

## **EAST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL**

### **EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY SERVICE**

#### **Standards and Quality Report 2021-2022**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

East Dunbartonshire Council Educational Psychology Service (the EPS) works flexibly from shared accommodation in Kirkintilloch Learning Centre. During session 2021-2022, the EPS has provided a service using a blended model of service delivery. This model of service delivery has been part of a Council-wide response to the Covid pandemic, and is based on feedback from educational establishments (EPS survey 2020-2021) that some aspects of shared work is better carried out online depending on context.

The EPS has a staffing complement of 8.5 FTE Educational Psychologist (EP) posts. This session, the EPS has been able to recruit an additional EP. As a result of this appointment, the EPS has been fully staffed and has been able to effectively lead on the Nurture Programme (see section on NIF Priority 3). One EP continues to be on an extended break from service. Unfortunately, three EPs have been absent due to ill health and from February to June, the EPS has worked with significantly reduced staffing. This situation is likely to continue. The impact of the reduced staffing has been acknowledged within EDC and the EPS has been able to recruit a full time temporary member of staff for session 2022-2023. This has allowed a measure of resilience within the Service, and this will ensure a more consistent service to be provided over session 2022-2023.

In accordance with legislative requirements, all Educational Psychologists in the EPS are registered with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC).

Compliance with HCPC registration requires that all members of staff have a minimum qualification of an Honours degree in Psychology and an accredited

postgraduate degree in Educational Psychology (British Psychological Society (BPS)). All of the educational psychologists in EDCEPS hold additional professional qualifications, which include teaching, social work and research.

The EPS is accredited by the BPS to provide supervision and training for year 1 and 2 trainee educational psychologists on the MSc Educational Psychology Training Course and to provide supervision for Year three trainee educational psychologists during their first year of supervised practice, leading to the Qualification in Educational psychology (QEP). Three educational psychologists are on the Register of Applied Practitioner Psychologists (RAPPS), which qualifies them to supervise trainee educational psychologists. In session 2021-2022, the EPS successfully supervised three trainee EPs (years 1, 2 and 3 of the MSc in Educational Psychology).

#### **FUNCTIONS**

The EPS is a statutory Service which assists the local authority in meeting the needs of all its children and young people through the application of psychological theory and practice within a local authority and educational context. The EPS has an advisory age range of 0-24 years.

In addition to working within the local Authority, educational psychologists provide a service for those young people who are looked after by East Dunbartonshire Council but who live out-with the geographical area to ensure that their support continues uninterrupted.

In line with national guidance (Currie, 2002), the EPS has five core functions, namely: consultation; assessment; intervention; training and research. These are inter-related aspects of work and an educational psychologist's involvement will usually be a combination of these as required to meet the needs of the particular situation. National guidance stipulates that EPs work at three levels: child and family; establishment and authority so that their work involves systemic as well as individual level

input. The EPS has contributed at national level through policy advice, research or collaboration with the Scottish Government or Education Scotland.

The EPS has statutory duties in relation to the Children's Hearing System including training. EPs have to meet all legislative requirements and follow appropriate ethics and professional codes of conduct as required by the HCPC.

## **LOOKING INWARD**

### **LEADERSHIP and DIRECTION**

#### **Self-evaluation for Improvement and Service Improvement Planning**

The EPS has continued the themed approach to self-evaluation and improvement by collaborating in small Service Improvement Groups (SIGs) and evaluating and improving service delivery under three broad headings: Research into Practice; Service Improvement and Delivery; and Collaboration and Co-Production. These areas of work derived from a self-evaluation Service scanning and scoping exercise (used at national level by Education Scotland, 2018). This is the final session of this three year plan.

This session, the work of the SIGs involved: producing guidance for EPs in transferring cases, and developing home visiting guidance for EPs in consultation with Health and Safety. The Research Professional Support Group continued to meet monthly to provide advice for education stakeholders at authority level on research plans. A wide range of education professionals brought research to this group and feedback indicated that they had found the input from the group to be very useful in supporting their research. The updated RFA has been finalised and is being used across the Service. The EPS Glow Blog has been updated, and an initial audit of how Pupil Voice is gathered by the EPS has been completed.

