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Introduction

This report provides information about Falkirk Council and its Educational Psychology Service. It will provide an outline of our self-evaluation and improvement and a rationale for the activities observed by Education Scotland in the Validation visit beginning 23rd of October 2017.

Falkirk Council Educational Psychology Service operates within Children's Services of Falkirk Council. Children's Services was created in April 2015 with the appointment of a new director with responsibility for what was previously within the Education and Social Work directorates. This includes Education, Social Work, Community Learning and Development, and Criminal Justice services. Social Work adult services were re-structured within the Integrated Joint Board and report to the Board and the Chief Executive of the Council.

Falkirk Council is set in central Scotland and has a population of 159,380, across 29,769 hectares. There has been an increasing population ([2016 census estimates](#)). There are 44,524 children and young people aged 0-24, 21,870 school pupils and 3,624 in our Nurseries. Falkirk Council has 8 mainstream secondary schools, 50 primary schools (45 with Nursery provision), 8 Nursery schools and 4 schools for children with Additional Support Needs. There are 20 schools across primary and secondary with specialist units for Additional Support Needs. There are approximately 250 children educated in St Modan's High School in Stirling who access this as a traditional catchment area. There are 78 children for whom Falkirk are the responsible authority educated in out of authority schools, either due to being looked after, placed in an independent special school, another local authority school or unit, or placed in a residential school.

Falkirk has 121 children Looked After at Home and 255 children Looked After Away from Home. When the last national figures were published (for July 2016), Scotland's rate of Looked After children per 1000 population aged under 18 was 14.9 compared to 11.7 in Falkirk. In 2014, 81.6% of Falkirk's Looked After children were in a community setting compared to 91.1% in Scotland. By 2016, 87.1% of Falkirk's Looked After children were in a community setting compared with 90.4% in Scotland. The Children & Families, social work core service is provided by 6 geographically based teams, a multi-agency Children with Disabilities Team and a Leaving Care Team. The work of these teams is supported by:- a Fostering & Adoption Team; an Intensive Family Support Service; a Looked After children's Psychologist; a Youth Justice Team (Connect); a Residential Care Service. A team of Co-ordinators chair all Child Care and Child Protection reviews and case conferences.

The Educational Psychology Service has a complement of 9fte psychologists. It is led by a Principal Educational Psychologist and a Depute Principal Educational Psychologist. There are 7fte main grade psychologists. In addition the service offers trainee placements and there are currently 2 Trainee Educational Psychologists. The Principal Educational Psychologist is a member of the extended management team of Children's Services and reports to the Head of Education.

In the past three academic years the service has averaged 6.8 fte psychologists in work. At the time of the Validation Visit there are 6.9 fte psychologists in work. Of the 4.9 fte psychologists 2.4 fte (3 staff) have been in post for three years or more and 2.5 fte staff (4 staff) have started in post since January 2017. In the last three years there has been 22 months where there has been 1 member of the Educational Psychology Service management team, due to secondments and acting up arrangements. The Service complement is lower than national averages and lower than benchmarked authorities. (see Appendix [Table 3](#))

The Educational Psychology Service develops a yearly plan of activity and improvement and reviews this plan in formulating the next plan. This plan is written to guide and shape the work of the Educational Psychology Service in a planning context, where the National priorities are distilled into local priorities within the Community Planning Partnership (agreed in early 2017), Falkirk Council Plan and the Children's Services Plan (both agreed at the last Executive Meeting of the Council in October 2017). This year there has been the development of the Education Division Improvement Plan, in response to the National Improvement Framework within education (agreed September 2017). The Educational Psychology Service plan is taken in large part from the education division plan and captures the contribution to the wider improvement agenda of the council.

The Service has developed and reviewed practice guidelines, covering the core functions and has a service handbook. There are Educational Psychology Service policies on Service Evaluation and Induction. The Service revised its Vision, Values and Aims in August 2017, which will inform the direction of the service. The accompanying guidance documents will be reviewed within the regular cycle of review (approximately every 3 years) depending on the exigencies of the service.

The Service performed a significant review of service delivery in 2015 in response to the council cut to complement (from 10.0fte to 9.0 fte) and the actual staffing position of 6.7 fte psychologists. This practice shift was captured within a new practice agreement framework for schools.

This has resulted in the following descriptors to assist with prioritisation:

“It is suggested the following may be a guide for discussing and considering those priorities:

1. Completing the individual child level work already committed to.
2. Prioritising requests for individual child and family level work (use Appendix 1 or the Child's Plan):
 - a. High priority individual child and family level work, particularly where the **wellbeing** of the child is **affected adversely or at high risk**
 - b. Those which involve **statutory** timescales, such as parental requests for a psychological assessment and consideration of a Coordinated Support Plan.
 - c. Those for whom **educational placement change** is being considered

For all new cases **signed consent** will now be required.

3. Work at whole school level, building capacity of staff that addresses needs of a number of children. This will need to be requested, discussed and considered. The Educational Psychologist will be signposting the establishment to authority level training in the first instance, See Appendix 4 for such requests.
4. All other requests for individual and child and family level work.”

Practice Agreement Document, 2017.

In 2017, the Educational Psychology Service office base moved to the current premises in modular accommodation in Children's Services, Sealock House, Inchyra Road, Grangemouth. The Principal Educational Psychologist remains based in the main Sealock House building, with advantages in developing informal and formal partnerships with other key managers in Children's Services.

What key outcomes have we achieved?

Falkirk Council Educational Psychology Service performs strongly achieving key outcomes.

Key outcomes for children in receipt of service

The Educational Psychology Service provides a consultation based service that incorporates Educational Psychologist judgement in relation to assessment and intervention. The features of the services' practice in relation to the key processes and functions complies with:

- the standards of Proficiency of the Health and Care Professionals Council; all psychology staff are members
- the national guidance produced by Association of Scottish Principal Educational Psychologists (ASPEP) and the Scottish Division of Educational Psychology (SDEP).
- the wider approach of Getting it Right for Every Child in Falkirk, in that much of the consultation activity is located in Team Around the Child meetings.

Each school and education establishment has an identified link Educational Psychologist that negotiates with a manager from the establishment to agree and coordinate the work of the psychologist in line with the practice agreement.

The psychology service has 1460 open cases, and worked with 293 new cases in 2016/17. In the last 4 years there has been a reduction in the number of children provided with a service. This is illustrated by the reduction in number of new children (cases) from 382 in 2013/14 and open cases of 1953. See Appendix - [Table 1](#) and [Chart 2](#).

The work of the service in relation to the outcomes for children has been evaluated through seeking school and nursery manager views most recently in 2016, a casework evaluation analysis, and a parental survey in 2016.

The evaluation data suggests a broadly positive view by those stakeholders on the impact of the Educational Psychology Service in improving outcomes for children and the service has remained positively viewed by school managers over time.

School managers' report to Service on levels of satisfaction

	2010	2011	2016
Satisfied/very satisfied - Service delivery	73%	100%	98%
Medium/high impact - children	87%	98%	94%

The self-evaluation exercises undertaken, including 2016, expanded on areas of impact and asked for views on the contribution to improving outcomes for children. (see Appendix - [Chart 1](#)). 100% of those that responded viewed the psychology service had a medium or high impact through :

- problem-solving approaches
- Increasing understanding of needs,
- new ideas and strategies,
- partnership
- and support.

