



Educational Psychology Service



Argyll & Bute
Educational Psychology
Service



Education Policy Lead Report

April 2022

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1	Context
1.1	Argyll and Bute Educational Psychology Service (EPS) is located within the wider Education Service, reporting directly to the Head of Education – Lifelong Learning and Support. The Principal Educational Psychologist (PEP) is a member of the Education Management Team.
1.2	The service comprises 6.8 full time equivalent (fte) educational psychologists, including the PEP, and 1.0fte highly skilled senior administrative assistant and 0.2fte clerical assistant. Scottish Government funding has contributed to the temporary appointment of a further 0.4fte EP, a research assistant, a principal teacher of nurture, and from Council recovery funding, two nurture teachers to support the work of the service in improving outcomes for children and young people.
1.3	Over the last four years the service has also supported the training of six educational psychologists (EPs) in collaboration with Strathclyde and Dundee Universities, with the trainees being on placement with the team for two days each week over a period of either one or two years.
1.4	The EPS Improvement Plan links directly to the Education Service Plan, delivering on the key objectives included within <i>Our Children Their Future</i> as well as the multi-agency Children and Young People’s Service Plan 2020 – 2023.
1.5	<p>The Psychological Service vision is <i>to promote the wellbeing and development of all children and young people using the knowledge and evidence base of child psychology.</i></p> <p>In accordance with statutory obligations the service aims to fulfil this vision by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • undertaking high quality assessment, intervention and consultation • working in close partnership with children, parents, schools and other agencies following GIRFEC principles • raising attainment and promoting achievement through Curriculum for Excellence by training and developing the skills of others • adopting a reflective and evaluative approach • contributing to research and policy development
1.6	<p>The EPS has three key objectives for delivery of a range of actions within the current 3 year service plan as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people • Maximise the impact of our engagement with families, education staff, partners, children and young people to close the attainment gap and enhance social justice • Enhance early intervention and prevention through high quality partnership working with the Early Years Team and colleagues in the Health and Social Care Partnership
1.7	<p>In line with national expectations for Educational Psychology Services across Scotland, the team delivers consultation, intervention, assessment, training, research and development to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children, young people and families • Educational establishments • The local authority to inform strategic developments locally and nationally
1.8	This report details key successes and achievements over the last four years.



2	<h2 style="color: #0070C0;">Children, Young People and Families</h2>												
2.1	<p><b style="color: #0070C0;">Casework priorities</p> <p>Through service self-evaluation and to ensure maximum impact from a relatively small resource to improve outcomes for children and young people, a number of casework priorities were established as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Ongoing and significant concerns, including for care experienced children and young people, evidenced by staged intervention, Child’s Planning and review ✓ A key point of transition with significant vulnerability anticipated ✓ A possible need for neurodevelopmental assessment, as a result of significant impact on day to day functioning ✓ Risk of educational placement breakdown 												
2.2	<p><b style="color: #0070C0;">Referrals</p> <p>For the three year period August 2018 to July 2021, the team of 6.8, increasing to 7.2, educational psychologists became involved in support for 593 children and young people across Argyll and Bute. In addition to these formal engagements around named children and young people, regular consultation was also provided to educational establishments regarding meeting the needs of children and young people more generally. It is interesting to note that whilst this time frame covers the two periods of lockdown necessitated by the pandemic, there was no reduction in the level of service provided to meet the needs of vulnerable individuals. There was an increase in telephone contact and video call engagement, including with parents / carers and children themselves. Effective approaches were developed to continue assessment of need and therapeutic intervention including creative use of technology such as the development of bitmoji therapy rooms.</p> <p>Over the last 8 months, there have been a further 138 new referrals to the service which are in addition to those children and young people who have open files and continue to have longer term, ongoing involvement with the service. Of these new referrals 6% were under 5 years, 65% were aged between 5 and 11 years and 29% were over 12 years.</p> <p>At any one time there are approximately 700 open files for children and young people receiving support from the EPS.</p>												
2.3	<p><b style="color: #0070C0;">Reasons for referral</p> <p>Over the last four year period, the primary reasons for involvement with the service are as follows, with the split across categories remaining fairly stable over time:</p> <table style="margin-left: 40px;"> <tr> <td>Emotional / mental health</td> <td>35%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Behaviour</td> <td>20%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Developmental delay / disorder</td> <td>21%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Specific learning difficulties</td> <td>10%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>General learning difficulties</td> <td>8%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Language development</td> <td>6%</td> </tr> </table>	Emotional / mental health	35%	Behaviour	20%	Developmental delay / disorder	21%	Specific learning difficulties	10%	General learning difficulties	8%	Language development	6%
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It should be noted that while these are the *primary* reasons for referral, children can have needs across more than one category. For example, children where there are concerns over a developmental disorder may also have difficulties in other areas such as language, behaviour or mental health.