These are significant pieces of work which are positively impacting the service delivery of the EPS and benefitting the work of partners in the wider

Council. More detail with evaluative updates is included in the Service Improvement Plan 2020-2023.

The SIGs have also provided a means of informal dialogue to support the wellbeing and practice of all the EPs who have continued to work remotely for significant periods of time during this session.

## **DEVELOPING PEOPLE AND PARTNERSHIPS**

Individual EPs are supported to develop their strengths and competences through the PDR process. This process ensures that all EPs have the opportunity to identify strengths, skills and competences and to be supported to develop aspects of their practice through leadership at EPS and authority level.

The work of EPs is supported by regular supervision with the Principal Psychologist. Through supervision, EPs are supported and challenged in their work and report that they find these arrangements to discuss and reflect on pieces of work useful in improving their practice. In addition to regular formal supervision, informal supervision is available and provided on a frequent basis by the PEP, DPP and through peer support within the EPS.

To support clarity and equity within the EPS, each EP has a defined set of leadership tasks, which are included and reviewed within the supervision process. This ensures transparency and balance of work for individual EPs, within the EPS and at authority level. This process supports distributed leadership within the EPS.

Service Meetings have continued to be held weekly online, and this provides an opportunity to raise issues/concerns or share aspects of work with all the EPs. This session a significant proportion of the work of the EPS has taken place online, so that opportunities for meeting continue to be an important aspect of service delivery.

## Wellbeing in the EPS

The impact of Covid, in terms of: the measures taken to protect health, ongoing absence levels in schools, and stakeholder wellbeing, has been significant across the workforce. In order to continue to support the wellbeing of partners, the EPS has taken a proactive stance on assessing and addressing wellbeing within the EPS. The EPS has reviewed EP wellbeing on three occasions between March 2020 and June 2022. This process has identified strengths, barriers and next steps to address the issues raised. The most recent closer look at wellbeing generated the following:

- Important aspects of wellbeing: being supported by management, having a varied workload (casework and development work) and connecting with EPs to debrief, process and gain advice.
- Identified next steps: protecting time face to face (EP meetings), continued support from management (EP and Central) and clarity around aspects of EP role (opening and closing cases for example).

A Wellbeing Action Plan has been developed which has built on the feedback from the Service.

## LEADERSHIP OF CHANGE AND IMPROVEMENT

During session 2021-2022, EP service delivery has changed from predominantly online working across the range of EP work, to a blended model of working. In line with feedback from schools and centres, Pupil Support and Support for All Groups have continued to meet online. Team around the Child Meetings have continued online where this best meets the needs of families and have been in person when required. Training has continued to be online apart from particular circumstances. An example of this would be the 'What's the Harm?' training, where due to the nature of the topic under consideration (self-harm), all training has been in person.

In recognition of the continuing impact of Covid and resultant measures on school staff, the revised

Interactive Evaluation (IE) format has been used again in session 2021-2022:

What have we managed to achieve this year?

What have been the key strengths?

What have been the barriers?

What are our next steps?

Feedback from school leaders through the IE process, is that

The EPS has continued to accept new referrals, hold Team around the Child Meetings and enable transitions to specialist placements, as well as effectively plan transitions from pre to primary school, primary to secondary and secondary to post school. The Service has used a blended model of delivery, which is considered by partners to be working well. Schools and Centres have welcomed EPs back in person to carry out contextual assessments and have commented on the positive impact in-person working has on relationships. All casework is carried out according to GIRFEC principles – and in partnership with parents/carers and children/young people. During session 2021-2022, link EPs delivered training for individual schools on topics such as trauma – informed practice, nurture, language and communication friendly environments, working memory, inclusive classrooms and emotional regulation.

## LOOKING OUTWARD

### IMPACT AT NATIONAL, REGIONAL IMPROVEMENT COLLABORATIVE (RIC) AND AUTHORITY LEVEL

#### National

The Principal Educational Psychologist (PEP) is a member of the Association of Scottish Principal Educational Psychologists (ASPEP). This is a national forum, which addresses key developments for the profession and links with the Scottish Government.

The PEP has led on development of an ASPEP position paper on 'Working Contexts for Educational Psychology Services in Scotland'. This paper draws

on legislation, research and audit within the profession with the aim of supporting Authorities and Services to provide appropriate working contexts for EPSs. This paper has been used by ASPEP to generate further research (currently in development) on working arrangements for the profession post pandemic.