The Service plans to build on this picture within the VSE activity.

Parents views of the Service (May 2015), suggested that in the main they had a positive view of the contribution with 83% saying Educational Psychology Service found a way to help. This exercise sampled parents of children under the age of 7. Helping parents and members of the Team Around the Child to understand the needs of the child, and in contributing to improving the outcomes for these children. See Appendix [Chart 3](#). 53% of the sample indicating a clear improvement in outcomes for their child. 24% of the sample reported a negative perception: a perceived lack of improvement for their child and/or a perception that improvements shown by their child were not a result of EPS involvement. The areas for improvement were suggested as *better communication with parents* and *more Educational Psychologist time or increased availability*. The service agrees that communication with parents can be improved and steps have been taken to ensure that practice within the Team Around the Child is enhanced to clarify when the Educational Psychologist is involved or ceases to be involved and communicating a change of Educational Psychologist. There is further improvement to be made in relation to the communication out with the Team Around the Child meetings and the processes for formal communication, to ensure that the assessment and advice of the Educational Psychologist are clearly understood by the parents.

The number of requests from parents for a psychological service remains small, and when these are received this work is prioritised in order to fulfil the obligations and statutory timescales. The service is aligned closely with the practices and procedures for assessing children's Additional Support Needs and allowing the authority to fulfil its obligation in meeting the Additional Support Needs of children. This is illustrated through the work at Team Around the Child level, in supporting establishments in their teaching and learning, both in mainstream, inclusive educational approaches and in specialist provision. The service provides key advice to the Team Around the Child and contributes to the authority decision making processes for granting specialist placements for children with Additional Support Needs.

Conclusion on outcomes for children

The service evaluation activity supports the assertion that the practice of the Educational Psychology Service is of a high quality, for those children that we provide a service for. This is achieved through development of clear practice guidelines, regular team meetings, a culture of peer supervision and effective leadership at management and main grade levels. The service guidelines are part of the induction processes for new members of the team, trainees and Educational Psychologist (Probationers).

The next step is to clarify the ways in which the change of service delivery in 2015 has been delivered to:

1. Ensure we are focusing on the right priority children
2. Working effectively in capacity building to assist appropriately in early intervention and prevention.
3. Ensure self-evaluation captures children's outcomes at a service level.
4. Sample parents of children of different ages and children themselves

Capacity building and outcomes

The service continues to provide training, research and development at establishment and authority level. The Service re-design in 2015 meant a change to the way in which training and capacity building was designed and implemented. Since that point the training and development work has become more focused at authority or cluster level. The Educational

Psychology Service developed a process for requests for training and reviewing these in order to prioritise training delivery in line with the authority priorities. This has meant that when an establishment feels that a particular training or development activity would be requested by the Educational Psychology Service through the link Educational Psychologist, this is captured in a training request, brought to a team meeting and considered for delivery at a wider, authority or cluster level. This means that there has been an increase in audience size, requiring re-design of how training is delivered. Often the approach used is based on Implementation Science and the Coach Consult Method, action research and a wider range of approaches are considered in the design of the training.

This places an emphasis on capacity building with teams of practitioners in schools, sometimes with an emphasis on training school based practitioners to deliver cascade training, sometimes where they set up project teams based in the school delivering on a school improvement priority. The emphasis within these course is explicit in enabling and empowering those practitioners to gather their own evidence in relation to child outcomes, through an action research approach and considering the intervention based on evidence gathered. This has been evidenced in the approaches used in: Solution Oriented Approaches, Pedagogy of Complex Needs, Nurture Training, in both the pilot and in the next wave of training designed for whole school implementation. The Educational Psychology Service often is delivering training in partnership with other services, such as in the training for implementing the Integrated Assessment Framework and practice in Getting it Right for Every Child in Falkirk, the Autistic Spectrum Disorder programme at level 2 and the Child Protection level 2 training. Where possible partners are invited to co-deliver, such as in the Nurture training, where school based practitioners delivered elements of the programme. The Service provides an integrated approach to training delivery and follow up with consultation by the link Educational Psychologist for the school, which is part of the design of the Nurture training and available for the Solution Oriented Approaches training.

The range of programmes of training and consultation has reduced since 2015, (see Appendix [Table 2](#)). It is the Service's assertion that the training and consultation has been:

1. more focused on local priorities;
2. responsive to feedback from participants;
3. delivered to a wide range of practitioners;
4. scaled up to larger audiences to maximise reach and impact which means delivered at authority level;
5. designed to maximise likelihood of impact on practice change at practitioner and establishment level;
6. of high quality.

There is evidence that there has been no discernable drop in quality at the point of delivery, as measured by participant's evaluations of the training. For example of 66 participants in Nurture training (2015/16), 100% thought it relevant, and 84.8% thought the training was good or excellent.

As the models of training place more emphasis on the impact of the training being measured by the participants and schools or teams who have attended it can be difficult to clarify by the trainers the effect of improving outcomes for children. That the school or practitioner takes the lead in their own self-evaluation has been built into the design explicitly e.g. within the Nurture Approach, Solution Oriented Approach and the Bridging the Gaps approach. The Educational Psychology Service remains limited in terms of the pupil, class or school level data

that supports the assertion that it has had an impact and has improved outcomes for children, through capacity building work. The Educational Psychology Service is basing the assumption on the effectiveness of this approach by the evidence gathered about the effectiveness of the Coach Consult Method, in previous Service Evaluation prior to 2015 and published research, and plans to take this forward through school improvement level of analysis. There is evidence from participants at a follow up stage that they viewed the training as having had a positive impact on their practice and improved outcomes for children. (88% of 66 participants thought it has a positive impact on improving pupils' wellbeing in a follow up evaluation, 2016). There is also evidence as outlined elsewhere in this report that pupils make gains (e.g. Nurture Pilot 2015 and Psychology of Parenting Programme). This area of work is linked to the work already being undertaken in schools in relation to closing the attainment gap and this richer picture of the effectiveness of targeted intervention at school level will be considered in future Educational Psychology Service evaluation activity.

The quality of the training offered by the service is of a high standard, with high levels of positive evaluations by participants, where it is rated as good or excellent. (See Appendix 4 for examples). This allows the service to make a significant contribution to the improvement priorities of the local authority.

Summary of key outcomes from training and capacity building work:

Integrated Approaches to Autism for Early Years Officers and Teaching staff, 2012-2017 (level 2).

A programme of training delivered in partnership with speech and language therapy, and occupational therapy. 137 practitioners across 64% of the early years and primary school establishments. Evaluation from participants through survey indicates a positive impact on staff skills and knowledge.

Nurture Training, 2012-2017. A programme of training that evolved from a pilot project in 5 schools (2012-2015), where members of staff were trained and ran nurture classes, to development of training to implement a whole school approach. The pilot project demonstrated improved outcomes for most of the 102 children directly supported in Nurture Classes (>75%) and 88 children who benefited from some time from the resource (88% of sample showed gains in SEB, where N=15), using the Boxall Profile. Both approaches showed a positive impact on staff skills and knowledge as measured in post training surveys.

