

# Educational Psychology Service

The purpose of this newsletter is to keep you up to date with the latest activities, project work and research carried out within the Educational Psychology Service. We hope that the newsletter provides an insight in to the broad range of activities carried out by the service. For further information on any of the activities outlined please contact the service directly.

Please note that, since our last newsletter, we have moved office. We are now located within the Education Department at the Main Street offices in Barhead. Our new contact details can be found at the end of this newsletter.

## THREE YEAR IMPROVEMENT PLAN

We have been working collaboratively to consider the key focus areas for improvement over the next three years. Firstly, we aim to deliver a high quality and equitable service that gets it right for every child. This involves reviewing the service delivery model to ensure it effectively meets the needs of the most vulnerable learners within the authority. Validated self-evaluation is also key within the plan. The service aims to improve and modernise evaluation processes to ensure that we involve all of our stakeholders in planning for improvement.

In addition to this, we aim to strengthen approaches to the prevention and early intervention agenda. Over the past few years the service has invested heavily in this area and observed a greater impact on outcomes for families. We will continue to support the implementation of the P1 developmental screening tool which, since introduced, has allowed staff to gather more detailed, holistic assessment information which has informed support, planning and general practice. Furthermore, the service will continue to contribute to the implementation of the parenting strategy and the development of materials on nurture and attachment.

Finally, the service has always valued strong partnership links with the Quality Improvement Team, schools, parents and partner agencies. We aim to further strengthen these partnerships to raise the attainment of the most vulnerable learners and enhance our approaches to supporting the emotional wellbeing and mental health of children and young people.

For more details about our three year improvement plan please see our website – details are on the last page.

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

School Improvement Partnerships.....	2
Symbolising the Environment	2
Child Protection.....	2
Autism Strategy Group.....	2
Lets Play Project.....	3
Understanding Children's Behaviour.....	3
Mindfulness.....	4
Contact Details.....	4





## SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PARTNERSHIPS

The service has been supporting the school improvement partnerships across the authority. Partnerships have been established between schools from different clusters in order to promote communication and sharing of experience between various schools. The partnerships have been created according to the schools' identified needs for improvement and interests. Schools have identified areas of improvement and an educational psychologist has been allocated time to support each partnership. Some of the improvement plans include focused support for the lowest performing 20%, early literacy skills and numeracy. The staff involved will carry out evidence based research to evaluate their work improving these areas.

## SYMBOLISING THE ENVIRONMENT

Chris Atherton, Christine McGovern and Siobhan Wilson have been involved in evaluating the pilot which took place in the Williamwood Cluster primary schools and Carlibar Communication Centre. The pilot involved symbolising the school environment, by providing children with visual cues to support their understanding of verbal and written information. The evaluation group compared the pre and post scores of the classes involved and gathered feedback from the staff and young people involved in the pilot.

Firstly, the results from the comparison between the intervention and control group highlighted statistically significant gains in the intervention group in comparison with the control in 2 out of the 8 skills based scores. This included '*I can demonstrate an awareness of & interest in my social environment*' and '*I can use my prior knowledge and experience to make predictions.*' Furthermore, the pre and post scores from the Communication Centre, indicated significant gains in all 8 skills based scores.

Themes emerging from the focus groups indicated that the symbolisation was having a positive impact. Staff reported an increase in the use of symbols and it was positively impacting on children especially those on a split placement between establishments. Next steps were identified in order to implement this approach in the wider authority.

## CHILD PROTECTION



Eilidh Lanzani jointly carried out child protection training with Ruth Sills, Interagency Child Protection Trainer, entitled '*What's Normal and Healthy Sexual Development in Children?*' The aim of the training was to increase participants' knowledge and understanding of healthy sexual development in children and raise awareness of the risks. The Brook Sexual Behaviours Traffic Light Tool was used which provides examples to demonstrate the difference between healthy and unhealthy sexual development. This helps professionals identify which behaviours are a natural part of growing up and which are problematic and may need intervention or support. The training included professionals from education, social work and health and was evaluated positively.

To access this training or any other child protection training please visit *My Insider* through the intranet.



## AUTISM STRATEGY GROUP

Chris Atherton has been part of a multiagency Autism Strategy group. The vision is to ensure 'individuals on the autism spectrum are respected, accepted and valued by their communities and have confidence in services to treat them fairly so that they are able to have meaningful and satisfying lives.' This is in line with Scotland's Strategy for Autism. Priorities identified by the group include improving local training and development opportunities for staff within the authority to develop expertise in ASD and engaging with children and young people with ASD and their parents to inform and evaluate existing practice, plan for improvement and to work together to build capacity for support within the local community. The group also aims to develop a localised, accessible resource for children, young people, parents and professionals that provides practical information, helpful signposts and contacts.