### **RIC**

The PEP participates in the PEP West Partnership Group. The focus of the work of the West Partnership RIC in session 2021-2022 has been to take a closer look at self-evaluation in the profession. The RIC has linked with Education Scotland with the aim of shaping national frameworks for evaluation of EPSs. This piece of work has led to a position paper on self-evaluation within EPSs produced by ASPEP.

A senior EP has initiated and leads a West Partnership Practitioners' Network, which has collaborated across the eight partner Councils in relation to common areas of EP work. In Session 2021-2022, the Network focused on sharing aspects of common practice such as approaches to supporting wellbeing. This has led to stronger links between Services and greater sharing of work.

### **Impact at Authority Level**

#### **Authority Groups**

The EPS contributes to decision-making and resource allocation groups within the Authority; groups include Locality Liaison Group, GIRFEC Liaison Group and Early Years Community Assessment Team. These multi-agency groups support inclusion and attainment for children from birth to 19 years who have significant additional support needs.

EPS input at authority level has continued with support and advice for establishment of a Counselling Service for young people in all EDC schools. Impact for children and young people who have participated in counselling has been positive in terms of self-reported improvement.

The EPS has led development of a mental health strategy for education. This paper was launched

during session 2021-2022 and information was gathered about the main issues in schools and how these could be addressed. Main issues identified included: anxiety and resilience in children, mental health in parents, and non-attendance (mostly in secondary stages). The EPS has contributed to a multi-agency mental health strategy at Council level.

The EPS has led on year one of a three year plan to develop nurture interventions in 12 primary schools. These schools have benefitted from a trained nurture teacher and family learning assistant. In acknowledgement of the need to focus on nurture as part of the Covid recovery plan, the EPS has been able to recruit a member of staff to lead the nurture intervention at authority level.

Each school has run a nurture group and implemented whole school nurture. Further details are in the NIF Priority 3 section of this report.

#### **ASN Policy and Strategy**

In 2017-2018, the Including Every Learner Policy was launched, and during session 2021-2022, the EPS has been reviewing this policy in partnership with the ASN Service. The revised policy will be submitted to Committee in Session 2022-2023.

Associated with the policy, guidance has been developed in relation to working with parents/carers who have employed private professionals in the education or learning of their child. This has been an increasing aspect for education professionals who work in the ASN sector. This guidance will provide clarity for parents and education staff.

#### **Early Years Outreach Model**

Provision set out in the including Every Learner Policy (2018), included an Early Years part time placement provision within the Enhanced Learning Resources (ELRs) in three primary schools. During sessions 2019-2020 and 2020-2021, the Early Years part of the ELRs was not utilised as fully as expected. This was partly due to Covid related factors but also fewer than expected requests for early years' places within ELRs meant that the resources were not fully utilised. In response to this, and in order to make best use of

resources, a revised Early Years' model has been developed by the EPS in collaboration with ELR staff. The new model was piloted during the latter part of session 2021-2022 and has been refined in line with feedback from service users. The new model will be operational from Session 2022-2023.

EDCEPS has been a lead contributor to the following authority wide strategies and approaches with the aim of improving outcomes for all children as set within the NIF priorities below:

**NIF Priority 1: Raising attainment, particularly in literacy and numeracy and**

**NIF Priority 2: Closing the poverty related attainment gap**

**Raising Attainment in Literacy in early years and early level primary children through Play-based Learning**

Play-based Learning is an overarching pedagogy for early learners. The approach supports achievement in literacy, numeracy, and health and wellbeing.

The professional learning community for play pedagogy continued on the virtual platform of Microsoft Teams for Session 2021-2022 and the EP was key in planning and delivering training on a range of areas (play pedagogy, loose parts and observations).

Some school visits were made by the EP, in collaboration with the ELST team and QIO, to provide support and challenge for schools who had introduced play pedagogy and were looking for authority level guidance.

In January 2022, the EP and an Early Years QIO colleague were asked to guest present at a lecture about play pedagogy to First Year Educational Psychology Trainees at Dundee University. Feedback about the session from the trainee EPs via the lecturer was very positive.