2.4 Trends over time

Our data has shown over a sustained period that **over half the referrals** made to the EPS arise as a result of concerns relating to either **emotional / mental health needs or behaviour**. Over the last four years there has been a steady increase in the numbers of children and young people referred as a result of concerns over possible **neurodevelopmental disorders**.

In each of the two years from August 2018 – August 2020, **35%** of the referrals were for girls and **65%** for boys. In the period August 2020 – April 2022, there has been a shift in this pattern with an increase in the number of girls being referred with the split now being **45% for girls** and **55% for boys**.

2.5 Autism assessments

Unlike in many other areas of Scotland, within Argyll and Bute EPs are involved with all aspects of the process of identification of autism spectrum disorders, including diagnosis. This includes supporting schools to gather contextual assessment information to contribute to the diagnostic process and ensuring that the voice of the young person is integral to their own planning. In addition the EPS provides support and advice to educational establishments, parents and carers regarding meeting the needs of children and young people with neurodevelopmental disorders.

This work is carried out in collaboration with education staff, including Education Support Officers, speech and language therapists, paediatricians in addition to other health and social work colleagues. It means that in almost all cases throughout the assessment process, the child and family are known to at least one service ensuring continuity of support whether a diagnosis is given or not. This is also one way in which services across Argyll and Bute contribute to the delivery of the outcomes within the Scottish Strategy for Autism.

Referral to the autism assessment teams	2018	2019	2020	2021
Number of referrals received	112	99	85	*
Number of children and young people assessed	61	71	59	
Number receiving a diagnosis	46	50	47	
Diagnostic rate as a percentage	75%	70%	80%	
Numbers waiting assessment at 31 December	71	88	104	

* Information still to be collated by the Health central admin for the teams.

Diagnostic assessments are carried out face to face and therefore the circumstances of the pandemic resulted in periods where assessments could not take place and therefore waiting lists and times have increased over the last two years, putting pressure on EPs to contribute to more assessments. Over the latter part of 2021 and early 2022 there has been an increase in the number of assessments being carried out.

Despite the considerable time required from the EPS and Health services, the benefits of this model are significant. Assessments are carried out by practitioners who have developed real expertise in this area, who know the children and families well and assessments are carried out

	<p>as close to the family home as possible. This allows effective support following the outcome of the assessment process whether a diagnosis is given or not to ensure needs continue to be met. Most recently the EP for Islay was instrumental in having assessments carried out on the island to avoid the distress resulting from children, who often have sensory sensitivities, and families having to travel long distances by ferry to meet with the autism assessment team.</p>
2.6	<p>Participation of young people</p> <p>As part of the service improvement plan we plan to engage with children and young people to ascertain their understanding and accessibility of available support for mental health and wellbeing and seek their views on gaps in provision. Following on from the Independent Care Review in 2020 The Promise outlines changes that need to be made in and around the ‘care system’ to ensure that services work for children and families and are shaped around them. A key promise is that children, young people and their families will be listened to, respected, involved, and heard in every decision that affects them. This project aims to establish a space where children and young people who are care experienced will be listened to and given agency to shape how education services provide support.</p>
	<p>The initial target group are care experienced young people who attend a participation group. It is hoped that this will give a starting point to explore how to involve all care experienced children and young people to share their views and have a say in planning.</p>
	<p>This work was initiated in October 2021. Thus far the following has been achieved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Links have been made with the care experienced group and planning has taken place to facilitate opportunities to meet with the groups. • A video has been produced by the educational psychology service to introduce the topic and invite young people to share their views. • Virtual meetings with groups across the authority have been arranged. • Proposals of possible research methods for gathering views have been produced and shared, the young people will decide what methods will suit them.
	<p>Next steps will be agreed following analysis of this information and young people will have the opportunity to co-produce a plan moving forward on what supports are most valued and what needs to change in relation to meeting mental health and wellbeing needs. The young people will decide how best to share their findings and we will discuss how to ensure that a wider group of care experienced young people can be represented in these processes.</p>
2.7	<p>Impact of involvement with children, young people and families</p> <p>Involvement with children and young people supports them to learn and build relationships within their local school and community. Over the last 4 years, despite a national increase in the level of additional support needs and mental health concerns, the EPS has worked with dedicated school and wider education staff, the Inclusion and Equality team, Education Officers / Managers and partner agencies to ensure that wherever possible the needs of children and young people are addressed effectively. The numbers of children and young people supported through placement outwith Argyll and Bute has remained consistently low.</p> <p>Feedback is received regularly from parents and carers, a sample of which is detailed below.</p> <p><i>“Thank you so much, you have achieved in one session what I’ve been asking for his whole schooling” – Parent</i></p> <p><i>“The support from you (EP) and (ESO) has been second to none, you have listened and understood, and most importantly put (Child’s) needs at the centre of every decision! The support from you both has turned a very negative situation into a positive, thank you!” - Parent</i></p>