From 2015 onwards the service modified the training and trained teams of 3 practitioners in schools on whole school approaches to Nurture over several sessions. - Evidence of positive impact on staff (in teams of three from 43 - 84.8% rated as good or excellent (survey). 88% thought it has a positive impact on improving pupils' wellbeing in a follow up evaluation survey.

Secondary schools practitioners have received training from the service in October 2016, delivered in partnership with secondary practitioners and based on the evidence based approaches of Education Scotland. In addition secondary school practitioners are accessing the training directly from Education Scotland. This strand of work will be evaluated in due course within the framework of self-evaluation outlined by the service, such as with follow up evaluation and in linking through to the strategic priorities and action.

Training for Support for Learning Assistants that focused on practical strategies of nurture and relationship based approaches to education support was delivered in August 2017. This

was identified as an area of workforce development need from the follow up evaluation and re-connector sessions with school staff. This led to training being for large audiences where Support for Learning Assistants came from schools that had participated in the level 1 training. Two sessions were delivered on Inset day each with ~125 participants.

Bridging the Gaps– a programme of learning using the coach consult method and implementation science, promoting attainment in numeracy. Educational Psychology Service lead/trained 16 practitioners from 13 schools, forming 4 research groups, to conduct action inquiry/research in their own schools with the aim of promoting attainment in numeracy. Positive impact on staff is evidenced through post training survey evaluation (e.g. knowledge gain comparing prior knowledge and post course knowledge averages at 3.3 points on a 10 point scale (taking participants from mean =5.2 to mean = 8.5). All measures of difference between prior and post knowledge found to significant at 0.01 level using paired t-tests. Schools are in the process of gathering their improvement data, using the established methods for evaluating attainment and developing new approaches following their attendance at the course, at child and school level. See draft research paper for journal publication, expanding on the project, results and the evaluation methods.

Pedagogy of Complex Needs – the Educational Psychology Service developed a training course, as the lead designer, with involvement of Additional Support for Learning and partner services in delivering sessions on key areas (Occupational Health, Windsor Park Sensory Impairment Service, Speech and Language Therapy), in response to a range of needs identified in specialist schools and settings where further training was required. The course used a project based/action research model (Coach Consult and Implementation Science), with detailed training in key areas across 7 sessions, and a presentation by participants of an in-depth case study. In the approach of scaling up, consistent with the service delivery model this was offered to teachers and Support for Learning Assistants in 4 special schools and units responsible for educating children with a range of complex barriers to learning and significant Additional Support Need, in 2016.

There were 37 participants in total for the course – 62% from Secondary Complex Needs Practitioners and 38% from Primary Complex Needs Practitioners. The analysis of the feedback and attendance rates indicated a stronger engagement from primary sector participants and a higher level of drop off from the secondary colleagues between session 6 and 7. This prompted a re-focus of the change process for improving practice in the secondary sector which resulted in the development of a partnership approach focused on one school. The aim is to ensure that the range of development activity with the school is coordinated and targeted.

Pathways for literacy and specific learning difficulties.

In 2014-15 a localised pathway was developed following the publication of the dyslexia toolkit. This pathway was jointly developed between the Educational Psychology Service and the Additional Support for Learning Outreach team. The two services then jointly delivered training to support for learning teachers on the pathway and the assessment methods, with the aim of empowering and enabling school based practitioners to undertake targeted assessment and intervention within a staged approach, based on evidence-based practice. In 2016 the Educational Psychology Service provided coaching to Additional Support for Learning Outreach team members and assisted in the design the evaluation, taking a more consultative role. This project is at a level of maturity with the Educational Psychology Service having reduced its role, as capacity is developed in the Additional Support for Learning Outreach team. One of its effects has been to reduce the need for direct educational psychology service

input at the child and family level. It is now a useful point to evaluate if this area of work has had the desired effect of building capacity in schools to be able to respond to the needs of children presenting with barriers to learning literacy. It is also important to consider how this links with the wider attainment challenge and [Literacy Strategy](#) of the council, “Zero tolerance to illiteracy”.

Summary of key outcomes from partnership work

ASD Strategy work

ASD assessment pathways – the Educational Psychology Service has contributed to two stands of assessment pathway – for pre 5 year old children through PreFCAT and for post 5 children directly with CAMHS.

Pre-Five Community Assessment Team (PreFCAT). The Educational Psychology Service has been one of a number of agencies involved in this multi-agency approach to assessment of young children. In 2014/15 the EPs assisted the group to clarify the pressure points and needs regarding the process as there was a high increase in referral numbers, meaning that the process of assessment took 9 months from initial request or referral. Simultaneously the Falkirk Autism Strategy group was interested in the assessment pathways for children who may have autistic spectrum disorder being either clarified or made more transparent or improved. This needs analysis led to a change of the process involved in the assessment pathway. Assessment pathway modified, involving process change, review of data and deliberation with key multi agency partners resulted in the process being more in line with Getting It Right For Every Child In Falkirk based approaches such as Team Around the Child. Time from referral through to completed assessment dropped from 9 month wait, to 4 months, with more bespoke pathways for individuals, and scope for longer assessment. Assessments completed in partnership with NHS Forth Valley paediatricians and allied health professionals and Children with a Disability, social work team.

Neurodevelopmental Assessment Pathways

The Educational Psychology Service joined CAMHS staff and the Principal Educational Psychologist from Stirling and Clackmannanshire. The prompt for this area of work was the Autism Strategy, although it is consistent with the strategy that the approach for autism is consistent with a broader approach for children experiencing other difficulties. One outcome of this development was a revised referral pathway to CAMHS, where it was based on the Child’s Plan and the Team Around the Child process rather than specific professional groups. The advantage of the development is that the service is accessed based on robust assessment, rather than dependant on prior access from other specialist services such as Speech and Language Therapy and Educational Psychology. The process or pathway is both consistent with the clinical best practice guidance and the approach of Getting it Right for Every Child.

Seasons for Growth

Service has offered training, in partnership with West Dunbartonshire for school staff over several years on running seasons for growth groups. Most recent activity involved training staff in Her Majesty’s Young Offenders’ Institute, Polmont. Evidence gathered using pre and post measures for the intervention group demonstrated positive effects to a statistically significant level ($p < 0.01$), illustrating that the training had been effective, young people’s outcomes had improved.

Solution Oriented Approaches

A training programme was devised focusing on using solution oriented approaches to work in the Team Around the Child approach and in supporting children with Additional Support Needs. The programme was originally offered in 2015. To date 76 practitioners have attended the courses from 29 schools and centrally based staff in Children's Services (education and family support). In 2015/16 it was an 8 session course, in 2016/17, it was modified, based on participant feedback to a 4 session course. The second year also involved an increase in audience size from 12 to 33, in line with the approach of scaling up. Participant survey data shows that 100% thought the courses relevant and each course evaluation showed high levels of participants rating it as good or excellent, and showing gain in knowledge, for example in *Applying Solution Oriented Approaches in meetings* participants average skill rating changed from 4 out of 10 to 8 out of 10 (N=33). The facilitators also used an evaluation fairy method to build up a richer picture of the participants views.