A face to face play pedagogy and pupil enquiry conference was held in June 2022 and an EP presented at this, outlining EDC's journey re: play pedagogy from 2016-2022 and the evaluative successes and challenges.

The ASN and play pedagogy working party continued to be supported by an EP this session. The EP supported a teacher working in the specialist sector with a framework for collaborative practitioner enquiry and tools to measure impact. An Education Scotland visitor to the specialist school described the work of this teacher as 'sector leading'

The roles of the EP this session in

1. Promoting knowledge of child development and play pedagogy research at local authority and national level
2. Supporting implementation and evaluation of play pedagogy at individual, school and authority, including the ASN sector

are the key areas where the EP has added unique value to EDC's pedagogical approaches in the early years of primary school.

**Raising Attainment through Outdoor Learning**

In the 2021-2022 session, the EPS continued to support the development of outdoor learning approaches through the Professional Learning Communities for Play and Outdoor Learning. Attendance at these sessions has been lower than in previous years, but inputs have been positively received. Evaluation has indicated a preference for outdoor learning training to be delivered in person where possible and this will be considered in planning for future sessions.

The EPS has contributed to a strategic working group aiming to review LLG processes for accessing support from the Outdoor Education Service. A key focus of this group has been developing approaches to measuring impact for individual pupils, and ensuring sustainability of outdoor learning approaches within mainstream schools. This work will continue in the



2022-2023 session, with revised guidance shared with schools by October 2022.

In the 2022-2023 session, the EPS will lead a research project aiming to develop a consistent approach to outdoor play at the Early Level of the Curriculum for Excellence. In addition, PLCs will be delivered for staff at all levels of the CFE through the academic session.

### **Closing the poverty related attainment gap Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) and Trauma**

The EPS continues to be represented on East Dunbartonshire Council ACES and Trauma Collaborative, the multiagency strategic group which has raised awareness across all levels of leadership for a trauma informed workforce.

The EPS has completed a process of self-evaluation regarding trauma awareness at whole Service level. This is a Service priority in order to ensure an appropriate level of competence in the area of supporting those who have experienced trauma. The EPS have mapped out a proposed training plan for the service and is in the initial stages of collaborating with Social Work to as a joint test site for Level 1 and Level 2 training.

The EPS contributes to EDC Adoption and Fostering Panel so that panel recommendations are informed by a knowledge of child development and attachment.

### **NIF Priority 3: Improving children's wellbeing**

#### **Supporting Wellbeing**

##### **Nurture Intervention**

In Session 2021-2022 twelve primary schools were centrally funded to set up Nurture Groups and focus on developing whole school nurture. This Pilot Programme was led by 2 Educational Psychologists, with support from a Trainee Educational Psychologist. 77 children were supported in Core Nurture Groups, all of whom had identified barriers

to their wellbeing. An additional 331 children were supported through wellbeing groups or 1 to 1 sessions with a Nurture Practitioner.

All evaluations of the Nurture Pilot indicate that the Core Nurture Groups were effective in their aim of improving children's wellbeing. In terms of the three measures of wellbeing pre and post for the core nurture children: the Boxall Profile, Ferre Laever's wellbeing and engagement scales, and Stirling Children's Wellbeing, all three showed statistically significant improvements in wellbeing over the period of nurture intervention. All 12 of the Nurture Pilot groups also demonstrated gains in developing nurture at whole school level. A full evaluation report will be completed and shared with stakeholders in August 2022.

#### **Improving Wellbeing through CALM training**

CALM is a training framework and model which has been incorporated in to a five year plan within the Education Service. CALM is aligned with nurture approaches and trauma informed practice. An in-house training model has been developed which ensures that staff who are accredited as CALM trainers can train others within EDC. This allows more teachers to be trained and ensures fidelity to the programme. In 2021-2022, CALM module 1 training was delivered in August and again in February for staff in Tier 2 and 3 Resources. Materials were created to support a virtual delivery and this was evaluated positively with all participants agreeing that the course was relevant to their work and that the course outcomes had been achieved.

