

**Equity,
Excellence &
Empowerment
through
Psychology**

**SOUTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL
EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY
SERVICE DELIVERY POLICY
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1. Introduction

This document details the delivery of key processes within south ayrshire educational psychology service and the framework we have put in place to secure the achievement of our vision, values and aims.

Our service delivery is guided by a wide range of legislation, policy, strategy and guidance, including:

- Education (Scotland) Act 2016;
- National Improvement Framework (2016);
- Curriculum for Excellence (2006);
- The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014;
- Getting it right for every child (2014);
- Developing a positive whole-school ethos and culture –Relationships, Learning and Behaviour (2018);
- The Standards in Scotland’s Schools etc. Act (2000);
- Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 (as amended by the Education (Additional Support for Learning)(Scotland) Act 2009;
- The Code of Practice for the Additional Support for Learning Act: Supporting Children’s Learning: Statutory Guidance on the Education (Additional Support for Learning) Scotland Act 2004 (as amended) - Code of Practice (Third Edition) 2017;
- The 2012 Doran Review Report - ‘The Right Help at the Right Time and Right Place’;
- Guidance on presumption to provide education in a mainstream setting 2019;
- Mental Health Strategy 2017-2027;
- National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2012;
- National Framework for Child Protection Learning and Development in Scotland 2012; and
- Statutory guidance on Part 9 (Corporate Parenting) of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.

At the heart of all aspects of our work is the construct of social justice, which is defined as:

“...full and equal participation of all groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs. Social justice includes a vision of society in which the distribution of resources is equitable and all members are physically and psychologically safe and secure” (Bell, 1997, p.3).

2. What is Educational Psychology

Psychology is the scientific study of the mind and how it dictates and influences our behaviour, from communication and memory to thought and emotion. It's about understanding what makes people tick and how this understanding can help us address many of the problems and issues in society today. As a science, psychology functions as both a thriving academic discipline *and* a vital professional practice, one dedicated to the study of human behaviour - and the thoughts, feelings, and motivations behind it - through observation, measurement, and testing, in order to form conclusions that are based on sound scientific methodology (British Psychological Society, 2020).

Educational psychology services in Scotland are built on a statutory foundation which is broader than for any other country in the world (MacKay, 2013). The current statutory functions are prescribed in the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, which remains the principal Act for Scottish education, although it has been considerably amended by subsidiary legislation since then. The Act as amended states:

It shall be the duty of every education authority to provide for their area a psychological service, and the functions of that service shall include:

- *the study of children having additional support needs*
- *the giving of advice to parents and teachers as to appropriate methods of education for such children*
- *in suitable cases, provision for the additional support needs of such children*
- *the giving of advice to a local authority within the meaning of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 regarding the assessment of the needs of any child for the purposes of any of the provisions of that or any other enactment.*

Educational psychologists (EPs) in Scotland aim to improve the life chances of all children and young people. Working within local authorities and in partnership with families and other services, we use applied psychology and knowledge of child development to address inequalities, support vulnerability and enhance inclusion. We seek to ensure that young people realise their potential to become successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens (Association of Principal Educational Psychologists, 2016).

We do this by:

- Designing and implementing interventions which support individuals and communities to develop resilience. With our partners, we therefore work to ensure that children are safe, healthy, active, nurtured, achieving, respected, responsible and included.
- Sharing knowledge about 'what works' and promoting evidence informed approaches to inform the policy and practice of literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing in our educational establishments and communities.
- Raising awareness of the crucial role of communication, relationships and nurture in children's lives.
- Training, coaching and developing the skills of other professionals, for example teachers and early years staff, to improve children's attainment and achievement.

- Highlighting the importance of understanding the interactive nature of assessment, teaching and learning – where adults and children can build new ways of responding to each other in different contexts, and over time.
- Working directly with schools to think about the needs of the whole child and reach solutions which overcome barriers to learning by building on the strengths and assets of individual children and their families.
- Aiming to ensure that assessment and planning for children and young people leads to their successful inclusion in their class, school and community.
- Using research to inform the development of targeted and universal services and the implementation of effective interventions in local authorities.
- Supporting effective transitions (early years into primary, primary to secondary and secondary to post school) to ensure young people are eventually successful in employment, further education or training.
- Highlighting the importance of young people developing transferable skills and flexible attitudes to respond to the changing world of work.
- Working with others to make sense of what's happening and how people think, feel and behave so that children and adults can make informed choices and decisions.
- Taking an optimistic view of the future through awareness of strengths and capabilities.

