

East Renfrewshire  
Educational Psychology  
Service

## Practitioner Enquiry

Theme One: Learning and  
Teaching

Activity Descriptor: School  
Improvement Partnerships: Video  
analysis and focus group

Date: 31 January 2017

Time: 10:30 –12:30 including 30  
minutes reflection

Venue: Room 2, Eastwood House

## VSE Briefing Paper

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## Theme One Key Question

*What impact is our contribution to **practitioner enquiry** and professional learning with schools having on learning and teaching, particularly for our most vulnerable pupils?*

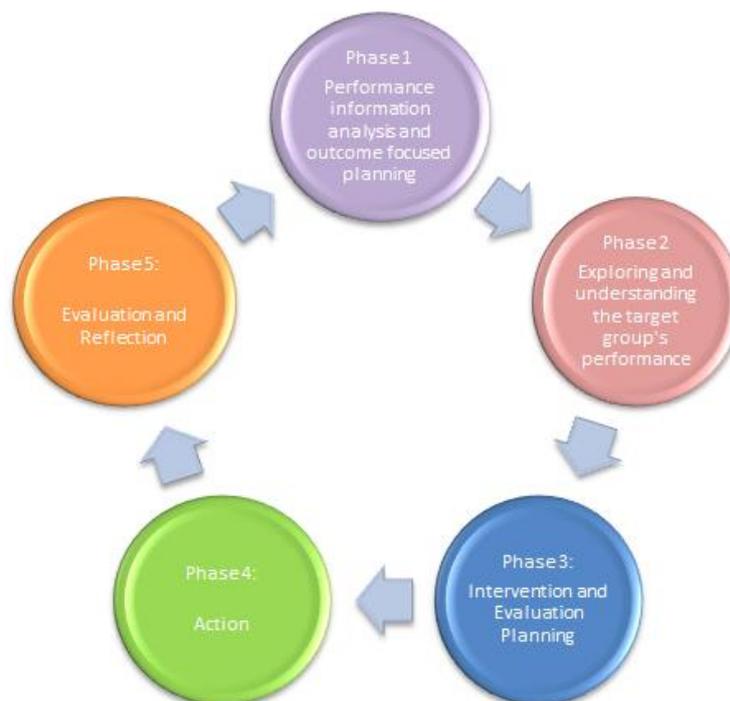
## Background

### What information, knowledge and data do we have?

Research is one of the five core functions of educational psychologists in Scotland (Scottish Executive, 2002). Educational Psychologists, therefore, have skills and knowledge which can inform and promote best practice through conducting research in educational settings. The Educational Psychology Service (EPS) recognises that there is also a role for educational psychologists to fulfil in supporting teachers to develop their own knowledge, understanding and skills in research. The School Improvement Partnership (SIP) project is seen as an opportunity for the EPS to fulfil this role.

The School Improvement Partnership (SIP) project is set within a national context of tackling educational inequity (Education Scotland Act 2016; Scottish Government 2016). SIP is a collaborative school improvement strategy that promotes new ways of working across classrooms and schools. Collaborative professional enquiry is used to innovate, test and refine new approaches to reduce the attainment gap. Teachers lead change through action research and use evidence to inform practice. Working in partnerships allows practitioners to learn from similarity and diversity in their respective contexts. Practice and expertise is moved around the partnership and networks are built across school clusters and the education authority.

SIPs aim to target the achievement of a small group of vulnerable learners using a five phase methodology to analyse the presenting issues in a systematic way as follows:



During the 2014/15 academic year the EPS supported a pilot SIP involving two primary schools. The project was carried out in collaboration with Robert Owen Centre for Educational Research at the University of Glasgow. It evaluated the impact of Cognitively Guided Instruction on maths. The project had a positive impact on learners' progress in numeracy at the early level and staff reported a positive impact on their teaching practice and their developing skills as researchers.

Given the positive outcomes of the pilot SIP, the model was refined and introduced across all primary schools and early learning and childcare centres during the 2015/16 academic year. Partnerships of two to four establishments were formed based on analysis of performance data. Each partnership was supported by an educational psychologist. Some partnerships have continued into the 2016/17 academic session and some new partnerships were formed.

The EPS has supported the introduction of the SIP model in several key ways:

- Writing guidelines for partnerships in collaboration with the Quality Improvement Team, addressing the core features of effective practitioner enquiry, its purpose, and the roles that each staff member involved should fulfil.
- Delivering training on the SIP model with Head Teachers and Class Teachers.
- Delivering training on research / practitioner enquiry skills at launch events.
- Developing an action research methodology for practitioners to use in their partnerships.
- In collaboration with Class Teachers, Quality Improvement Officers and an Education Development Officer, identifying ways to form partnerships on the basis of schools having a shared focus on factors that impact on the attainment of vulnerable learners.
- Allocating time for individual Educational Psychologists to support each partnership.

Evaluation data was gathered from SIP practitioners via questionnaire at the end of the 2015/16 academic session. In evaluating the role of the educational psychologist in the SIP 92% of staff strongly agreed or agreed that the educational psychologist contributed positively to the work of the school improvement partnerships.