Carrongrange Partnership Group

The partnership group developed out of the delivery of training on Pedagogy Complex Needs. The partnership consists of senior managers from the school, Additional Support for Learning Advisor, link Speech and Language Therapy, Children with Disabilities Team manager, Clinical psychologist from CAMHS and the link Educational Psychologist. The focus of the group is on addressing whole school issues, identifying and responding to workforce development needs and supporting transitions. The partnership has a wider benefit in being a forum to establish cross agency service delivery, understanding roles, strategic advice and coordinating training delivery.

Overarching strengths

The training and development work of the Educational Psychology Service is a significant strength. We have adopted an approach with larger audiences in a process of scaling up the training. The models of training and development activity are developed specifically in response to the area of learning. The approaches are informed by the Coach Consult Method, Implementation Science or use programmes devised by third parties such as NHS Education Scotland. This has resulted in contributions to the field of educational psychology in published research from members of the service.

The improvement agenda of the service within the context of reduced staffing and resources has been an area of considerable strength. This has meant a shift in focus with the children having greater levels of vulnerability or barriers to learning. This in turn means a greater emphasis on capacity building with schools and partners in their ability to meet needs, and respond at early intervention effectively. It is the services assertion that the work undertaken is highly effective, and this will be a focus for the VSE week.

Key Challenges

The Educational Psychology Service staffing levels, as described in the introduction, have been affected by the wider pressure on the council to reduce its revenue budget. In comparison with other authorities the Educational Psychology Service has the second lowest ratio of psychologists to population of any authority when fully staffed (ASPEP Survey 2016).

The implication of this has been the focus of service re-design and the improvement agenda of the service is in delivering high quality service with a change in staff resource levels. This brings with it challenges in ensuring quality when scaling up capacity building work such as training, and ensuring this work is addressing the demand or needs within the workforce. A further challenge is ensuring the service delivery for child and family level work is targeted at those children that need this most.

There has also been considerable turnover of staff. Since January 2017 there has been 2.5 fte main grades join the service. 2.8 fte main grades have been in post for three years or more. Of this 1.4 fte staff have had periods not in work (career break and maternity leave) for approximately 1 year returning to work in summer 2015 and 2016. At the time of the Validated Self Evaluation exercise there is one full time main grade member psychologist. The majority of staff work part time. This brings with it a challenge for ensuring the service can provide service delivery when the stakeholders require this, and in ensuring the improvement agenda for the Educational Psychology Service is undertaken effectively. This has been a gradual and ongoing transformation in response to the workforce needs and priorities, replicated in other Educational Psychology Services, and the service has ensured that the logistical barriers to individual Educational Psychologist participation in the meetings, supports and structures of the Service, through the course of normal service delivery are minimised.

It remains a challenge for the service to ensure that improvement activity in communicating with parents results in an improved service experience for parents of children in receipt of a service. We are addressing this through our use of publicity materials and ongoing discussion about the balance between verbal reports and written reports.

This level of staffing has a context. Many departments within education or children's services in Falkirk have seen staffing levels reduce and there have been significant vacancies in education sections within a context of restructuring, particularly in 2016/17. The restructuring has taken effect from the amalgamation of social work and education into a Children's Service directorate, in April 2015, with a subsequent new appointments and restructuring within the education section. The Head of Education has been in post since June 2016.

There are anticipated to be ongoing budget pressures with the council planning framework working towards a broad savings target of 20% over the next five years. How the council is responding is articulated in the new Corporate Plan for 2017-2022, by trying to develop a council of the Future Approach (innovative, responsive, trusted and ambitious). In this context the service is well placed to bring innovation and creativity to the challenges of the future, through its clear use of evidence informed practice.

There is an additional challenges within this context of increasing demand for service, which affects the council as a whole with a rising population and a rising number of both school age children and older people where services offered by the council are anticipated to be in higher

demand. There is evidence of increasing numbers of children with high levels of Additional Support Needs.

The Council and Children's Services in particular are placing an emphasis on a modernising approach, through Council of the Future, and ensuring children are "Closer to home". This latter area of work is a strategy aimed at ensuring children are cared for and educated closer to Falkirk, reducing a financial costs, but ensuring there are high quality services available locally to meet the needs of a group of young people with high levels of need. The strategy will be launched in November 2017. This is illustrated by the joint work undertaken to date which has seen number of children educated and cared for in residential schools or secure units reduce from 32 children in 2014 to 20 children in 2017.

Areas of strong practice

The Educational Psychology Service has highly, motivated staff with a high level of skill and knowledge across a wide range of applied educational psychology practice. Particular strengths are evident in research skills, and training and integrated assessment practice.

The Educational Psychology Service staff over the last three years have published research in:

A colourful dot on a dreary economic canvas: Building capacity for innovation in schools through the Coach Consult Programme, Leisa Randall, Susannah Turner & Lyn McLafferty. Educational & Child Psychology Vol. 32 No 4 December 2015: Practising Psychology in Challenging Times

Nonviolent Communication, Shona Cameron. In "Restorative theory in practice: insights into what works and why", Editor Hopkins, B. Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2015.

How well do we meet the needs of our stakeholders?

Where are we now?

The Educational Psychology Service evaluation indicates that we meet the needs of stakeholders effectively.

Impact on children and young people

The Educational Psychology Service was a significant contributor within a partnership to the development of practice in Falkirk of Getting it Right for Every Child. This practice shift is now well developed in Falkirk. The Team Around the Child, assessment, plan-do-review process captures the views of the child and the progress in achieving the positive outcomes through the Child's Plan. The Educational Psychologist works in partnership with the parents, child and the other professionals supporting them.

The re-focused service delivery model, placing a greater emphasis on consultation and time limited involvement, means that the children in receipt of service have less direct engagement with the Educational Psychologist, outside of the Team Around the Child meetings. The voice of the child is essential within the Team Around the Child approach and work of the psychologist. This is reflected in ensuring that this is gathered, either by a person who knows the child well or the child contributing the views themselves to the Team Around the Child. The Educational Psychologists operate a minimally intrusive approach to both assessment/intervention and in ensuring the voice of the child is heard. The evidence on individual children at present rests within individual Team Around the Child processes. Children's Services has launched a new outcomes review framework in September 2017, which the Educational Psychology Service will be using. The Educational Psychology Service will further explore this theme within the Service Evaluation cycle, and design proportionate evaluation activity. This theme will be expanded on within the Evaluation activity planned for the Validation Visit.

The service evaluation data demonstrates that when the service is involved with a child the psychologist has a positive impact. The service has been involved in developments, such as the Nurture Class Pilot (2012-2015) and Psychology of Parenting Project (2014-16) which have had a positive impact on the target populations, as demonstrated through triangulated data of child outcomes improving as well as the participants' report of impact.

Impact on community

The quality of the work undertaken has been consistently high over time, within the areas of capacity building such as training. There is emerging evidence that this process of scaling-up the programmes of training can be designed to maintain a high level of quality and a positive impact on staff, there are areas where the service needs to ensure this work has an impact at the level of practice change with participants. The evaluation data to date, is strongly suggestive of a positive impact at the point of delivery of the training and when participants are surveyed at follow-up points. The Educational Psychology Service has contributed positively to the approach of the Young Offenders Institute in Polmont, through Seasons for Growth.

