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<https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/fa/epservice/>



Falkirk Council
Children's Services

Standards and Quality Report Educational Psychology Service Self-Evaluation 2021-2023

Introduction

Falkirk Council Educational Psychology Service has 7.5 fte psychologist that are core funded, 1 fte Senior Psychologist for early years and over the last two years had temporary funding of between 0.4 and 0.8 fte for funded projects. This reflects 31st out of 32 authorities for staffing ratios of psychologist to children (1:4322, Scotland average is 1:2916). According to the Association of Scottish Principal Educational Psychologists (ASPEP), Falkirk should have a core staffing of 12.5 fte based on the 2023 ASPEP Paper on National Staffing levels. Including project staffing we rank 30th of the 32 local authorities in Scotland

The Educational Psychology Service re-designed its approach to service delivery in 2018. It provided a positive platform to embrace the significant changes required of working practices in educational psychology during the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown arrangements. When the initiative was first implemented there was a progress report and a 6 month evaluation. [[Self Evaluation and Plan | Falkirk Educational Psychology Service \(glowscotland.org.uk\)](#)]. This found that the service delivery overall was effective.

This year (2023-24) becomes a point to evaluate and review its overall impact (see figure 1) and whether the reach in our digital development was having an impact.

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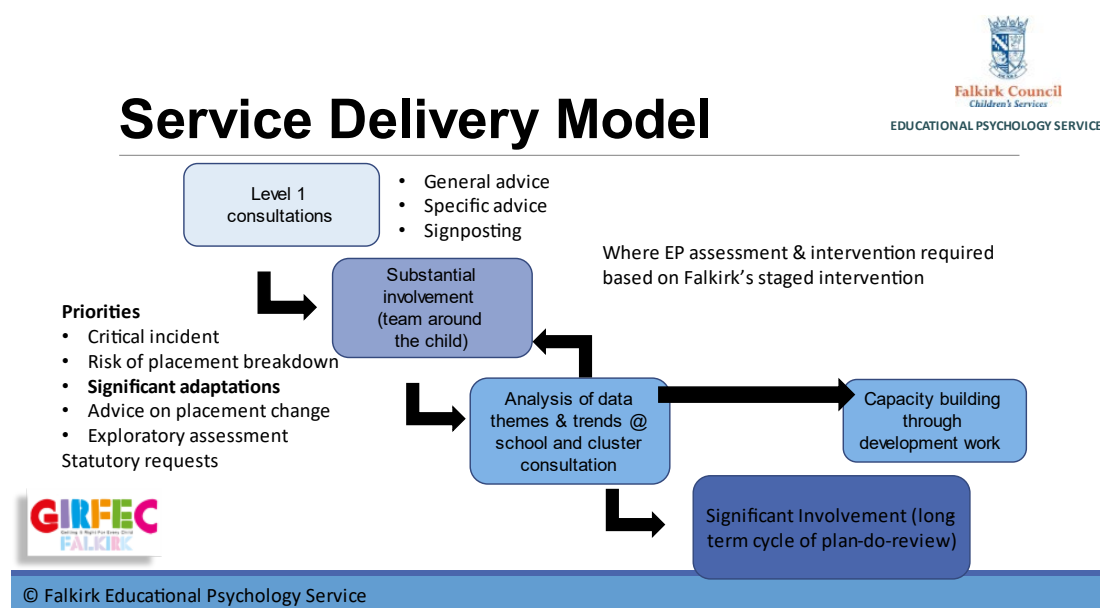
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Evaluation

Core Service Delivery

We offer casework and development work (including training, research & policy).

Figure 1 – Service Delivery model – casework



We currently have 1106 open cases, where 67% male, 32% female; Scotland wide from 2022, 57% of males and 43% of females have ASN, in context of 34% of pupils having ASN).

EPS increased the number of children in receipt of service from 750 (21/22) to 859 (22/23). This is a 15% increase. We completed work on 20 projects (+6%) and delivered 54 training courses/authority developments (+55%). Parents that thought we had completed our educational psychology task had a satisfaction rate of 88% (4.4 stars). Completed 2 parent groups in last 18 months (Parent Plus).

