



# Educational Psychology Service Newsletter

Autumn 2016

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## Welcome to our Autumn edition!

The purpose of this newsletter is to keep you up to date with the latest activities, project work and research carried out within the service. For further information on any of the activities outlined please contact us directly (contact details can be found at the end of this newsletter).

It has been a busy start to the academic year for the service with our ongoing work with schools and development activities across the authority. We have also continued to prepare for our Validated Self Evaluation which we anticipate will take place some time between January and April 2017.

There have been some recent staffing changes:

- Carolynne McKendry has joined our team with a particular focus on work related to emotional wellbeing and mental health
- Frances McGeehan has also joined us as a Support Assistant (Prevention and Early Intervention) to work directly with some of our most vulnerable children and young people
- Claire McCluskey, has joined us on placement as a First Year Trainee Educational Psychologist from Dundee University
- Siobhan Wilson, who was previously a Trainee Educational Psychologist, has joined the team as an Educational Psychologist (Probationer)



## NATIONAL ACTION ENQUIRY

Chris Atherton, Christine McGovern, Ainsley McGoldrick and Jennifer Hunter have recently started working on a new resilience project as part of the National Educational Psychology Action Enquiry Programme. The East Renfrewshire project aims to explore the impact of a peer mentoring system on the wellbeing and attainment of pupils. Research has shown that one of the key elements affecting change for vulnerable young people is a consistent relationship with another person. It has also been found that young people show more preference to discussing their daily challenges with peers than parents or school staff.

Fourteen S1 pupils from St Luke's High School have been paired up with volunteer peer mentors from S6. All of the peer mentors have attended 2 half-day training sessions with Educational Psychologists from the team. This training focused on developing listening and interpersonal skills in order

to support their mentees. The project will run until January '17 and the mentors will be meeting their mentees twice a week over a period of 14 weeks. They will also be receiving a weekly session of supervision with an Educational Psychologist.

An extensive evidence base shows a range of positive effects that peer mentoring can have on young people including attainment, development of communication skills, improved behaviour, reduced bullying, and better staff and pupil relationships. However, we are interested not only in the impact on mentored pupils' resilience and attainment, but also the positive outcomes for the mentors. Mentoring experience can boost confidence and self-esteem, improve social skills, develop a sense of responsibility and enhance pupils' CV for those interested in entering careers working with young people.

## LETS PLAY PROJECT

Gillian Thorburn has worked alongside June Walls (Early Years Prevention Officer) to continue to promote this project which aims to develop parent/carers' skills, to highlight the importance of positive play experiences for children and encourage opportunities for quality interactive play between children and parents/carers. It is now operating across three family centres in East Renfrewshire (Madras, Carlibar and Arthurlie).



Small groups of interested parent/carers attend sessions which include group discussion and skills practice with their children in the family centre playroom. Younger and older siblings are also welcome to attend. A series of follow-up activities are arranged throughout the holiday period and delivered by a range of partners. Staff focus on developing positive relationships with parent/carers and pre-engagement work is a priority. As a result attendance and retention within groups has been high.

Feedback from parents and children has been very positive. Most parents have reported an increase in knowledge and/or confidence in relation to supporting their child's development through play. Examples of comments made by parent/carers:

*"In the last few months my son's behaviour has been much better because I've made more time for him and I've been less stressed."  
"It was more like speaking with friends... we were all learning together."  
"I found out about more places to play around where I live."*

The intention is to introduce Let's Play to all family centres in East Renfrewshire by 2017. A Let's Play manual is currently being developed and a network will be established in order to encourage collaboration and peer support for those involved. Gillian and June would like to thank all staff involved for their hard work, enthusiasm, and contribution to the success of this project.

*"It has helped me reflect on how important it is to be flexible and approachable to parents when working to encourage engagement. I have developed my knowledge around child development and learned more about how to demonstrate this knowledge to parents"*

Depute Head of Centre

## FAMILY DAY AT MCCREADY

*"I enjoyed everything about the group especially when I got given information on how to get my daughter off her bottles. Now she has been off bottles for 3 weeks now. She now has a better night's sleep and her nappy is a lot dryer at night."*

At the end of the school year Eilidh Lanzani delivered 3 parent workshop sessions in McCready Family Centre. Each session focused on topics which were requested and most popular with parents in previous sessions. The topics covered were sleep, positive relationships/conflict resolution and challenging behaviour. Very positive feedback was received from those who attended the sessions — they reported relevant topics were explored and were useful in understanding children's behaviour and development. We were glad to hear that they enjoyed the relaxed atmosphere and the opportunity to hear about other parents' experiences. It was also good to hear that following the sessions, some participants felt reassured and more confident in dealing with temper tantrums and some problems at bed time.

Eilidh is planning to deliver more similar sessions in the new school year. We continue to try and improve our service delivery, which is why we hope to deliver the next sessions at various times of day to accommodate more parents.