This is a context where the pupil attainment data illustrates that :

- Primary children in Falkirk are performing slightly better than average in reading and literacy and talking, or in line with average (numeracy and writing) as compared to both the LGBF comparator authorities and Scotland,
- Secondary children are generally performing in line with the comparator authorities, with the exception of children from SIMD quintile 1 (lowest 20%), or from deprived areas. Those children have demonstrated attainment that is lower than that of comparator authorities or the Scotland average.
- More children entered positive destinations than the national or comparator averages.

This is illustrated in the [Local Government benchmarking framework](#).

This illustrates that Falkirk as a whole has positive developments in promoting positive outcomes for children, although a particular focus is required on those most affected by poverty. The Educational Psychology Service has designed its allocation model of schools to Educational Psychologist to reflect a prioritisation of

1. Children within an Additional Support Needs school or unit
2. children within households in the lowest 15% of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation
3. Towards early years and primary rather than secondary.

The capacity building work tends to be valued highly by the Educational Psychology Service, it is not clear that this area is similarly valued by the school based managers. To a degree this potentially reflects a necessity of this approach within a context where resources are reduced in services such as the Educational Psychology Service. As the ASPECT report (2011) from HMIE (Education Scotland) stated, the work that has most impact is that which is both targeted and linked to or leading to a wider strategic development. It is the view that the work of the Educational Psychology Service is highly aligned to strategic developments in inclusion, promoting literacy and assisting with attainment.

The Educational Psychology Service has a tradition of ensuring an exit from our role in capacity building work. This has been evidenced in a number of areas of work where the Educational Psychology Service contributes significantly in the early stages of an initiative, e.g. develops the training course, delivers the course and then passes this role onto others, as participant become familiar with the process and context; or in joint delivery with a coaching or supervision role. Examples include:

- To Lead or not to Lead – a programme for aspiring leaders and managers, now delivered by school managers and officers from Education.
- Psychology of Parenting Project – Triple P and Incredible Years courses for parents – now delivered by family support and partner agencies.
- Pathway for assessment in relation to barriers to literacy, now delivered in school by Support for Learning and training delivered by teachers in Additional Support for Learning Outreach Team.

Impact on staff

There have been significant changes in staff as outlined above, within the Educational Psychology Service. The staff are motivated to perform work to a high standard and feel strongly that the move to a new office has been very positive, and that the facilities are better in allowing staff to perform their role. The staff remain concerned about the demands on the Educational Psychology Service, which continue to be high. Staff in the service have collegially developed the revised Vision of the Service and responded positively to the

approach of distributed leadership within the service and are mutually supportive within a collaborative culture. There are opportunities for continuing professional development, and areas of interest and being pursued. The benefits for the Service are maximised when aligned with the strategic priorities of the local authority and Educational Psychology Service which is considered within the management one-to-one meetings and the Employee Review and Development meeting.

How do we know?

The Service has undertaken a range of evaluation activity in the last 4 years, which has demonstrated strong practice and positive outcomes for children.

- Stakeholder discussion and survey – 2013
- Impact Box Evaluation - October 2013
- Training by EPS evaluation - October 2013
- Team meeting evaluation - February 2014
- EPS CPD Needs Analysis - January 2014
- Nurture Pilot 2012-2015 and report, November 2015.
- ASD training and workforce development (2015 report)
- Nurture Schools approach (level 1, wave 1 training) evaluation report. (May 2016)
- Parents' survey and report (May 2016) and discussion in Service development day (November 2016). See Appendix Chart 3
- End of year evaluation from head teachers 2016 (initial analysis of qualitative data completed, see Appendix Chart 1, quantitative data to be analysed).
- Participant surveys of training are routine, through CPD manager
- Follow up evaluation of training through surveys, evaluation fairy or re-connector sessions
- Summary reports of key strands of work, June 2017 to October 2017

(see Appendix 5)

The Educational Psychology Service has an Improvement Plan which is reviewed, within Development Days and team meetings. Staff participate in the formulation of the plan and agree areas of responsibility. The Service staff are participants in and regular contributors to training on these development days and to the fortnightly team meetings. Staff have a supervisor which after an induction period can be negotiated directly with a peer. All staff have regular 1-1 meetings with their line manager and review discussion every 18 months focusing on continuing professional development and personal evaluation (Employee Review and Development).

What are our strengths?

The psychology service has key strengths in the core functions of an educational psychology service and applies these in a dynamic approach in order to improve outcomes for children. The Educational Psychology Service works effectively within the Team Around the Child process in partnership with others services. There is evidence of contributing positively to the strategic priorities of the council through the focused capacity building work. Evaluation of impact on stakeholders is firmly embedded in the routine delivery of the service, particularly in relation to gathering data from participants attending training, and following up evaluation after a period of time.

Where are our challenges?

The Service has relied heavily on interview or questionnaire data to evaluate its performance. The service does not track whether children in receipt of service are affected by poverty or members of protected groups (such as those described within the Equality Act). The service requires a greater level of triangulated data to clarify the reach into populations of children that we serve, such as Looked after Children, lowest performing 20%, ethnic minorities, or children with disabilities.

What are our next steps for improvement?

The use of this data would help inform the Service about its approach in relation to targeting the most vulnerable children for educational psychology assistance.

Falkirk Councils is in the early stages of implementing a framework at Team Around the Child level for monitoring and evaluating the improvement in outcomes at a child level. The Educational Psychology Service will be implementing this in 2017/18. This will assist in capturing triangulated data that demonstrates impact and outcomes for children in receipt of a service.

How good is our leadership?

Where are we now?

The Service has had in place a service plan, developed on an annual basis and fitting clearly within the context of the wider education and council plans and priorities. There is a range of distributed leadership initiatives and opportunities and staff respond positively to leading these. Support and challenge is provided to staff through both peer supervision, line management one to one meetings and informal discussion.

The Service produces a summary of its performance data and improvement, within the Service plan review process. This is not reported to a wide audience and there is no overarching strategy at the wider council level within which to report publicly on performance standards of the Educational Psychology Service.

Stakeholder views have been incorporated at key points in the service planning and improvement journey, within a service evaluation framework. Stakeholder views are captured within the variety of evaluation activity. The Service recognises that social work, community learning and health colleagues are under-represented in the planning for improvement and stakeholder consultation. The Service also recognises that the evaluation data has relied substantially on views of stakeholders and has identified an area for improvement which includes triangulated data.

Each educational psychologist has had an opportunity to discuss with their manager their development journey and their individual plan and future contribution to service development within the Employee Review and Development scheme. There are significant advantages in using this approach, as it allows psychologists to consider their role in relation to wider opportunities for career development, training and partnership working.

The service has a strong track record on recruiting psychologists to vacant positions, but in line with other sections of the council has had to manage with vacancies for long periods that presents risks in service delivery. Retention of psychologists on temporary contracts is more limited, where employees on these types of contract secure permanent contracts before the end of the temporary contract period. This appears to be in line with the experience of other services. (ASPEP survey data).