3. Vision, Values and Aims

Vision

The educational psychology service is fully committed to south ayrshire council's vision of working with partners and communities to make life better by delivering a sector leading service that achieves *equity, excellence and empowerment through psychology*.

Values

- Inclusion, Equity, Diversity and Compassion.
- Connectedness and belonging.
- Professionalism and continuous improvement.

Aims

- To deliver evidence based psychological practices within the educational context to improve attainment, close the attainment gap, improve health and wellbeing and improve school leaver destinations.
- To work in partnership with others to promote equity and inclusion within mainstream schools to meet the needs of our most vulnerable learners.

- To support children and young people to achieve their potential and be confident individuals, successful learners, effective contributors and responsible citizens.
- To make a positive difference in south ayrshire by empowering others, enhancing their emotional well-being, and nurturing their resilience.
- To get it right for every child by supporting schools to develop as learning organisations through professional learning, coaching and enquiry.
- To deliver prevention and early intervention through professional learning, research and strategic development and service delivery within the early years context.
- To promote relational and strength based approaches that develop learners' skills for learning, life and work.
- To effectively engage with parents and carers to provide a nurturing home environment where families have formed positive, loving and lasting relationships.
- To continue to develop a highly skilled workforce that delivers a consistent and high quality psychological service.
- To place self-evaluation and improvement planning at the centre of service delivery to secure continuous improvement.

4. Key Processes

The breadth of the statutory foundations of Scottish educational psychology services has provided an ideal opportunity for the profession to develop a comparably broad range of professional roles. MacKay (1989) sought to articulate these under five headings: consultation, assessment, intervention, training and research. These were formalised when the Scottish government took the lead in commissioning nationally-recognised performance indicators for educational psychology (MacKay, 1999), with the five 'core functions' operating at three levels: the level of the individual child or family, the level of the school or establishment and the level of the local authority.

Consultation and advice

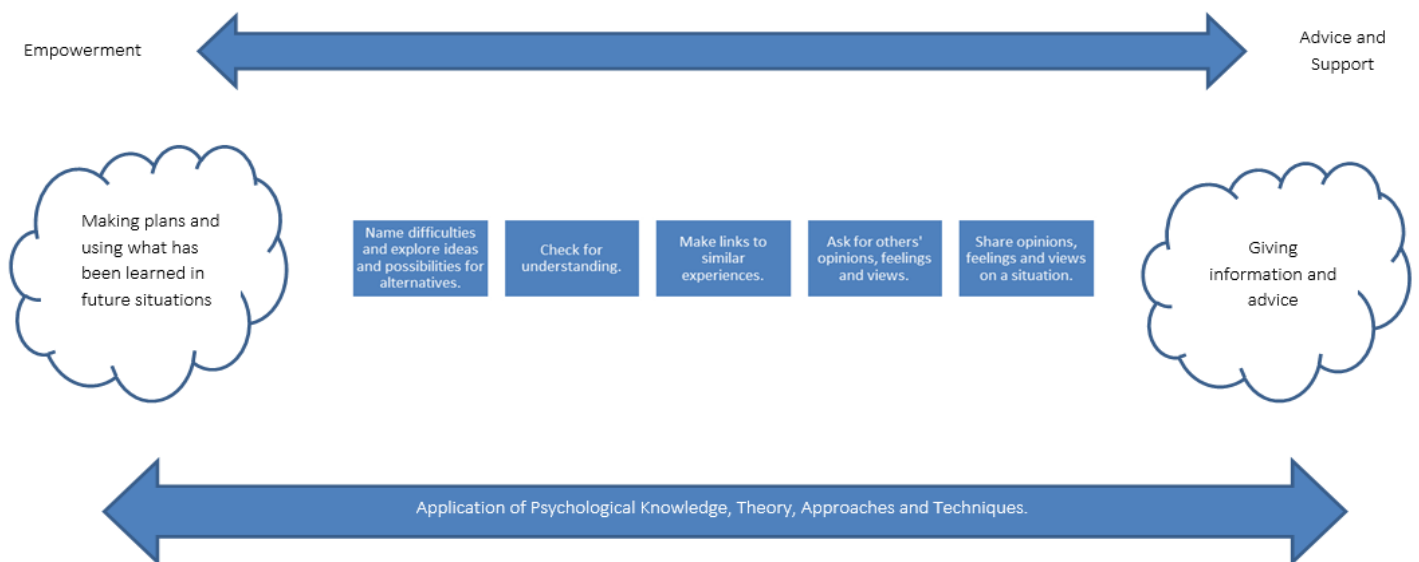
Consultation and advice is a key process of effective service delivery at all levels of the continuum of support that the educational psychology service provides. The following definition of consultation has been updated taking into account the views gathered from focus groups with stakeholders and service users as part of the validated self-evaluation (VSE) process in January 2016.