## PROMOTING & NURTURING EARLY COMMUNICATION AND LANGUAGE

East Renfrewshire Education Department and NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde are launching a joint initiative to develop the capacity of all early years establishments to promote and nurture the language and communication development of all children. This initiative builds on the training all early years establishments had on Hanen principles of language and literacy. It



recognises the importance of early language development on child de-

velopment, wellbeing and learning. Eilidh Lanzani (Educational Psychologist), and Rosamund Rodriguez (Quality Improvement Officer) have worked collaboratively with professionals from Speech and Language therapy and Education to draft guidelines and procedures for a pilot which has been taking place since September 2016. Three early years establishments have been selected across East Renfrewshire to pilot the initiative during the current academic year. Professionals from educational psychology and SLT will provide a mentoring role to support the establishments through self-evaluation and action planning towards validation. Early years establishments will be validated as Promoting and Nurturing Early Communication and Language when they can provide evidence of good practice in developing speech, language and communication. Please contact Eilidh Lanzani at the Educational Psychology Service for further details.

## THERAPEUTIC INTERVENTION

There are now 3 Educational Psychologists within the team who have undertaken training in order to provide EMDR (eye movement desensitisation and reprocessing). This intervention will be prioritised towards those who most need it, particularly Looked After children and young people.

EMDR is a therapeutic approach for working with individuals who have experienced traumatic incidents. It has a strong evidence base and is one of the recommended therapeutic approaches for treating post traumatic stress disorder (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, 2005). Sessions are delivered individually on a weekly basis and can be brief for those who have experienced a single incident trauma. Possible referrals can be discussed through school joint support teams.

## ASD ADVISORS UPDATE

At the most recent ASD advisors' training day Chris Atherton together with staff from Williamwood Communication Support Service discussed Autistic spectrum disorder in girls and the extreme male brain theory. Two pupils from S4 and S6 at Williamwood High School also shared presentations about their experiences as learners with ASD.



Our next ASD advisors' training will be a half day session focusing on transitions. The training will be held in April 2017. For more information please go to the CPD webpage or contact our service directly.

## SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMME (SIPP)

In partnership with the Quality Improvement Team, we recently delivered training to teachers who are beginning their SIP journey followed with a session for Head Teachers, Educational Psychologists and all SIP practitioners in order to further develop a shared understanding of the role of improvement partnerships and the plans for the year ahead. The showcase from the Eaglesham/CrossArthurlie/Calderwood Lodge partnership was extremely well received and highlighted the potential impact professional enquiry and action research can have in improving outcomes for

our most vulnerable learners. The Educational Psychology Service is fully committed to supporting the work of the school improvement partnerships and we are looking forward to continuing our journey with you throughout the academic session. The presentations from the recent SIPP training event and associated paperwork can be accessed through the following hyperlink:

<https://glowscotland.sharepoint.com/sites/EastRenfrewshireCouncil/sip/SitePages/Home.aspx>



## APPLYING MINDFULNESS APPROACHES TO PROMOTE POSITIVE WELLBEING IN ADOLESCENTS

In our last newsletter we reported that Siobhan Wilson was involved in supporting the implementation of mindfulness approaches in Mearns Castle High School. Siobhan worked alongside staff within the school for 6 weekly sessions to gain a deeper understanding of the approach and develop personal mindfulness practice. The staff within the school, along with Carolynne McKendry, then worked with 3 groups of 10 pupils in S4 using a programme developed by the service based on the Learning to Breathe curriculum. This intervention ran from January to March 2016 for roughly 12 weekly sessions. Following the intervention Siobhan evaluated the impact of the approach through analysing pre and post data from the Internal Control Index (Duttweiler, 1984) and carrying out focus groups with pupils, parents and staff involved in the project. The findings from the pre and post measure indicated a statistically significant result for improving pupils' internal locus of control. Furthermore, three broad themes were drawn from the focus groups: 'impact,' 'limitations' and 'future.' Themes emerging from 'impact' were firstly that the ethos during the SQA exams was calmer. Comments suggested that the intervention normalised different emotions young people were feeling. It was also noted by pupils, parents and staff that the practice impacted on their ability to cope. Young people commented they felt more in control and relaxed while parents noticed that the practice had improved their relationships as they appeared more accepting and able to manage conflict more effectively. There were also comments from parents and staff that they noticed an increase in young people practicing mindfulness as the intervention was carried out. Some limitations were noted including practical issues associated with timetabling in a secondary school and the classroom environment. It was also not-

ed that it was challenging to find the time to practice. Finally, themes emerging from 'future' were around the continued practice for pupils and suggestions around starting earlier in the school year as well as earlier school year groups. Pupils noted the importance of having autonomy over their practice and suggested follow up sessions or drop in sessions during exam time.

Mearns Castle are continuing to develop the application of mindfulness approaches within the school following these encouraging results. The service will also continue to support schools with implementation and evaluation of mindfulness approaches to promote positive wellbeing. If you would like further information or have any questions about the project please contact Siobhan Wilson.