With the assistance of Annie McGauley (DHT) and Kristina Azubalyte (Psychology Assistant), Chris has been working alongside professionals from education, social work, CAMHS and the third sector to take forward a work stream looking at key themes for school-aged children. The service will also be contributing to developments around pre-five and transition practices. Multiagency working is a key theme in the development of a local autism strategy. The Educational Psychology Service values the positive and effective working relationships we have with parents and partner agencies and recognises the importance of this in improving outcomes for children and young people and their families within East Renfrewshire.



## ‘LETS PLAY’ PROJECT

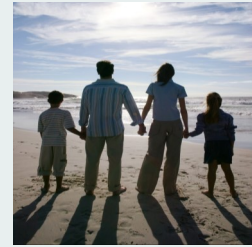
Gillian Thorburn has been very involved in the development of the ‘Let’s Play’ project, which was introduced to Madras Family Centre in July 2014. The project aimed to develop parents’/carers’ skills, to highlight the importance of positive play experiences for children and encourage opportunities for quality interactive play between children and parents/carers. The project involved a 3-day group intervention for parent/carers, involving children and siblings, followed by a series of activities throughout the holiday period.

Recommendations outlined through the Early Years Framework (2008) and the Play Strategy for Scotland (2013) were considered throughout the design of this project. The project team adopted a strengths-based approach which was respectful of parents/carers existing skills and knowledge. Parents being involved in the design and pre-intervention work led to meaningful engagement and high retention rates. Education staff worked collaboratively with partners across agencies, including a third sector organisation (Parent Network Scotland). Feedback was very positive and self-rating scales showed good improvement in relation parents’ confidence in supporting children’s development through play.

The project has since been introduced to Carlibar Family Centre and there are plans to implement this approach further across East Renfrewshire. The family centres focused on the engagement process and valuable information has been gathered in relation to factors which encourage positive engagement including time to develop positive relationship between staff and parents/carers; consultation with parent/carers prior to the intervention; work with parent/carers to design a programme content suited to their needs and flexibility in relation to time and/or length of programme.

## UNDERSTANDING CHILDREN’S BEHAVIOUR

The annual parent workshops are going to run again over May/June 2016. These workshops provide an opportunity for parents to learn from each other in a friendly, supportive environment.



Last year there were three parent groups: primary, teenage and autism. Evaluation comments included:

*“It helped us to work together more, there is a better atmosphere at home.”*

*“I really felt when I signed up my world had ended as teenage life had begun, but I realise this is a stage to go through and we are all doing ok. It was good to know you’re not the only one going through it.”*

We have been looking at ways we can improve this service for parents. This year we will be running workshops that focus on children who have social communication needs/ASD.

If you are interested in attending please seek information through your school or contact the service directly.

***“It brought welcome reassurance that others have similar difficulty and you are not just a bad parent; greater understanding of son’s perspective is eye opening.”***

## MINDFULNESS



There is an emerging body of evidence suggesting that mindfulness interventions with school-aged children can improve the mental, emotional, social and physical health by reducing stress, anxiety and challenging behaviour. Over the past two years we have been developing our personal practice within the service through attending practice group sessions and instilling practice into our work with young people. We have also been carrying out some research project to contribute to the body of evidence.

Last year, trainee educational psychologists, Alison Fotheringham and Siobhan Wilson, collaboratively delivered a mindfulness intervention to a Primary 4 class in Calderwood Lodge. The intervention was designed using the evidence based 'MindUp' programme materials. Data gathered from staff, parents and pupils identified key areas of impact around improved focus and concentration skills and suggested that the intervention provided techniques that the pupils could use. Pupils reported that the intervention was exciting, engaging and helpful. The school has now decided to implement the approach with their pre-school children.

This year, staff from Mearns Castle High School have been attending a practice group over 6 weekly sessions and are now implementing the Learning to Breathe programme among three groups of S4 pupils. The rationale for this project was to prepare young people who are experiencing anxiety about exams. Siobhan Wilson is evaluating the impact of these groups through pre and post data as well as gathering the views of the young people, parents and staff. The outcomes of this project will be detailed in our next newsletter.

### EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY SERVICE VISION

*Everyone Attaining, Everyone Achieving through Excellent Experiences' is the vision of East Renfrewshire's Education Department. The Psychological Service is committed to realising this vision and to Getting It Right for all children and young people in East Renfrewshire. It is our belief that all children and young people have the potential to be confident individuals, successful learners, effective contributors and responsible citizens, and we strive to provide a sector leading psychological service that works collaboratively with others to ensure this potential is realised, and to improve outcomes for individuals, families and the wider community.*

**Educational Psychology Service**  
211 Main Street  
Barrhead  
East Renfrewshire  
G78 1SY

**Telephone:** 0141 577 8510  
**Fax:** 0141 577 3946

**Email:** [ps@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk](mailto:ps@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk)

**Website:** <https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/er/PsychologicalService>