#### **Improving learner wellbeing through the Autism Advisor Programme**

In Session 2021-2022, the Autism Adviser programme continued to build capacity within Tier 1 provision to support well-being and promote attainment and achievement for learners with ASD and social communication difficulties. This session, there were 2-3 inputs delivered for the Autism Advisers in each sector (early years, primary and secondary). These sessions were conducted online via Teams by a member of the EPS and the Outreach

team, with guest inputs from colleagues in the Occupational Therapy team and information shared from the National Autistic Society (NAS) with a focus on Autism Awareness week. Although attendance was variable, those who attended the sessions reported finding them useful in their support for learners with additional support needs.

Requests for future sessions to be conducted in person will be taken into account when planning sessions for 2022-23.

### **Mental Health and Wellbeing**

Mental health needs have increased across the population over the last two years as a result of Covid and resultant measures. The response of the Education Service has been to prioritise wellbeing within planning and developments. Most schools and centres had wellbeing as a priority within their school improvement plans (S and Q Report 2020-2021). Authority responses to mental health needs across the Council have included:

#### **Review of the Suicide and Self-Harm Guidance**

Multi-agency guidance for staff responding to issues of self-harm and suicide was developed in 2017 by the EPS, Health and Social Work Services. In session 2021-2022, two EPs led on a multi-agency review of this guidance. In collaboration with Social Work and Health colleagues, staff across all sectors of education, social work, and colleagues from the voluntary sector, were consulted via an online questionnaire. Overall, participants reported that the guidance was used and valued, but several improvement points were identified. These changes will be further explored through focus groups and refreshed guidance will be launched in session 2022-2023.

#### **What's the Harm? Training**

Two EPs were trained as trainers this session and have delivered two full day training sessions to multi-agency staff who work with young people who may experience self-harm. All 8 secondary schools

participated in this training (Wellbeing or Guidance Teachers). In addition, a self-harm awareness raising course was provided via Teams to the Educational Psychology team. These sessions were very highly positively evaluated by participants, with all participants rating themselves as feeling more able to respond appropriately to someone who is self-harming and feeling more able to work more effectively with someone who is self-harming. Plans are in place to train three Health Service colleagues and three Social Work colleagues so that training can be multi-agency in its delivery.

### **Impact at establishment level**

#### **Interactive Evaluations (IEs)**

This session, the amended format and questions within IEs were continued in light of the continuing demands on all staff due to recovery from Covid. IEs were carried out both online and in person and were completed for most establishments.

Impact of the EPS for schools and EYCs included:

#### **What have we managed to achieve this session?**

- Managed all aspects of educational psychology casework e.g. assessments, TACs, EYCAT and GLG requests moving from predominantly online working to a blended model of service delivery
- Continued to provide regular input at all Pupil Support Groups (Schools) and Support for All Groups (Early Years)
- Individual establishment professional learning has resumed with the main focus on wellbeing
- Stronger relationships have been built associated with in-person working
- Clear and knowledgeable advice about resources and other agencies
- Working with and supporting parents
- Cross authority working has been managed over the session

#### **What were the Strengths?**

- Flexible and responsive service

- Professional Learning was a strength in several IEs for example: working memory, inclusive classrooms and nurture input
- Regular planned visiting times
- Collaborative partnerships and positive relationships
- Can ask anything and reach out between meetings
- Robust professional discussion
- Professional expertise
- Parents feel comfortable and that they can relate well to the EP
- Signposting to support from other agencies/resources
- Service has been over and above what was required

#### **What were the Barriers?**

- Some establishments would like more time from the EPS due to increased level of ASN need. The schools acknowledged that they would need to further prioritise and reconsider how PSGs are used.
- Generally, education staff missed building relationships when not able to come in due to Covid-enabled measures
- Some schools stated that they would like to see more direct work with children – schools acknowledged that they would need to prioritise casework to enable this

#### **Plans for Session 2022-2023**

Responses were in two categories: firstly, establishment priorities in terms of professional learning:

- Attendance (secondary schools)
- Metacognition
- Inclusive classrooms
- Play and outdoor play
- Attachment and Nurture (several establishments)
- ASD
- Mental Health – whole class intervention
- Parent engagement/workshops
- Literacy

- Transitions – anxiety and social communication needs
- Trauma informed practice
- Language and Communication Friendly Environments (several establishments – all sectors)
- Pupil engagement
- Promoting Alternative Thinking Skills (PATHS)
- Planning for the new ASN school