"Thank you so much for your work with (child) and all the efforts you are making for her. It has been a big weight off our mind knowing she has you to talk to". – Parents

"I wanted to thank you for coming out to see (child), for speaking to myself and (teacher). Your time, knowledge and guidance I know will benefit us all and ultimately (child)

I am so thankful we can all work together to aid (child) and help her achieve, feel confident, happy and healthy". - Parent



3	Educational establishments
3.1	<p>Link Educational Psychologist</p> <p>The EPS provides a named link EP to all 78 primary and secondary schools across the authority including eight island locations. EPs work in close collaboration with school staff and partner agencies to understand the needs of children, young people and families within their local context. A number of issues arise from the diverse nature of the authority which impact on service delivery, including the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a need for flexibility and responsiveness as schools with fewer pupils can still have a high level of need for support • The geography and economies of scale mean that specialist services cannot be delivered in central locations and therefore there is a high level of inclusion of children with severe and complex needs, and those who have experienced trauma in mainstream schools. This often requires creative supports to be developed and delivered locally with the support of EPs • Small schools often have had no previous experience of responding to particular additional support needs or child protection issues and therefore, as with all schools, benefit from support from EPs to develop the necessary skills and confidence to meet needs. <p>EPs are often asked to provide advice and support for the children and young people educated outwith Argyll and Bute, including those in foster families living in other areas of Scotland.</p>
3.2	<p>Schools and educational psychologists working together</p> <p>There is specific guidance on schools and EPs working together that has been reviewed and updated based on consultation with school staff and remains under review to ensure this is fit for purpose moving forward.</p> <p>To ensure sustainability and impact, wherever possible intervention from the EPS should link to objectives detailed within the establishment’s improvement plan.</p>
3.3	<p>Training</p> <p>Each year, the EPS develops and delivers high-quality training and workshops to enhance the skill and understanding of staff. Much of this training is directed at education staff however sessions are also delivered to, and with, partner agencies. The training developed by the service translates the latest research into action which can address on-going and emerging issues within educational practice and policy. Much of the training delivered is linked to key strategic objectives within the EPS Improvement Plan as detailed in section 4 below, however educational establishments and partners also request training relevant to their particular setting.</p> <p>Examples of training delivered over the last 4 years include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS) • Solution oriented meetings • Understanding developmental trauma • Supporting transitions • Return to school following COVID-19

- Executive functioning and self-regulation
- ASD in the educational context
- Anxiety – what works?

For training attended from 2019–2022, 1236 evaluations have been completed by participants. Evaluations are distributed at every training session to ensure the events are relevant and useful for practitioners and to support development of materials. Following training, participants were asked how useful the training had been and to rate their confidence in applying their learning in practice.

Quantitative feedback of training for 2020-2021 on a scale of 1 – 5, with 5 being the most favourable response showed the following:

- How useful did you find this training? Mean score of **4.44**
- How confident are you that you will apply what you have learned from this session? Mean score of **4.24**

This represents a positive improvement from the previous year’s (2019-2020) data which reflected mean scores of *How useful?* at 4.35 and *How confident?* at 4.12.

From this session, follow up questionnaires will be circulated to establish the impact of the training delivered through changes in practice to improve outcomes for children and young people.

The necessity of changes to practice as a result of the pandemic have enhanced the access to professional learning sessions delivered by the EPS as many training events have been able to be effectively delivered online. This has included the use of tools such as Jamboard to make sessions stimulating and interactive. Costs, in terms of both finance and time, have also reduced.

3.4 **Gathering stakeholder views**

Stakeholder consultation continues to inform service delivery within the EPS. The gathering of stakeholder views is linked to key pieces of work to shape developments.

A remote working survey gathered the views of stakeholders about the adaptations made to remote and online delivery of educational psychology services during Covid restrictions. Many advantages arose from very difficult circumstances and as a result it was important to capture these elements moving forward. The views of 73 stakeholders (parents, carers, children, young people and other professionals) were gathered and used to plan service delivery with a leaflet produced for stakeholders.

