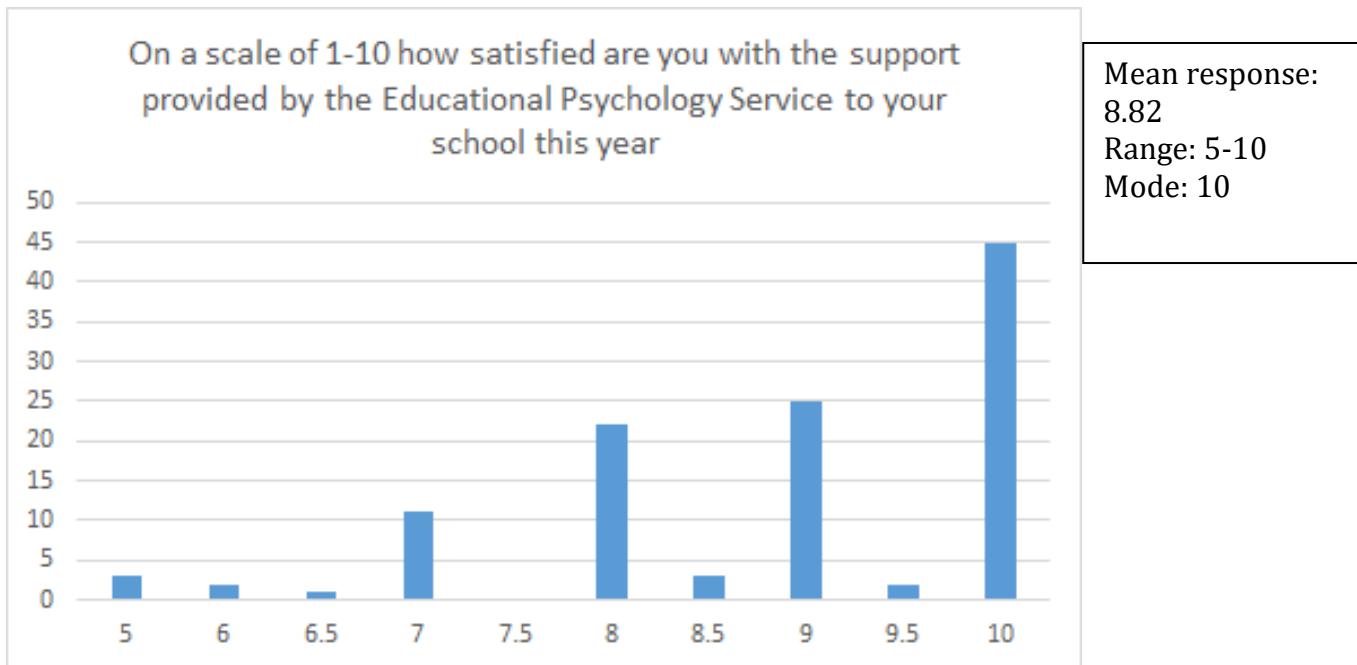
The phone line was mentioned 4 times.

The main themes coming through were around the increased accessibility of the EP, especially for informal consultation, ongoing dialogue and impromptu phone calls which were very supportive for HTs. Virtual meetings seemed to be mentioned in a positive way, in that they are more accessible to some parents and a good way to bring many agencies together to work together collaboratively and support the child and the parents. The informal consultations have had an impact on CTs and have helped to build trust, confidence, early intervention and development for teachers.

On a scale of 1-10 (1 = extremely unsatisfied; 10= extremely satisfied) how satisfied are you with the support of the Educational Psychology Service this year?

Of the 123 responses received, 120 schools provided a response to this question.

Responses are summarised below:



The above represented an increase in overall satisfaction in the support provided by the Educational Psychology Service in 2021-2021, compared to 2018-2019 when there was a mean response of 8.75, with the mode being 9.

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How could our work together be more effective?

63 schools (representing just over 50% of respondents) shared that the work of the Educational Psychology Service could be more effective if the EP was able to return to the delivery of a face-to-face service, or aspects of it. Building on this latter point, the second largest response (16 schools) was a suggestion that the Educational Psychology Service may wish to consider a hybrid model of working in order to combine elements of virtual and face to face delivery. Examples given included having opportunities to retain informal/professional Consultation and CLPL as virtual opportunities. The benefits of face to face input to support the engagement of some children and families, as well as opportunities for direct assessment when appropriate (e.g. classroom observation) were also sub-themes in this area.