*"I stress about everything really abnormally. But my mum looked at me after my exams and said 'you haven't freaked out at all. You haven't stressed as much as I thought you would.' Even in 3<sup>rd</sup> year I was stressed about exams. But I stayed calm" - participant pupil.*

*"When he has an argument with me or his siblings, he sort of is considering exploding but then takes a step back and thinks about it." - parent of a participant.*



Jennifer Norval (Trainee Educational Psychologist) is continuing to carry out the 'Symbolisation' project after the success of the pilot that took place in Carolside Primary

School. The project is being carried out in early years classes in Netherlee Primary and Busby Primary and training will be available to other schools in the authority. The project involves using Picture Communication Symbols in the class environment and aims to provide children with clear, visual sources of information to support their understanding. Research has shown that using symbols in schools has been found to: reduce pupil anxiety and frustration; act as a reminder of tasks

## SYMBOLISATION PROJECT

to be completed and equipment needed; reduce distractibility; improve task completion; improve classroom independence; support perseverance with tasks (Foster-Cohen & Mirfin-Veitch, 2015).

The project will involve evaluating the impact of a symbolised environment. Pre-intervention baseline data and post-intervention data will be gathered in order to measure this and the views of staff and pupils involved will be sought. A similar project implemented in schools in Fife was supported by Fife Augmentative and Alternative Communication Team (FAACT) and was run over ten years with great success. Most primary schools in Fife are now 'Symbolised' and school staff are very positive about the impact of the project.

## MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID



Our Educational Psychologists work hard to help schools develop staff capacity in supporting young peoples' mental health. Jennifer Hunter and Carolynne McKendry partnered with staff from Young Persons' Services to facilitate a Mental Health First Aid training course.

Scotland's Mental Health First Aid: Young People (SMHFA:YP) is a nationally developed, evidence-based, certificated course for adults who work with young people. The course does not train participants to be mental health workers, but provides the knowledge and skills required to recognise young people who may be having mental health difficulties and gives them a framework for how to intervene and offer initial help.

This course is about learning and practising how to notice a young person needs help and to have the confidence to do something. Participants will also have the opportunity to share good practice around supporting the mental health needs of young people on an ongoing basis. These are transferable skills which can be used, not just with young people in educational environment, but in many areas of professional and personal life.

There are three parts to the course and all parts must be undertaken in order to complete the course:

- Short online learning module and mental health quiz - 2-3 hours (you can do it at home or from your office)
- Face to face learning session with trainers and other participants - 6 hours

- Short reconstructor session and reflection - 1 hour

School staff who have completed the SMHFA (YP) course have commented:

*"Excellent and relevant course"*

*"Increased my confidence speaking to young people about their mental health and wellbeing, in particular asking about suicide"*

*"Everything in the course is relevant to my day to day practice"*

*"Great opportunity to share experiences and good practice with colleagues"*

We realise that making a time commitment to training can be difficult but we aim to be as flexible as possible in our delivery, in order to try to meet the needs of schools. We are keen to deliver this course to pastoral support staff, in the first instance, in all of our secondary schools. If you would like to learn more or sign up for the course, please do not hesitate to contact our service. Currently Jennifer and Carolynne are working with the latest group, who have completed the online part of the course

For more information about the course and upcoming training days please contact our service.



## GIRFEC (EDUCATION) FRAMEWORK



work. This revised framework replaces Staged Intervention (STINT) as our single agency approach to

Over the last few months, in partnership with the Quality Improvement Team, we have delivered a number of training sessions to over 150 promoted members of school staff in order to support the implementation of the new GIRFEC (education) frame-

meeting the needs of learners. Overall, the training was extremely well received with nearly all school staff reporting that they are confident in implementing the revised framework. Educational Psychologists have also received this training so please consult with your link EP if you would like support with implementation at a school level. The presentation delivered at the recent training and associated paperwork can be found through the following hyperlink:

<https://glowscotland.sharepoint.com/sites/EastRenfrewshireCouncil/namedperson/SitePages/Home.aspx>

## SUPPORTING PARENTS OF CHILDREN WITH SOCIAL COMMUNICATION DIFFICULTIES

*“The information given during the workshop was extremely helpful as I always felt at a loss what to do. Now I understand his range of emotions and triggers. I do try not to say things that will escalate the issues.” - parent.*

Our 2016 Parent Workshops focused on parents of children with social communication difficulties and were held over four evenings in May 2016 at St. Luke’s High School. We had an overwhelming response from parents from across the authority.



This year’s workshops were different in structure from previous years as a needs analysis was carried out before deciding on the topics. We also set up the groups by the topics that parents were interested in rather than children’s age groups. The interactive workshops covered a variety of topics including:

- Introducing social communication needs and practical support strategies
- Understanding sensory issues
- Exploring cognitive theories
- Promoting resilience in parents , carers and families

Parents who attended the workshops provided very positive feedback and commented on the benefits of increasing their knowledge and understanding, developing new skills and sharing ideas with other parents as having an impact on how they supported their children at home.

*“I loved that it was friendly and relaxed. And to hear strategies that I had never thought of.” - parent.*

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