Key strengths of the SIP approach were identified as follows:

- Networking across the authority and out-with local clusters was valued by staff
- Staff valued the opportunity to engage with current research
- A robust data gathering process was adopted
- Staff valued the opportunity to share practice between and across schools.
- Staff valued working closely with the educational psychologist

Some of the more practical challenges encountered were identified through staff evaluations:

- Partnerships were established late in the academic year, making it difficult to plan around existing school commitments
- The partnerships did not form part of the school improvement plans as these were written in advance of the decision to roll out SIPs
- As a result, the partnerships were not factored in to the staff collegiate agreement, making it difficult to manage time, meetings, research, lesson design and cover alongside other school commitments.
- Once further discussion between partnership members took place, it became apparent that some initial target groups were not appropriately matched
- It took time for staff to fully understand the process and methodology

From an EPS perspective, these challenges were responded to for the year 2016-2017:

- Refresher training for teachers and head teachers was delivered in September 2016.
- The EPS held discussions with each individual school to identify a vulnerable group of

learners.

- The EPS supported staff to gather data on these learners.
- Rather than liaise with colleagues to identify shared target groups, as teachers had done in the previous year, partnerships were allocated centrally with involvement from the EPS on the basis of them having a similar research question.

One of the key challenges looking forward will be to evaluate the impact of SIPs on the attainment of vulnerable learners and data gathering to evidence impact is required in the coming years.

## Activity Outline, Rationale and Outcomes

### **What are we doing?**

Short video clips of a SIP meeting will be shown to stimulate discussion about the contribution of the educational psychologist to the meeting and the wider SIP project in general.

This will be followed by short video clips of semi-structured interviews with a teacher and parents to stimulate discussion about the impact of the contribution of the educational psychologist on staff, children and parents involved in the SIP project.

The activity aims to answer the key questions outlined in the briefing paper. A framework based on the Person Centred Planning tool "PATH" (Promoting Alternative Tomorrows with Hope) will be used to identify goals, where we are now, what we need to do to achieve our goals and first steps towards the goals.

Participants have been invited to this activity on the basis of their involvement with SIPs and/or to support the process of self-evaluation.

### **Why have we chosen this activity?**

The Psychological Service has been involved in the SIP project for a relatively short period of time. It is prudent to evaluate our contribution to this project so far in order to identify key strengths and areas for development looking forward.

### **What is the evidence base for this type of activity?**

The use of video to support professionals to reflect on practice is well established, for example, Video Interactive Guidance (VIG) and Video Enhanced Reflective Practice (VERP). The aim of the approach is to support professionals to build on their current strengths, further develop their attuned communication skills and to identify areas for improvement.

PATH (Promoting Alternative Tomorrows with Hope) can be used across a variety of settings to create a shared vision of a positive future. It utilises a unique format to encourage contributions from larger groups with a clear focus on moving from the current situation to a preferred future. The PATH allows a wealth of information to be gathered, analysed and synthesised during the process (O'Brien, Pearpoint & Kahn, 2010).

### **What key questions do we intend to answer in this activity?**

- What is the contribution of the Educational Psychology Service to the SIP project?
- Is this contribution unique or could another professional make the same contribution?
- What are the strengths of our involvement in SIPs?
- What weaknesses and barriers are there and how will we address and overcome these to improve?
- Is our involvement in SIPs building capacity of staff? If so how?
- Is our approach to SIPs evidence based and, if so, how do we know?

- Is our approach equitable / does it promote equity across schools?
- What are we trying to accomplish through our involvement in SIPs?
- Are wellbeing outcomes being improved for children and young people as a result of our involvement in the SIP project if so, in what way?
- Is our involvement in SIPs raising attainment? How are we measuring this?
- What information, knowledge and data do we currently have? Are we making best use of this and, if not, how can we improve?
- Do we have all the information we need in order to evaluate our impact? / Is there anything else we need to consider?
- What opportunities are there to improve our performance? (What could / should we be doing differently?)
- Looking outward, what can we learn from how other Educational Psychology Services support practitioner enquiry?
- Looking forward, what changes, if any, do we need to make in our approach?
- Is involvement in SIPs a beneficial use of time for supporting the teaching and learning of the most vulnerable pupils?
- How should this type of work be prioritised by the EPS compared to casework, CLPL for example?

Activity Facilitators	
Name	Role
Kathleen McGuire	Quality Improvement Officer
Vicky Flores	Educational Psychologist

Participants	
Name	Role
Chris Atherton	Senior Educational Psychologist
Christine McGovern	Educational Psychologist
Jennifer Norval	Trainee Educational Psychologist
Kristina Azubalyte	Psychology Assistant
Catriona Wingrave	Class Teacher
Melanie McGurren	Education Development Officer
Gillian Hughes	Class Teacher
Willie Inglis	Head Teacher
Jennifer Lavery	Principal Teacher
Vicky McCabe	Class Teacher
Nicola Roberts	Class Teacher
Claire Finlay	Educational Psychologist, Midlothian
Brendan Docherty	Head Teacher
Marion Carlton	Head Teacher

Jennifer Nicol	Senior Adult Learning Manager
Frances Cathcart	Teacher
Eileen McGeoch	Depute Head Teacher
Beth Hannah	Programme Director, University of Dundee
Laura Sharp	Social Worker
Stacey Walker	Teacher

References
<p><i>Education (Scotland) Act 2016</i>. Available:  <a href="http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2016/8/pdfs/asp_20160008_en.pdf">http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2016/8/pdfs/asp_20160008_en.pdf</a>. [Accessed 20 January 2017].</p>
<p>O'Brien, J., Pearpoint, J., &amp; Kahn, L. (2010). <i>The PATH &amp; MAPS handbook – Person centered ways to build community</i>. Toronto, Canada: Inclusion Press.</p>
<p>Scottish Government. (2016). <i>National improvement framework for Scottish education – achieving excellence and equity</i>. Edinburgh: Scottish Government. Available:  <a href="http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0049/00491758.pdf">http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0049/00491758.pdf</a>. [Accessed 20 January 2017].</p>

Thank you for participating in this activity