- Consultation involves the educational psychologist using problem-solving and active listening to try to promote change and identify ways forward.
- The language used during consultations will focus on identifying strengths and needs rather than labelling difficulties.
- The educational psychologist will acknowledge that everyone has key knowledge, experience and skills to help bring about change.

- Through consultation, the educational psychologist aims to offer a unique perspective, bringing their knowledge of child development, applied psychology and experience of educational systems to have a positive impact on an issue.
- In south ayrshire, educational psychologists recognise that consultation has to be responsive to a wide range of different needs to be effective.
- The contribution of educational psychologists within a consultation can range from offering specific advice to helping others find their own unique solutions.
- The service aims to establish positive working relationships with everyone involved and offer a holistic viewpoint to the context being discussed.

South ayrshire educational psychologists use an adapted version of the Activating – Compensating Model to inform their practice (Anderson, 2000; Beaufortova, 2001; Silhanava, 2008).

South Ayrshire Psychological Services Model of Consultation



Adapted from Anderson (2001), Beaufortova (2001) and Silhanava (2008).

Assessment and Intervention

Consultation, assessment and intervention are inextricably linked. The service utilises a range of approaches to assessment, rather than a prescriptive framework, and follows the guidance provided in the code of ethics and conduct provided by the British Psychological Society and the standards of practice of the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC).

The service fully endorses the position paper (British Psychological Society, 2014) which states that in all educational psychology assessment work in Scotland:

- There should always be a clear rationale for educational psychology assessment. This should be directed to promoting the wellbeing and improving the teaching and learning of the children or young people concerned. It should build on information already available.
- Assessment techniques and approaches are based on an understanding of current psychological theories, methodologies, evidence-based practice and research. Psychologists should be clear about the theory and evidence underpinning their practice.
- Prior to assessment, parent(s)/carer(s) consent for educational psychologist involvement must always be obtained.
- It is essential that educational psychologists advise about the most appropriate and embedded educational procedures, which will facilitate the views and participation of children and young people, as core features in assessment processes. Parent(s)/carer(s) may also require support and advice to help facilitate their views and participation.
- Assessment acknowledges that children and young people develop as a result of an interaction between themselves and their environment. Assessment should be:
 - ✓ Conducted over time and across different contexts;
 - ✓ Minimally intrusive, whilst achieving the best outcome for the child/young person;
 - ✓ Inextricably linked to intervention in such a way, that the assessment is formative and provides results that inform any required intervention;
 - ✓ Built upon and inform the ongoing cycle of assessment, planning, intervention and review. In terms of best practice, be negotiated within a multi-agency, staged intervention framework;
 - ✓ Collaborative and working in partnership with parent(s)/carer(s), the child or young person, and those who work most closely with the child or young person; and
 - ✓ Mindful to consider and promote the young person's strengths for learning.

Educational psychologists offer a wide range of appropriate interventions to children and young people with additional support needs. We foster collaborative working and the sharing of professional skills for effective intervention. Intervention methods selected are based on best practice.

Similarly, interventions conform to the code of conduct, ethical principles and guidelines of the British Psychological Society and represent best professional practice. The aims, nature and duration of interventions are fully discussed with all service users, are seen to be relevant to their needs and are designed to support and empower them in developing solutions.

All interventions are carefully planned and implemented on the basis of agreed action plans, and when required make use of staff with appropriate specialist skills. Interventions are designed to be effective but also minimal, unobtrusive, efficient and equitable, and should be fully coordinated with the work being done by other professionals.