The Service has established a positive culture of support and challenge and collegiate approaches to decision-making and the development of service practices.

How do we know?

- The managers of the service undertake their own performance reviews within the ERD process,
- the managers undertook 360 degree evaluations with peers, direct reports and managers in 2013/14.
- In 2013 undertook an evaluation with organisational development.
- The service undertook a joint Public Sector Improvement Framework, self-evaluation (PSIF) with the Additional Support for Learning team in 2015.

- There is additional evidence from the yearly cycle of service planning, review of the plan and improvement activity.
- The Service has regular team meetings and working groups undertaking sub-tasks.
- The service has developed a wide range of activity that has been led by individual members of the service. Each strand is at a different point in their journey.
- The distributed leadership approach has illustrated the strengths of individual team members and the collective group as a whole.

What are our strengths?

The Service has strengths in collegiate working and distributed leadership. Across the full team there is a range of skills and areas of special interest that can be drawn upon. The Principal Educational Psychologist has developed strong strategic partnerships with a number of agencies and services, within both the voluntary and public sectors, and leads the Autism Strategy. The service has a clear vision, which articulates well with the priorities of the council, whilst proving a direction for a unique and valuable contribution.

Where are our challenges?

In the last 3 years the service has operated with one manager for 22 months, either a Principal Educational Psychologist (9 months) or an Acting Principal Educational Psychologist (13 months). This has presented opportunities for distributed leadership, which the team members have largely taken on, demonstrating initiative and collegiate approaches to working. It did present opportunity for career development and progression amongst members of the main-grade team. This resulted in one period of a member of staff acting-up as Depute Principal Educational Psychologist.

The Educational Psychology Service needs to improve its methods of communicating its vision, values and aims to stakeholders, and in particular parents and children.

The Service needs to ensure its practice guidelines, and procedures are updated to reflect the new vision of the Educational Psychology Service in the context of the Council of the Future.

What are our next steps for improvement?

The work of the service in improving leadership is to ensure:

- The distributed leadership and collegiate approach is adopted throughout the team,
- Induction and support to develop leadership ambition and skills for succession planning and career development.
- The management team access and make use of data to target the activity of the Educational Psychology Service further.

How good is our capacity for improvement?

Where are we now?

Since 2015, the Educational Psychology Service has focused its self-improvement activity, on providing a high quality service with reduced resources. In tandem with this process has been a drive toward more coherent partnership work, more focused work on vulnerable children and capacity building work that it's highly aligned to the local priorities. There is evidence that the capacity building work is effective. The service are fully aware of the limitations to the evidence gathered.

While there has been a reduction in numbers of children receiving a service, this is fully expected following the re-design of service in 2015. The task now is to ensure that this remains focused on the population requiring our service most. It is certainly the case that the work of the service has been directed towards children with the highest levels of complexity or vulnerability, however there may be gaps in this, or barriers to providing an effective service, which will be the subject of the VSE.

The Educational Psychology Service has been largely successful in realigning the work of the team in this way and this has been as a result of a collective effort. However, there requires a deeper understanding of the impact and outcomes we can achieve in partnership both with children and in our capacity building work.

A more intelligent use of proportionate self- evaluation activity and triangulated data has assisted the service in targeting areas for improvement through the planning cycle.

This has led to more focused delivery of service to children and their families, the delivery of training to be scaled-up to larger audience sizes, using frameworks that maximise the impact of the delegates' professional development, using evidence based and evidence informed models of delivery. The models aim to maximise the impact on the children and families in receipt of services from delegates, and while there is substantial evidence this has had an impact on the delegates in only a small number of cases has this been able to be triangulated with evidence showing improvement in outcomes for children. This latter aspect of triangulated evidence is true of other development activity. Where it has been evidenced includes the Nurture Pilot Report, November 2015, the Attendance Research project (2014), Psychology of Parenting Project (2013) and the PreFCAT development (2015/16 and ongoing).

How do we know?

The service tracks progress through the service plan and review process, and the service evaluation activity. The measures we have taken indicate a positive service is delivered, as reported by stakeholders. There are a number and range of methodologies used in an embedded approach, such as those used with the Team Around the Child process and those used with delivery of training. The service is aware of the limitations of each of the methods used. It is proportionate in its self-evaluation activity and has achieved a lot within its resources, both in improving outcomes for children and in its self-improvement journey. The limitations include that there is a tendency toward views of stakeholders providing data, whether in qualitative or quantitative forms.

The self-evaluation activity where the evidence has been triangulated indicates that children improve outcomes, or have a faster and more responsive service (e.g. Nurture, Seasons for Growth, Pre-Five Community Assessment Team).

What are our strengths?

The key learning from our self-evaluation activity indicates that:

- The Service is very strong on areas of delivery, where we provide a service. The journey of improvement has responded positively in delivering a quality service with less resource.
- The Service uses a proportionate approach to self-evaluation activity, with some areas embedded in practice, and each year a focus on an area of activity. While the essence of this is described in the Service evaluation policy, this requires updating in the new context, to ensure it is feasible and realistic.
- The service has a participative and collegiate approach to service improvement captured within the activity developed and led at all levels within the service.

Where are our challenges?

Maintaining a focus on service improvement with a high level of staff turnover. The focus will be on ensuring service delivery moves towards excellent.

A continued challenge is the financial budgetary pressures on the council and its partner organisations in a context where there is anticipated to be further reductions in capacity to deliver services and a rise in children and citizens who need services from the public sector. Within the Educational Psychology Service the challenge is to ensure we can make improvement, in the context of the Council of the Future, such as increasingly digital and with the potential for increasing demand as result of ensuring children are “Closer to Home”.

What are our next steps for improvement?

- A new Children’s Services Management Information System is to be purchased during 2017/18 and once implemented will be used by the Educational Psychology Service for record keeping and used to develop service performance information.
 - This system will provide significant opportunity for closer partnership work with social work and Additional Support for Learning colleagues at Team Around the Child and wider levels of work
- Use the revised vision to influence practice.
- To further clarify that the prioritised service delivery for vulnerable children is meeting the needs of Falkirk Council stakeholders, including the children and their families.
- To ensure that the work on capacity building is developed further to promote practice change at the practitioner level that has an impact on the outcomes for children.
 - Develop a system to incorporate triangulated data in our capacity building work
- Undertake further Population Segmentation approaches to ensure service delivery is targeted at those that most need it, and that capacity building work is undertaken to assist both in the early intervention and prevention approaches known to be most effective.

- A commitment to partnership approaches at all levels of work and to enhancing effectiveness of these partnerships
- Validate the evaluation picture of the service strength and areas for development
 - Clarify stakeholders views on service re-design and its impact

The service is clear on the direction of travel in relation to both its strengths and areas for improvement. It will do so using the planning framework, self-evaluation and distributed leadership approach. We plan to:

- Build on the high quality work taking place within the Team Around the Child to ensure there is triangulated data by using the council framework for monitoring outcomes.
- Analyse how the long term impact of capacity building work is achieved through into school improvement planning processes.
- Develop service delivery in the context of “Re-aligning Children’s Services”, which involves targeting services on the basis of informed data and commissioning or targeting services with stakeholders involved in service design.