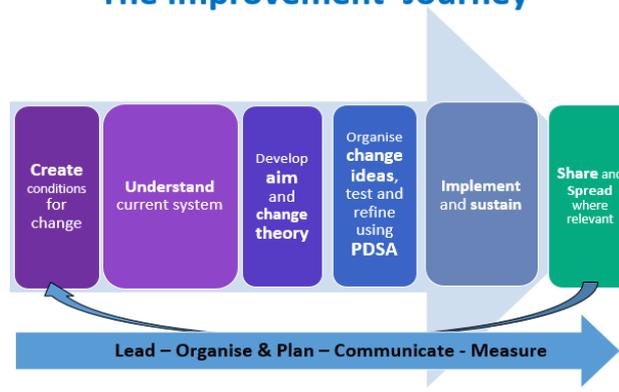
There has been effective engagement with stakeholders to evaluate planned work regarding non-attendance. The EPS has facilitated a working group that consults education, health and social work on a joint intervention which aims to address school non-attendance and increase the positive engagement of young people with learning.

The service carried out a survey across educational establishments to establish the mental health needs of children, young people, families and staff as perceived by our education colleagues. The results of this survey have been used to guide interventions and feedback is being collated to ensure staff are aware of what has been done as a result of the views they shared with us.

Our trainee educational psychologist is carrying out focus groups with pupils and parents involved with Our Children, Their Nurturing Education to inform future developments.

<p>3.5</p>	<p>Interventions</p> <p>Across Argyll and Bute, the size and nature of schools vary significantly depending on the location. As a result, particular interventions can be required based on the establishment's specific evaluation of need, improvement plan priorities or resulting from the needs of children and young people with particular vulnerabilities such as those identifying as LGBTQ+, those who are care experienced or have a neurodevelopmental disorder.</p> <p>Interventions supported or delivered by the service are directed to meet needs within a local context, supporting evidence informed practice including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Living Life to the Full - Working on What Works (WOWW) - Think well do well - Friends for Life - The Homunculi CBT Approach for children with autism and similar difficulties – working with individuals, small groups or whole class including at P7 transition - Autism and Anxiety - The Dyslexia Mind Palace – a shared google online room for interactive psychoeducation - The Autism Mind Palace - a shared google online room for interactive psychoeducation - Online shared drive therapy room for using CBT with autism <p>As with training, these interventions are delivered and evaluated in addition to the key strategic objectives detailed below.</p>
<p>3.6</p>	<p>Feedback</p> <p><i>'The work of the EPS in A and B is simply outstanding...'</i> Comment on Twitter post – Secondary School Head Teacher</p> <p><i>'I just wanted to formally thank you very sincerely for the training you delivered this evening. I thought it was excellent. I have returned home to a WhatsApp group of support assistants who are buzzing, brimming with enthusiasm and confidence. They want more!'</i> Secondary School Depute Head</p> <p><i>'I can honestly say, that is the best feedback post training I have ever heard. Your delivery of very relevant information landed exactly how I had hoped and the conversation staff are now having demonstrate their perspectives have shifted. your (training) was so relatable and explained in such a connected way that I felt I learned so much and was able to look at situations from a different angle.'</i> - Primary Head Teacher</p>

The Improvement 'Journey'



4	<h2>Key Service Objectives and Strategic Developments</h2>
4.1	<p>Overview</p> <p>EPs are uniquely placed to ensure that strategy to improve outcomes for learners is informed by direct work with children, young people, families, educational establishments and partners. As a result the EPS drives significant strategic developments that are relationship based, have social justice at the heart and aim to close the poverty related attainment gap. Interventions are evidence informed with a strong focus on effective implementation to maximise sustainability and impact. All interventions are aimed at making a difference to the lives of children and young people.</p>
4.2	<p>Mental health and wellbeing</p> <p>Mental health and wellbeing features strongly in the EPS Improvement Plan, which is appropriate given the increasing dialogue nationally around a 'mental health epidemic'. Much of the training described above, delivered to educational establishments and partners, has a focus on mental health. In addition, as noted in section 2 above over half the referrals to the EPS arise as a result of emotional, mental health or behavioural needs. It is important, therefore that the service drives and delivers strategic approaches relating to mental health that will bring about systemic change with a focus on early intervention and prevention to make a difference to all children and young people across Argyll and Bute.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <p>Mentally healthy schools</p> <p>From 2017, the EPS worked with Choose Life and the Health Improvement team to provide mental health, self-harm and suicide prevention training and awareness-raising in high schools across Argyll & Bute. This work promoted help seeking for mental ill health, thoughts of suicide or self-harming behaviours and facilitated a culture of mentally healthy schools where pupils and staff were increasingly committed to the mental health and wellbeing of themselves and each other. This sustained intervention took place over three years and successfully built awareness across staff groups to help them recognise when support and intervention is required and engage with evidence informed strategies and approaches to bring about change. At that time all schools involved highlighted a sense of increasing levels of low level anxiety, worry and low mood across the year groups in secondary schools and very much valued the support provided.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <p>Our Children Their Mental Health</p> <p>Developing from the mentally healthy schools work, the EPS led a short life multiagency working group to develop a mental health strategy for education staff and partners entitled <i>Our Children Their Mental Health</i> which is available on the council website. This strategy is accompanied by a resource hub which provides easy access to information on materials and interventions, with the topic and target audience clearly referenced for each item. In addition to education staff,</p>

colleagues in Child and Adolescent Mental Health (CAMHS), Child Health and Social Work have made use of this material when supporting families.