Secondly, suggested changes to processes and planning to facilitate more effective working between school and EPS:

- Moving visit days around to involve other agencies more consistently
- More rigorous case management to allow new cases to be taken on
- Streamlining PSGs to allow the needs of some children to be met at this level rather than requiring referral to EPS

#### **Reflections by ASN Coordinators on EPS service delivered during session 2022-2023:**

Effective partnership working leading to very good outcomes for learners (Primary Head Teacher)

Provision of expertise from Educational Psychologist through discussion and documentation to support a range of issues (Primary Head Teacher)

Very approachable, supportive and knowledgeable, an important part of the (school) team (ASN School)

There is a strong partnership between (school) and the EPS and a high level of collaboration during case working. This is a key strength of our practice and it has allowed the team to be flexible in responding to challenging circumstances in the school in order to meet individual pupil needs (Secondary Depute Head Teacher)

The hybrid approach to working (with some meetings taking place on Teams, and some in person) has been supportive. Being able to return to in person meetings when required has helped to develop positive working relationships with pupils,



families and colleagues (Secondary Depute Head Teacher)

Information from the IE process indicates that session 2021-2022 has seen resumption of greater level of in-person work, while sustaining those aspects that can be achieved more effectively by online working. Schools and centres have benefitted from more in-person work from the EPS, which has allowed positive and responsive relationships to develop. Despite challenging circumstances including school staff and EP absences, essential educational psychology services for children and families have continued. In addition. Some individual establishment professional learning has resumed, with most of this being around wellbeing, including nurture, and some topics around raising attainment e.g. literacy, metacognition, working memory.

## **LOOKING FORWARD**

### **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

Session 2021-2022 has required EPs to deliver a service using a blended model with some time working from home and more of the working week spent on in-person visits to educational establishments. Feedback from education partners has continued to indicate that a blended model of service delivery is the most effective way of working: some meetings or pieces of work can be managed well online due to organisational factors and the nature of the work, whereas other aspects require in-person arrangements. The EPS will continue to offer a flexible service according to contextual need.

Feedback from schools and centres has demonstrated that an educational psychology service has successfully been delivered for children and families through regular planned visits to schools and centres. In-person working has allowed observations and consultations to take place. Team around the Child meetings, advice, and support in contacting other agencies, requests for placement or additional targeted support have all been delivered by the EPS.

A variety of professional learning has been delivered with a focus on wellbeing. Professional learning has been in person when required but online for most of the session in line with Council guidance.

EP absence has meant that cover arrangements have been in place for the period of February to the present time. EPs have shared out essential work across the Service with each EP taking on the link role with a number of other schools or centres in addition to their own school allocation.

The EPS has demonstrated its role and impact in providing input for children and families, advice and training for establishments, input to Council staff about key issues, and at policy level where EPs have led on a number of policy documents. These include: the Mental Health Strategy for Education and the Council Mental Health Policy, Including Every Learner revised Policy, the Suicide and Self-Harm Multi-Agency Guidance and the ELR Early Years Model. The EPS has also continued to support the research function within Education by providing advice through the Research Professional Support Group in line with recommendations from Education Scotland about future directions in Educational Psychology Services.

The EPS has demonstrated leadership of key Council Interventions as part of recovery from Covid such as the Nurture Intervention, including training, coaching, statistical analysis and write up of a substantial evaluation report. This intervention will continue for session 2022-2023 with a focus on secondary age young people.

The EPS will continue to provide a service for children and families building on the strong relationships with school partners, and with parents/carers. The EPS will take a closer look at the way children's voice is gathered in matters that affect them. The EPS will build on links with parents and carers through planned work looking at how we engage with parents, and supporting parents with their children's mental health and wellbeing.

Responding to feedback from secondary schools in particular and some primary schools, the EPS will carry out a research project on supporting school attendance and will produce an evaluation of the pilot in Session 2022-2023.

In terms of leadership and direction, the EPS will take a closer look at their own self –evaluation processes to ensure that its self-evaluation is as rigorous and consistent as possible.

The EPS will continue the process of becoming a trauma informed Service through use of the whole Service NES Trauma Training Framework and support this programme within the wider EDC context.

**Gillian Dury**  
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**20-07-2022**

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