At this point it is important to take stock of the impact of the service re-design and focus on the following key questions within the Validated Self-Evaluation week.

Are we correctly prioritising our resource deployment to ensure that the most in need of our service receive it, and that capacity building work assists others in improving outcomes for children?

Learning and Teaching

What can we learn about our approaches to capacity building that will assist Falkirk Council and its partners in ensure there is effective early intervention and prevention work that promotes wellbeing and attainment for all children, but particularly those most affected by poverty or significant barriers to learning?

Partnership Working

How well do we provide an Educational Psychology Service that promotes inclusion and equity, in partnership with other agencies in our work to improve outcomes for the children in Falkirk?



Nick Balchin

Principal Educational Psychologist

Appendix 1 – supporting evidence

Chart 1 -School Managers View of the Educational Psychology Service contribution to improving outcomes for children and areas of impact, June-September 2016

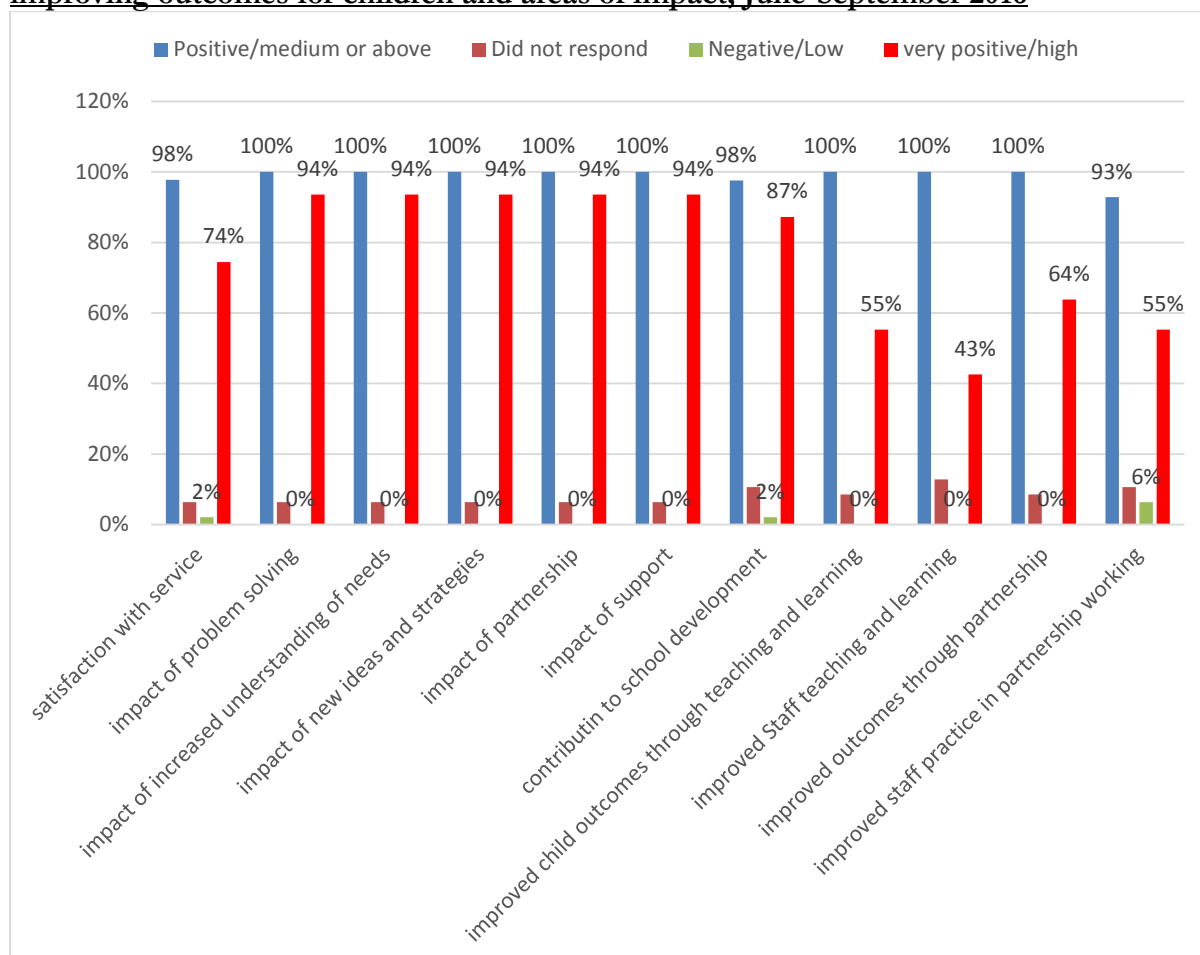


Table 1 – Cases and staffing of Educational Psychology Service

	<i>New</i>	<i>Total Open</i>	<i>Avg EP Fte</i>	<i>New per EP</i>	<i>caseload</i>
2013/14	381	1953	8.6	44	227
2014/15	332	2011	8.2	40	245
2015/16	343	Not available	6.7	51	Not available
2016/17	293	1460	6.8	43	215

Chart 2 - EPs average full time equivalent new cases compared across the last 4 years

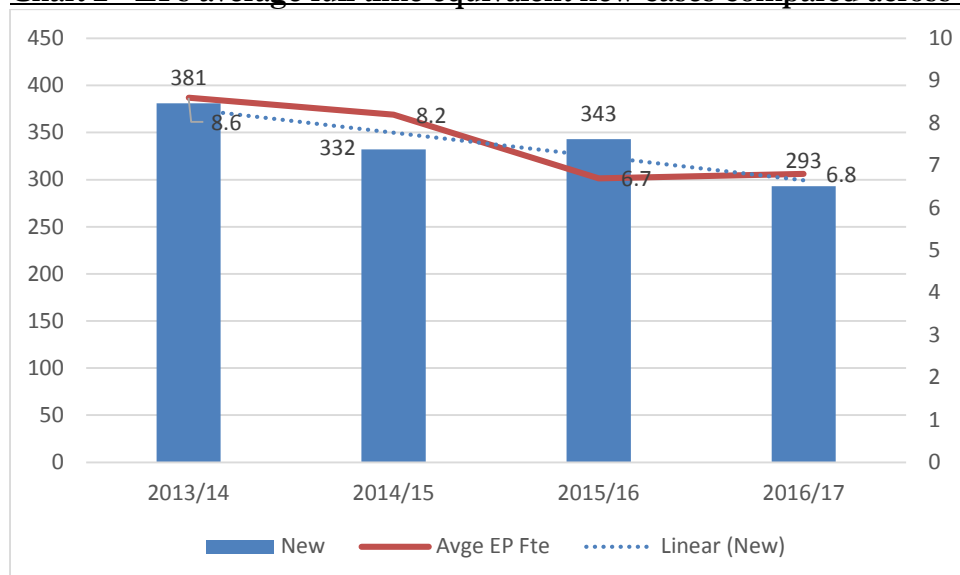


Table 2 – Educational Psychologist delivery of capacity building work - training and consultation