Table 1 – Reason for involvement

Reason for EPS involvement	Percentage
Critical Incident	1.2%
High Risk of Education Placement Breakdown	12.1%
Evidence of Significant Adaptations Required for Current Package	21.2%
PCP Casework Assessment and Advice Regarding Specialist Placement	23.7%
Significant ASN and Advice	59.4%
Exploratory Assessment	20.8%
Statutory Request	3.3%
Other	7.5%

Within our service delivery for children, children were identified with the following reasons for their additional support needs as the primary need for EPS involvement (87% have multiple factors, 13% have only one need):

- 25% SEBN (+3%), and where SEBN as primary and secondary – 43% (+5%)
- 23% ASD (+1%), and where ASD as primary and secondary – 33% (+4%).
- 8% Language or Speech Disorder
- 4 % non-attendance (-2%)

- 5% social communication needs (-1%)
- 4 % mental health (-1%)
- 2% complex needs (-2%)
- 4% learning disability
- 4% other learning difficulty

(denotes increase or decrease in last year)

Parents views on the EPS

“It’s amazing to get psychological services involved and read the reports”, Parent - Parental Request for Assessment

We conducted a parent survey in June 2023. The sample was intended to only include parents/carers whose children had received substantial involvement from the EPS (see Service Delivery model, page 2), however the survey was also sent to some parents/carers where EPS had provided level 1 consultation. Although the survey was not specifically designed to seek the views of these parents/carers, it has been helpful in beginning to identify changes to this part of service delivery too.

57 parents and carers responded (10%), which consisted of mothers (91%) fathers (5%) and carers (4%). More than half of the group (54%) rated us very positively with 4 or 5 stars. 16% of parents reported we had completed our task and they rated satisfaction in our work at 88% (4.4 stars).

“Really felt like she understood my little boy and her strategies for helping him have helped him immensely in his time at nursery and at home.” Parent - School or ELC wished an educational psychology assessment

“[EP] was our EP at [ELCC] I found her to be very helpful and a friendly face during a very stressful time around my sons primary school placement.” Parent - a high risk of education placement breakdown

Not all parents were as satisfied. For those who felt our role was not completed, which amounted to 42% of the sample, they rated our service at 64% (3.2 stars) and those that didn’t know 74% (3.4 stars). A small group of parents who had never met the psychologist responded to the survey. This group were dissatisfied with the service. This suggests that the current level 1 involvement requires improvement, such as ensuring there is feedback to parents at the very least.

“I have had zero feedback, so I think more contact with parents should be above everyone else” Parent who had not met us

“It would be helpful to meet or speak to the psychologist.” Parent who had not met us

“Main comment is better communication needed, more catch ups required even by email. In this school year we have had two meetings which doesn’t seem much...” Parent - School or ELC wished an educational psychology assessment

Parents rated our service as positive when they knew our service’s task was completed. Even those that are positive about our service have commented that they would like more of our assistance

or more of our time. Very few people who access our service know about the websites and the resources available there. Staged intervention and the educational psychologist locus within the wider system are both not clear to many parents. Some parents were not clear on the statutory role of our service but those that did and were at the end of the process were appreciative

“Thank you for providing an invaluable service which supports children in the Falkirk area.” Parent - Parental Request for Assessment

Parent Groups

We have run three parent groups using the Parent Plus approach. The first was for parents of children who attend Carrongrange School (jointly with Children with a Disability Social worker) and the next two for parents of children under the age of 5 (jointly with the pre-school home visiting service). All three course have been rated very highly by parents. *[data here]*

Training and Development Work

The Service has delivered the majority of its training and development work as part of the service plan. This has delivered training and workforce development for ~1000 delegates over the past 2 years from schools and nurseries on the following:

- Pedagogy for children with Neurodevelopmental disorders and differences
- Anxiety Toolkit
- Skills for Learning and Life
- Family Learning
- GIRFEC and SEBN
- Trauma Informed Practice for leaders,
- NDD assessment – pathways for referral

The service has a role in provide training at other points. In the last two years the service has provided 55 training sessions to over 1000 participants on other topics not necessarily within the service plan (2022/23 = 35 and 591 delegates; 2021/2022 = 20 and 436 delegates). The topics include, Autism and specific sessions on related pedagogy such as environmental audits, social stories and SCERTS; Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder; conflict resolution and de-escalation; return to education following coronavirus, intensive interaction, arousal cycle, attendance; collaborative action research; inclusion; nurture; AD/HD; solution oriented approaches; challenging behaviour; inclusion; Down’s Syndrome; pathways to school readiness; Decider Skills.

The team also get invited to guest lecture at national level which over the last two years has involved topics as varied as: Inclusive Education, EP Practice in Secondary Schools; Arousal Cycle; Readiness for School; Writing at Doctorate Level in Applied Educational Psychology Practice.

The team has also developed online training sessions, materials and guidance for staff to use as they required. This website has seen just under 12000 hits:

blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/fa/epspractitioners/.

We have a separate website for parents which also has had over 11000 hits: [Falkirk Educational Psychology Service | Working in Partnership to Improve Outcomes for Children in Falkirk \(glowscotland.org.uk\)](https://www.falkirk.gov.uk/education/psychology-service).