• **Developing a trauma responsive workforce**

In 2019, the Scottish Government sought expressions of interest from Local Authorities and Health and Social Care Partnerships, to take part in trials to pilot approaches to implementing the delivery of high quality and sustainable trauma training in differing contexts. Argyll and Bute was successful in having their bid accepted. The EPS has been central to the delivery of this trial in collaboration with social work and CAMHS managers. The purpose of the delivery trial within Argyll and Bute was to develop a trauma informed workforce across managers, practitioners and carers, with an appropriate level of training for each group, leading to changes to practice to improve outcomes for children and young people.

Following a very successful launch event held in Dunoon in December 2019, and despite the circumstances of the pandemic, strong progress has been made against the project aims with high uptake of training across education, health, social work children’s services and the third sector. The training being delivered is in line with the Scottish Psychological Trauma Training Plan developed by NHS Education for Scotland.

A number of significant successes have been noted including:

- Strong multiagency commitment, leadership and ownership including the 3rd sector
- Investment of time in ensuring leadership and strategic buy in to support engagement over time
- Strategy built on existing strengths ensuring developments are coordinated with local practice and training including, the GIRFEC practice model, existing work on Adverse Childhood Experiences and Our Children Their Nurturing Education in schools
- Building awareness of trauma in to existing training such Child Protection and the PATHS curriculum
- Inclusion of the voice of lived experience
- Flexibility in responding to the impact of the pandemic by making e-learning modules accessible with significant uptake across services <https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/trauma-informed-practice-training>
- Over 83% of all staff working within our schools completed the e-learning modules at the appropriate levels
- High uptake of facilitated on-line trauma skilled training sessions by social work children’s services staff
- Trauma responsive PACE training for foster carers and our residential workforce
- Strong, consistent communication and update of materials
- A widening focus on staff wellbeing
- Presentations on progress to national groups including to the Deputy First Minister.
- The Bute and Cowal Promise project is working to develop a trauma responsive intensive family support model for children on the edge of care

Good progress has been made towards developing a trauma responsive workforce. We will continue to build on this positive start with a revised training plan and an evaluation of how this training is helping our workforce understand how trauma affects those we work with and how they are changing responses to children and improving their experience of services to improve outcomes. The next children’s services plan needs to address how we will lead, support and develop our workforce in terms of enhancing and embedding the skills, attitudes and values that are foundations of trauma responsive practice. This work supports many of the EPS developments described below, ensuring that we have relationship based approaches at the heart of our work.

<p>4.3</p>	<p>Our Children Their Nurturing Education (OCTNE)</p> <p>OCTNE is the authority wide education strategy that brings together nurture, adverse childhood experiences and trauma-informed practice. The implementation of the strategy is being led by the EPS, including the Principal Teacher for Nurture and two Nurture Teachers (1.7 FTE).</p> <p>Initially the aim of the strategy was to support schools to become communities with nurture and relationships at their centre, as a trauma informed recovery from the impact of COVID-19. With the addition of Nurture Teachers (September 2021), the strategy has expanded and is able to offer increased support to education establishments. The EPS also considered research and learned from best practice in other areas to drive this strategy.</p>
	<p>Research demonstrates that nurturing approaches like OCTNE can have a positive impact on pupils' social, emotional and behavioural needs, and academic progress. OCTNE is a whole school approach, thus every child and young person in Argyll and Bute will benefit from attending an educational establishment who place nurture and relationships at their centre of all they do.</p> <p>The expansion of the strategy in September 2021 is supporting schools to establish targeted nurture interventions for groups of pupils (trauma skilled) and supporting the team around our most distressed young people who are at risk of educational placement breakdown. The Nurture Teachers are seconded to this role until September 2022. Given the impact for vulnerable children it is hoped that these posts will be extended.</p>
	<p>Between September 2018 and December 2019 the EPS led an authority wide nurture and relationships strategy group, composed of head teachers/depute head teachers and education support officers across Argyll & Bute. Using the Education Scotland self-evaluation and planning framework of looking outwards, looking inwards and looking forwards, we undertook an audit of nurture practice across the authority, including barriers, considered best practice from other local authorities, and used this evidence to develop a nurture and relationships strategy proposal for the Education Management Team.</p>
	<p>In support of planning for recovery from COVID-19 an updated proposal was prepared for EMT in June 2020, and agreement for recruitment of a Principal Teacher for Nurture followed. The PT Nurture took up post in February 2021. The OCTNE framework and accreditation model were developed, and the first cohort of schools enrolled in OCTNE in March 2021. A second cohort enrolled in November 2021 and a third cohort, focusing on Early Years establishments will begin in April 2022. Leadership training has been developed to ensure that practitioners have appropriate professional learning in attachment, brain development and improvement science, to ensure they are able to develop robust, evidence based whole-school approaches that are unique to their context”.</p> <p><i>“This has been one of the best training experiences I've been on. The amount of things I have learned is enormous and the amount of things to go and research is amazing. Loved it all. Thank you all so much”.</i></p> <p>There are now 29 schools engaging with OCTNE, with 5 already having have achieved bronze accreditation (nurture committed) and 2 silver accreditation (nurture aware).</p> <p>Six schools are being supported by the Nurture Teachers (NTs), put in place as a result of authority COVID recovery funding, to set up, or further develop, their targeted nurture provision for vulnerable pupils. Two schools are also receiving input from NTs to support 3 pupils who are, or were, at risk of educational placement breakdown.</p> <p>Training and support for schools is ongoing.</p>