Additional themes recorded included:

Greater strategic/whole school/cluster focus. 16 schools mentioned the benefits that may arise from the EP having a greater strategic focus within the school in addition to case work. There was recognition of the need to set time aside for this. 10 schools mentioned the benefits of greater linking with the cluster priorities and their service improvement plan. 6 schools further mentioned the that they would welcome the support of the EP in the evaluation of strategic interventions, and interpretation of data.

Organisation: 13 schools mentioned organisational aspects of service delivery. Comments centred around improved forward planning, with visit dates (either virtual or face to face) agreed in advance, and aspects of joint planning – such as prioritisation and improved consideration to timings of meetings (for example, considering of potential complexity in issues which may require more time)

Increased opportunities for informal/professional Consultation: 10 schools mentioned the benefits of both individual and/or group professional Consultation (group professional Consultation, for example, between small schools).

Consistency of EP: Benefits of retaining the same Educational Psychologist to work with the school was mentioned by 6 schools.

10 schools had no comment to share in response to this question.

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How could the work of the EPS have a greater impact in the school?

The focus of this question was to triangulate the EPS data analysis (part 3) with key school data information (if available), note trends and identify initial areas of focus. The question was analysed in three sections: section 1 focussed on the main question around impact; section 2 on trends/themes identified; and section 3 on systemic issues emerging, as identified by schools through the review and planning.

Section 1: How could the work of the EPS have a greater impact in the school?

There was a total of 19 responses to this question. The main theme related to the EP returning to some face-to-face meetings and being able to visit schools. Comments around meetings being in person related to unknown families, when parents find online meetings difficult, and when the situation is complex. Some schools mentioned keeping some meetings and procedures remote, such as informal Consultations, as this provides more flexibility. Another theme was regarding links with parents to build relationships and through webinars.

Other themes mentioned were: coaching/group consultations; input to whole school to introduce the EP and explain our role in supporting the school; a small school mentioned being able to seek support from the EP on an as and when basis; building relationships; consideration given to EP role in school working groups – impact groups – possibly supporting the research process; EP role in supporting pupil voice within their meetings; more EP time, different distribution of time – using time strategically across the Cluster; one school recognised that they had focused a lot on casework level this year and they shared that they need to also work more systemically; EP could track codes for Informal Consultations and MAAPMs to add to themes being reflected upon; more strategic work – ensure PSAs are included.

The second part of the question was about **trends/themes**. Responses to this question covered the following topics:

Emotional wellbeing: This was mentioned 25 times and was the most common theme.

Engagement in learning: Mentioned 9 times

Nurture: Mentioned 13 times

Self/emotional regulation: mentioned 17 times, the second most common theme

Social skills/interactions: mentioned 9 times

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Resilience: 7

Anxiety: 9

Transition: 7

Other themes mentioned related to parental support/wellbeing & engagement; communication skills; relationships; COVID recovery; attainment; emotion coaching; early intervention; sensory; autism; EBSA; growth mindset; attachment; ADHD; memory; behaviours; cognitive skills; ACES/trauma; neurodiversity

Other topics were mentioned on an individual school basis but are not detailed above.

The third part of the question related to **systemic issues** emerging:

The most common theme again related to **nurture** - universal (16) and to **nurture themed parental workshops/family nurture** (4).

Wellbeing of staff/pupils and parents (13) were common themes with **anxiety and mental health** (4) also mentioned.

Attendance and EBSA (4) were mentioned also with links to wellbeing and anxiety common.

Cluster work and sharing practice (6) were mentioned and this also linked to support around enhanced provision/CRH, understanding the systems and **coaching approaches**.

Other themes included: **cognitive skills tracking** and tracking progress in numeracy and literacy; **communication**; implementing the CIRCLEs approach; universal supports –developing teachers knowledge; transitions; attachment; **sensory**; **lockdown recovery**; developing holistic community support; practitioner enquiry; learning progress – maths; behaviours; **resilience**; task perseverance; **relationships/attachment**; **emotion coaching**; **ADHD**; **ASC**; neurodiversity; flexible learning; attainment-literacy; trauma; teaching and learning; thinking skills; differentiation; restorative approaches; **self-regulation**; early intervention; empathy– staff understanding; anger; pupil voice; growth mindset.

The highlighted text relates to themes which were mentioned by schools more than once.