Funded Projects

In the last 4 years the service has adapted to work with targeted funding streams. This period the funding streams have focused on 4 projects. **Early Years** (1 fte Senior EP); **Getting it Right for Every Child Practice** (0.2 fte Senior EP); **Community Mental Health and Wellbeing MHWB** (0.4 fte) and the **ASN Strategy/Strategic Equity Fund** (0.4 fte). This has been able to be achieved through employing educational psychologists on a temporary basis. The temporary staff generally provide core work with more established members of the EP team devoting to this project work. At the time of writing the GIRFEC project has ceased after 1 year and the ASN Strategy/Strategic Equity Fund project has just started. Each project has its own reporting, and each has delivered significant contributions through strategic consultation and training or workforce development.

Analysis

A combination of factors means it is a suitable time for the Educational Psychology Service to review its modes of service delivery. The educational psychology service delivers a lot for a very small resource. However, it has not always been successful in ensuring that its impact is noticed, or that all stakeholders know and understand how the educational psychology service works and how to make best use of us. This is evident for those parents for whom there was level 1 consultation and felt excluded from the discussion or what happened next. Other elements that may benefit from reviewing the approach include the role we play within the context of staged intervention.

When the current model was introduced in 2018, approximately 60% of children were supported at Level 1 only and 40% of children were supported by us at significant or substantial level. For the last year we have seen a significant shift where approximately 60% of children were supported at substantial and above level and 40% supported at level 1 only. This indicates a shift involving two dimensions. Some children require longer involvement from us at significant level and there are more children for whom the complexity of their needs is such that we move to that substantial level sooner. This is evidence by the increase in the number of children who have multiple factors involved in their barriers to learning and additional support needs.

Our training provides a blend of learning experiences:

- 66% is planned training affecting school-based practice
- 33% is on-demand training to schools and partners as issues arise.

At present there appear to be a high number of hits on our websites but the next stage of evaluation will require a more analytical approach to determine the impact of this work.

Conclusion

The Educational Psychology Service is very modest in size. It delivers a lot with a limited resource. That more than 1000 children have been supported through individualised assessment and advice is impressive. It is also quite impressive for such a tiny team to have supported 2000 delegates in training and workforce development and reached 23000 hits across our two websites with advice. There is more to do to improve. The team has identified a clear pathway to reviewing its service delivery and will be focusing on this across 2023/2024. It has a bold new vision statement which will shape how we work for the next 5 years:

"We passionately believe in making the children of Falkirk's lives better. We promote positive educational journeys using the power of psychology and work with parents and others as partners."

November 2023

We will refine our approach for work with children, find ways of improving our Impact through our digital communication and ensure our training and workforce development has a focused and positive impact.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nick Balchin". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line at the end.

Nick Balchin, MA, PGCE, MSC, C. Psychol
Principal Educational Psychologist

Appendix 1 – EPS High Level Plan 2023-26

The Educational Psychology Service Focus will be on these priorities and EPS improvement based on data and feedback.

1

EPS improvement based on data and feedback

- Core service delivery for those most in need of our service
- Improvement based on data
- Parent views and wider feedback

2

Curriculum

WFD – Pedagogy for children with Neurodevelopmental disorders and differences

3

Inclusion and Equality

WFD - Social emotional and behavioural needs

- Needs analysis
- GIRFEC and SEBN
- Universal approaches
- De-escalation

Partnership working with Community Mental Health and Wellbeing team – **service design** and **communication**

EPS service delivery into Partnership Nurseries

4

Learning, Teaching and Assessment

- SCERTS (with ASN)
- WFD - Building on the Skills for Learning and Life framework
- Attendance project
- Anxiety toolkit Phase 3
- Refresh guidance on specific learning differences

Appendix 2 – Data table trends over time

Measure	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Number of children	592 (800)	880	507	980	728	989
Level 1 consultation only	61%	46%				57%
Parental requests		22				33*
LA requests		18				9*
		%				
Learning Disability		6				7
Dyslexia		3				1
Other specific learning difficulty		1				1
Other moderate learning difficulty		11				7
Visual impairment		2				1
Hearing impairment		3				2
Physical or motor impairment		1				1
Language or speech disorder		3				18
Autism Spectrum Disorder	17	31				44
Social, emotional and behavioural difficulty	36	54				49
Physical health problem		2				1
Mental Health	11%	10				7
Interrupted learning		3				1
English as an additional language		1				1
Looked after		6				3
More able pupil		1				0
Communication Support Needs		17				11
Bereavement		1				1
Substance Misuse		0				N
Family Issues	14%	21				4
Risk of Exclusion		10				1
Other						
Non-attendance	11%	11				8
Social Skills	11%	20				2
Other		11				22
Multiple barriers						86%

Family
Issues