Training

The delivery of training is a key process of the educational psychology service. Educational psychologists are well placed to deliver high quality training to a range of service providers and educational establishments. Training and coaching offers an opportunity for educational psychologists to support others in linking research and psychological theory with practice. Educational psychologists have a wide range of knowledge of learning and teaching, child development, assessment, additional support needs and research skills as well as an understanding of change processes, including implementation science, and the systems they are working in, including the local and national contexts and policy and legislative frameworks. When delivering training, educational psychologist should ensure:

- Activities contribute towards the achievement of the schools/services improvement priorities;
- An assessment of the needs of participants (including learning preferences) takes place to inform content and delivery;
- Content is evidence based and best practice;
- An implementation plan is agreed to support the change process, including how learning will be transferred into practice and
- Robust evaluation takes place to measure short and long term impact on participants and outcomes for learners as well as areas for improvement.

Research

Research is a core component of educational psychologists' professional training and they are therefore in a key position to lead research, or support others with its delivery within the educational context. EPs have specific knowledge and skills in research methods and design, are competent in statistical analysis and are trained to take a constructively critical stance to research findings.

The service promotes the use of its research function to:

- Contribute to the development of evidence based educational practices;
- Inform school and local authority policy and strategy;
- Explore new ideas and to evaluate and encourage reflective practice;
- Empower school staff to use research skills, evidence and data (Research strategy for Scottish education, 2017);
- Evaluate, or support others to evaluate, the impact of work on improving outcomes for learners;
- Support the effectiveness of interventions through the use of implementation science and
- Contribute to the discipline of educational psychology.

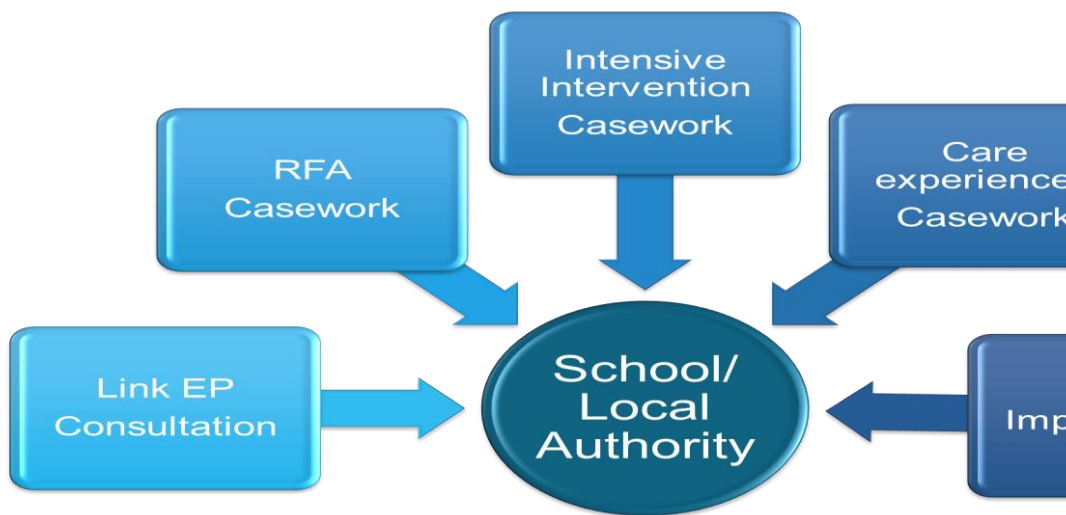
In all research related work, the service follows the British Psychological Society and HCPC guidance on Ethics and Consent.

5. Service delivery

In recent times, the educational psychology service has redesigned its service delivery model (Diagram 1) to support the achievement of its vision, values and aims. The new model of service delivery builds on the strengths of the service to improve outcomes for learners with the following specific aims:

- Improve allocation of service resource to promote excellence and equity across key local and national priorities.
- Achieve greater depth and impact of improvement work.
- Build capacity to deliver inclusion through professional learning, research and strategic development.
- Improve schools' access to the wider service team.
- Improve the balance of service delivery between casework and improvement work.
- Further strengthen self-evaluation for improvement, including more opportunities for professional dialogue, collaboration and moderation within the service.

Diagram 1



Link EP consultation

In order to promote consistency for educational establishments, learners and parents/carers the service adopts a cluster model of service delivery with a named educational psychologist allocated to each school and early years center.