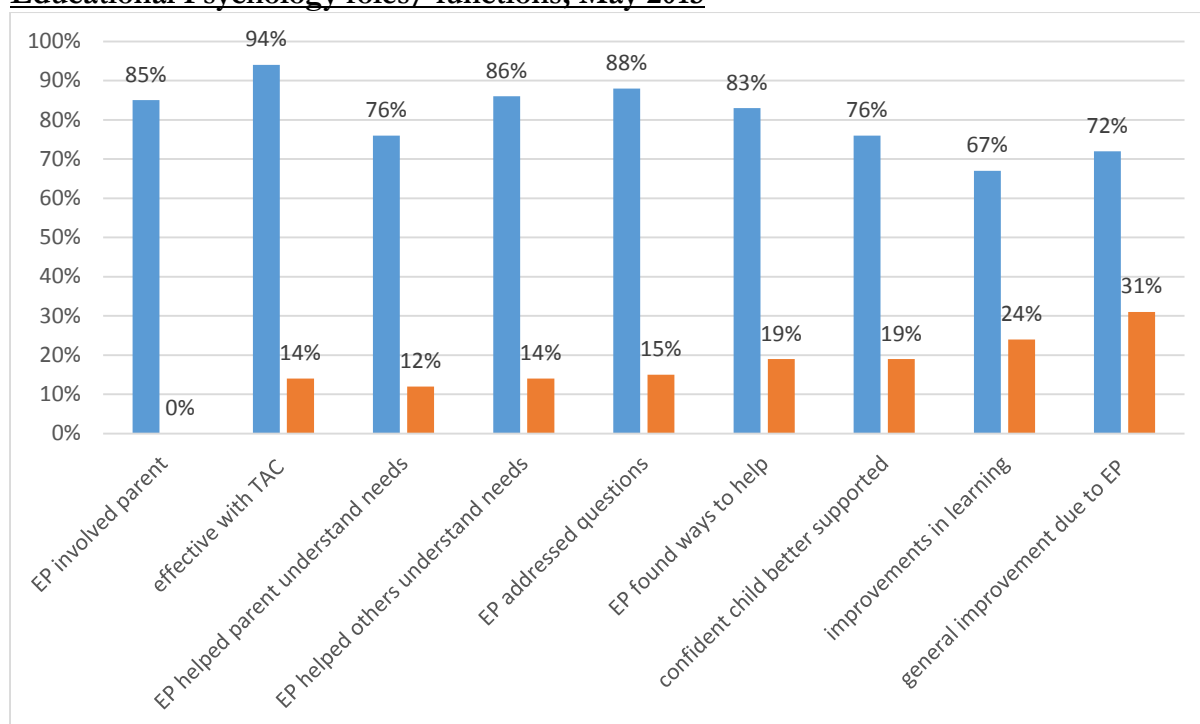
Year	No. of EPs (average)	No of events	No of topics (training)	No of topics (consultation)	No. of overall EP hours spent delivering training	No. of overall EP hours spent on consultation at strategic level
2013 – 2014	8.6	66	24	10	398 hours and 45 minutes	70 hours
2014 – 2015	8.2	103	27	23	279 hours and 30 minutes	162 hours
2015 – 2016	6.7	46	11	4	284 hours	94.5 hours
2016 – 2017	6.8	24	10	12	203 hours	63.5 hours

Table 3 – Staffing levels of Falkirk Educational Psychology Service compared to Local Government Benchmarked authorities,

Source the Association of Scottish Principal Educational Psychologists staffing survey 2016, using Mid 2015 population census estimates

Local Authority	Staffing Comp FTE	Actual FTE	Pop. 0-24 yrs	Ratio Against Comp	Ratio Against Actual	Difference from Ave vs comp	Difference from Ave vs Actual
Clackmannan shire	5.2	6.2	14389	2767.1	2320.8	-1613.5	-2055.7
Dumfries & Galloway	8.1	8.1	37995	4690.7	4696.5	310.1	320.0
Falkirk	9.0	7.8	44634	4959.3	5722.3	578.7	1386.2
Fife	24.0	23.1	105844	4410.2	4582.0	29.5	205.4
Renfrewshire	8.5	9.5	48834	5745.2	5140.4	1364.5	763.9
South Lanarkshire	22.7	23.8	88062	3879.4	3700.1	-501.2	-676.5
South Ayrshire	7.4	7.4	28791	3890.7	3890.7	-490.0	-485.9
West Lothian	11.6	11.6	54182	4670.9	4670.9	290.2	294.3
Totals	96.5	96.6	422731				
Average				4380.6	4376.6		

Chart 3: Percentage of parents who reported positive or no view across a variety of Educational Psychology roles/ functions, May 2015



- Percentage of parents, from those who offered a view, who thought that the Educational Psychologist contribution was positive
- Percentage of parents who did not offer a view

Appendix 2: Vision and Priorities.

The council priorities and vision are captured in the following statement:

The Council's Priorities are:

- **People**
 - Raise aspirations and ambitions
 - Reducing the impact of poverty on children and young people
 - Reducing the Impact of poverty on families

- **Place**
 - Improving the neighbourhoods we live in
 - Promoting vibrant town centres
 - Grow our economy

- **Partnership**
 - Work with communities to help them thrive delivering services differently
 - Empowering and enabling people to be self-reliant
 - Promoting stronger, more self-reliant communities

The Falkirk Community Planning Partnership's Strategic Outcomes Local Delivery (SOLD) plan outcomes are:

- Our area will be a fairer and more equal place to live
- We will grow our economy to secure successful businesses, investment and employment
- Our children will develop into resilient, confident and successful adults
- Our population will be healthier
- People will live, full, independent and positive lives within supportive communities
- Our area will be a safer place to live

Council of the Future

“..a council of the future that is an innovative, responsive, trusted and ambitious organisation for the future through excellence in four core capabilities:

- One Council – Working together to improve outcomes for the people of the Falkirk area.
- Enabled and Empowered Communities – Working together with Communities and Partners to have enabled, empowered and connected communities where people lead healthy, safe and fulfilled lives.
- Modern and Digital - Modernising how we deliver our services, being innovative by design and delivering services that are more accountable, flexible and efficient.
- Data – Enabling Communities, Members and officers to use data and information to make decisions based on shared priorities and real-time information.

Strategic Priorities within Children's Services - Education Division:

Planning for Improvement – The Golden Thread

Scottish Government's National Improvement Framework



Educational Psychology Service Vision

Vision:

The Educational Psychology Service of Falkirk Council provides an evidence based approach to service delivery. It is a nurturing and collaborative team that provides advice, consultation, training, research, assessment and intervention in a team based approach in collaboration with other professionals, parents and children. It is child-centered at its heart and uses a relationship based approach to assist in improving the outcomes for children, whether in the team around that child or when offering training and policy work.

Core Values

- Evidence informed practice
- Nurture and relationship based,
- Using knowledge of psychology to empower the key people in child's life,
- Working in partnership - Collaborative and supportive
- Identify needs and contribute creatively and supportively to finding solutions
- Respect, empathy and integrity

Aim

“Our aim remains to provide a high quality psychology service through consultation for the children and families who require this most, using a knowledgeable and supportive, team approach”