	<p>The direct support to schools at the whole school level is resulting in more of our educational establishments being communities with nurture and relationships at their centre. The accreditation and moderation model is ensuring that there is a high standard and consistency across Argyll and Bute, from early years through to secondary schools. Improvement methodology and small tests of change will be conducted at the individual school level. This in turn will result in the need for fewer targeted interventions in schools for individual pupils and/or groups of pupils over time.</p> <p>Higher quality targeted interventions are increasingly being implemented with fidelity, across Argyll and Bute. Expertise in nurture interventions will no longer be restricted to the Helensburgh area, where there had been robust nurture support offered through Parklands School, but not made available across other areas of the authority. The capacity and skill of our workforce in schools will have increased, reducing the need for more specialist support from other agencies and central education teams in setting up targeted nurture supports. More pupils will be receiving the right support at the right time, reducing the number of very distressed young people in our schools. The numbers of children requiring specialised and alternative education provisions and curriculums will reduce over time.</p> <p>A case study evaluation has been undertaken with one school who have received intensive support from NTs to set up appropriate nurture provision for a group of pupils. Feedback from staff following this support:</p> <p><i>“I just wanted to say thank you so much for everything you and (NT) have done for the Nurture Group and both myself and (ASNA). I know we have both really benefited from your support and guidance as have the children. I really appreciate all you have done and genuinely can’t thank you enough”.</i></p> <p>The direct intervention of our NTs providing support, challenge, coaching and consultation to our schools will make a significant contribution to the development of a trauma responsive education workforce which is a core aim of the Children and Young People’s Service Plan 2020 – 2023, with reporting through the Trauma Strategy Group and governance sitting with <i>Argyll and Bute’s Children</i>. Evaluative information is available on the direct intervention work.</p> <p>The evaluation strategy has been built in from the outset and approaches to gathering data are in place.</p>
4.4	<p>Addressing non-attendance (ANA)</p> <p>ANA is the Psychological Service response to the significant increase in non-attendance following the pandemic. This initiative aims to build the knowledge and skills essential to professionals working at all ages and stages of intervention, and all types of non-attendance. ANA also aims to enhance partnership working between schools, agencies and the third sector.</p>
	<p>The ANA development group aims to reduce non-attendance across both primary and secondary settings. Although it is arguable that all children have been affected by the various lockdowns, those affected most include pupils with additional support needs, mental health problems and difficulties in the home/community.</p>
	<p>Initial work began in March 2021 and to date the following resources have been produced:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 training sessions and workbook • Professional practice guidebook • Guidebook for parents of non-attenders • Guidebooks for children and young people who are non-attenders • Bespoke planning resources and implementation process in local establishments

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Established authority wide Maximising Attendance working group (consisting of interagency partners) • Appointed Principal Teacher of Maximising Attendance (start April 2022)
	<p>ANA has a strategic evaluation framework which gathers qualitative and quantitative data prior to, during and after the successful embedding of the ANA intervention framework. A range of data will be used to identify impact including the analysis of centrally held information via Seemis to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. review current levels of non-attendance, issues and patterns b. facilitate bespoke planning c. measure improvements over time in levels of attendance <p>Evaluation will also include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gathering of stakeholder views from parents/carers, young people and partner agencies. • An authority wide survey disseminated to all schools to gather information on current processes and gaps in provision. This will aid both local and authority wide service planning and delivery.
	<p>The next steps for this work include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pilot to commence with 2 schools in summer term 2022. • Executive summary and publication of initial findings to support understanding of non-attendance. • Materials being adapted through consultation with partners from school settings, health and social work to ensure face validity and reliability. • Review of the pilot process and adapt for the launch and wider adoption across Argyll and Bute.
<p>4.5</p>	<p>Counselling in schools</p> <p>The EPS has supported the development of the Counselling in Schools Service in line with Scottish Government expectations. This service is directed at providing support for children and young people with mental health and wellbeing needs from the age of 10 years upwards. Beginning in February 2021, the Counselling in Schools Service has been accessed by 351 pupils from all secondary schools and 24 primary schools. Common reasons for referral include anxiety, depression, self-harm, and relationships. The timing of this service has been critical in terms of responding to increased need resulting from the pandemic.</p> <p>Qualitative and quantitative information is gathered to evaluate the efficacy of counselling sessions. On the YP-CORE 10, young people who engaged with counselling reported an 18% reduction in scores. On the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire, young people reported a 27% reduction in pre and post scores. The service has recently expanded with a further two counsellors joining the team, which will increase service capacity.</p> <p>The evaluation of counselling in schools is led by the EPS and, moving forward, consideration is being given to how this service delivers and enhances the suite of mental health supports for children and young people, including the views of young people themselves to identify any gaps in service provision.</p>
<p>4.6</p>	<p>Seasons for Growth</p> <p>Seasons for Growth is an evidenced based peer education programme which aims to support children and young people who have experienced change, loss or bereavement. Seasons for Growth aims to strengthen the social and emotional wellbeing of children and young people who are dealing with significant life changes by exploring the impact of change and loss on everyday life and learning new ways to respond to these changes. Seasons for Growth normalises participants' experiences and increases protective factors such as building personal resilience and social skills whilst also minimising risk factors such as isolation that influence mental health and wellbeing. The Seasons programme has an important role in supporting the Covid recovery plan due to the extent of change and bereavement children experienced recently.</p>

	<p>Seasons for Growth is a small group programme which is suitable for any child or young person from 6 to 18 years old. It also incorporates engagement with parents to ensure that children's learning is shared encouraging more open discussions about loss and bereavement at home as well as within the Seasons group. It is an inclusive programme and is particularly beneficial for care experienced children, children from service families and those with additional support needs.</p>
	<p>Initial Seasons for Growth training was funded through the MOD in 2015 and approximately 30 members of staff were able to facilitate groups within the Helensburgh and Lomond area. Since September 2020, Psychological Service developed a model of implementation focusing on training, coaching of staff and evaluating impact. Within Argyll and Bute, there are now more than 80 trained members of staff and the reach of the programme has been extended to include schools in Bute, Oban, Islay and Cowal allowing more children and young people to access the programme as they require it. A model which ensures fidelity of the programme has been introduced which incorporates ongoing coaching of trained staff, links with social work, the school counselling service and third sector organisations to support delivery. An accreditation pathway for staff has been established and evaluation data from children, parents and staff is being collected.</p>
	<p>Collection of impact data is currently ongoing and at early stages as Seasons groups were limited due to Covid restrictions. Feedback from children who have recently participated in a Seasons group included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "I'm not the only one whose family has changed." • "I have ways to cope when difficult things happen." • "There are people I can talk to if I need it." • "It's okay to feel big feelings." • "It's okay to talk to people." <p>Feedback from parents included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "My child has now got tools to help regulate his feelings and to talk about his feelings." • "My child is more confident in talking about her feelings to me and others." • "I hope more children have a chance to do Seasons, it's been so helpful for my child."
	<p>Seasons groups were limited in being able to run over the last 18 months due to Covid restrictions in school however, more groups have been able to be offered and run since January 2022. The aim is to focus on implementation and supporting staff to run groups within schools. Peer networking opportunities will be offered across the authority through staff reconnectors where examples of practice and resources can be shared as well as problem solving any barriers that arise. Gathering evaluative information to consider the impact of Seasons and to ensure fidelity of the programme will continue to be key priorities.</p>
<p>4.7</p>	<p>Meeting the needs of vulnerable groups - LGBTQ+</p> <p>Research has found that mental health difficulties are more prevalent in the LGBTQ+ community. LGBTQ+ youth are disproportionately affected by suicidal ideation and self-harm behaviours potentially due to perceived stigma and psychopathology. The discrimination and bullying that LGBTQ+ individuals face negatively impacts their social and emotional health.</p> <p>Research has also found that while this cohort of young people require support, many practitioners lack the knowledge, skills and confidence to provide that support. It is recommended that further training and knowledge is required across primary care providers.</p>

	<p>The aim of the research is to gather the views of children and young people from the LGBTQI+ community in secondary schools within Argyll & Bute. This will specifically explore their understanding and perception of mental health support services, the support that they have accessed as well as their views on how support for this community can be improved. This will be used to inform best practice recommendations including policy and guidance within the Educational Psychology service and across schools.</p> <p>The objectives will be achieved through gathering the views of children and young people who identify as LGBTQI+ within secondary schools across Argyll and Bute. Findings will be coded to identify common themes across the participants.</p>
	<p>The group started work in September of 2020. Thus far the following has been achieved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of the research into the life experiences and mental health challenges of LGBTQ+ young people • A survey of LGBTQ+ provision in all secondary schools within Argyll & Bute • Interviews with staff members who are recognised as “Allies” within all schools • Interviews with members of community facilities who have provision for LGBTQ+ young people • Discussions with individual young people who identify as LGBTQ+ with an emphasis on their views on the focus of the research • Production of a research proposal (including a questionnaire) that was put forward to the Ethics Committee and agreed upon. • Trialling of the questionnaire with young people • Completing semi-structured interviews with groups of LGBTQI+ young people in schools (ongoing)
	<p>Responses to the interviews/ questionnaires will be collated. Using an action research approach young people will be consulted on these and guidance and policy for the EPS and schools will then be co-created. Following a period of use these will then be evaluated with young people and adults. The interviews will continue and a questionnaire will be created that will be accessible on-line.</p>
<p>4.8</p>	<p>Contribution to strategic groups</p> <p>Over the last four years the EPs have led or made a valued contribution to a range of multiagency strategic groups, including:</p> <p>Locally</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Joint Resource Group (chair) Joint Services Management Group Autism strategy group Suicide prevention group Maximising attendance group (chair) Argyll and Bute’s Children Trauma strategy group (co-chair) Post school transitions working group (chair) Disability transition group <p>Nationally</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Association of Directors of Education (ADES) Children and Young People / ASN Network Association of Scottish Principal Educational Psychologists (ASPEP) Executive Group Scottish Division of Educational Psychology (SDEP) Executive Group National conference planning team with ASPEP and Education Scotland

4.9 Publications and contribution to research

The Educational Psychology Service in Argyll and Bute works to contribute to the body of evidence that will inform practice locally and nationally. EPs from Argyll and Bute have published, or contributed to the publication of the following articles over the last four years.

Ledsom, C., Greig, G., Ginter, L. (2021). Towards an Educational Psychology Service Framework for the Embedding of a School Counselling Service: An overview of practice in Argyll and Bute Psychological Service. *Educational Psychology in Scotland*. Scottish Division of Educational Psychology. DOI 10.1080/02667363.2019.1573720

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02667363.2019.1573720>

Greig, A., Hobbs, C. & Malagoli, C. (2021). Trauma. Editorial in *Educational & Child Psychology*, 38, 1, 2021, 5 – 9.

Greig, A., MacKay, T. & Ginter, L. (2019). Supporting the mental health of children and young people: A survey of Scottish educational psychology services. *Educational Psychology in Practice*.

Greig, A., Hobbs, C. & Billington, T. (2018). Closing the Attainment Gap. *Educational and Child Psychology*, 35(1).

Greig, A. (2017/18). The woman who did not see the Angel: Dr Anne Greig argues that Educational Psychology is the answer to the mental health crisis. [The woman who didn't see the angel | The Psychologist \(bps.org.uk\)](#). The Psychologist Online.

In production - Greig, A. & MacKay, T. (2022/3). The Homunculi Approach. 2nd Edition, with new information on universal/whole class/school and transition projects with teaching power points, lesson plans, curriculum for excellence links, videos and other downloadable resources.

5	<h2>Further information about the work of the EPS</h2>
5.1	<p>Helpful links</p> <p>EPS Glow Blog Argyll and Bute Educational Psychology Service Ambition – Excellence – Equality (glowscotland.org.uk)</p> <p>Twitter https://twitter.com/ArgyllButeEPS</p> <p>EPS section of A+B website Educational Psychology (argyll-bute.gov.uk)</p> <p>Mental health and wellbeing Glow Blog https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/glowblogs/mentalhealthresources/?msckid=b483a443af4211ec9fb35d72748abba6</p>
	<p>Roslyn Redpath Principal Educational Psychologist roslyn.redpath@argyll-bute.gov.uk</p> <p>General service email address educational.psychology@argyll-bute.gov.uk</p>