Each educational establishment is provided with core consultation time by their link educational psychologist, which is determined by the service taking account of a wide range of management

information, including school roll, SIMD and FSM data, staged intervention as well as information contained within the service's database.

The purpose of this consultation and advice role is to:

- Maintain and further develop positive relationships with individual educational establishments.
- Manage existing casework, including attendance at Team around the Child (TAC) meetings.
- Support schools with children and young people who are not directly involved with the service, in line with early intervention (informed consent required).
- Negotiate and agree requests for assistance.
- Contribute to the self-evaluation and improvement planning of the school/early years centre.

RFA casework

Previously the service negotiated and agreed casework at an individual school level. However, in order to improve consistency and achieve equitable access to the service for all children and young people a central request for assistance process has been put in place. The service recognises the value placed on casework by service users and stakeholders and allocates significant resource to this area of work, which is separate to the core consultation time described above.

The service meets on a fortnightly basis to consider new requests for assistance to determine whether the request meets the service criteria. The service prioritises the needs of children and young people who are: care experienced; at risk of exclusion; SIMD 1-3; not attending school and/or require an educational placement assessment. In most cases, where the request for assistance has been agreed, the case will be allocated to the school link EP. However, there may be instances where it would be allocated to another member of the team, where it is determined to be in the best interests of the learner.

The service has developed a casework and file management policy, as well as request for assistance guidance for educational establishments, which details service casework criteria and processes as well as specific roles and responsibilities.

Intensive intervention

The service recognises that, at times, our most vulnerable children and young people might benefit from a period of intensive support and therefore the service has allocated protected time to each member of the team for this purpose. This flexible and responsive approach can be utilised in a number of ways, including the provision of therapeutic support.

All educational psychologists are able to deliver therapeutic support with some members of the team able to deliver more specialised therapies, including EMDR, CBT and VIG. The service delivery model allows for all children and young people, where a need has been identified, to access these more specialist approaches through its internal processes.

Care experienced casework

Children and young people who are care experienced and attend a school outwith South Ayrshire are, as a group, extremely vulnerable and have been identified as a group of learners who are at significant risk of poorer educational outcomes. The ASL Act (2009) prescribes that, where South Ayrshire has been identified as the home authority, the educational department maintains overall responsibility for education, regardless of what education provision the learner attends. This includes the provision of an educational psychology service, where a need for this support has been identified. Therefore the need to provide a psychological service for this vulnerable group of learners is included with the service delivery model.

In this situation the service takes its guidance from the paper *Scotland's Looked After Children and Young People in Out of Local Authority Placements* (ASPEP, 2015). In line with the GIRFEC agenda the role of the educational psychology service in both contexts is to support the work of the named person and, if applicable, lead professional.

This role can be defined thus:

- To consider, construct and review the coordinated support plan, if applicable;
- To work collaboratively to meet the needs of children and young people;
- To liaise with establishments in other authorities and present assessment at the GARF (GIRFEC Authority Resource Forum) regarding the deployment of additionality;
- To be consulted in advance regarding the setting of dates for team around the child meetings;
- To attend and contribute to team around the child meetings, as appropriate.

Improvement work

In order to deliver highly effective strategic support to schools, the education department and the wider local authority, the service allocates considerable resource to the delivery of professional learning, research and strategic developments. Schools and services can request this support, following consultation with their link EP or the principal psychologist, which is then discussed at a service level. Where a request is agreed, this is allocated within the team, taking account of: capacity, priority, knowledge and skills. This model supports the service to: achieve a greater balance between casework and improvement work, improve the quality and depth of work as well as improve the use of service resource. In addition, schools and services benefit from the opportunity to access the range of knowledge, skills and abilities within the service team.

The service advocates the involvement of link EPs in school and cluster self-evaluation and improvement planning. Supporting schools with the achievement of their improvement priorities is a key aim of the service and through professional dialogue with the senior leadership team, link EPs are required to complete a service level agreement with each educational establishment that details the role of the EP in this work. Service level agreements should be formed on an annual basis although should be treated as a working plan that is reviewed and updated on a termly basis.

The service makes a significant contribution to supporting the education department and wider local authority with the achievement of national and local priorities, through the delivery of training, research and strategic developments, including working groups, resource groups and strategy groups. This work is negotiated between the principal psychologist and the quality improvement manager who has responsibility for the service. Other members of the central education team can

request strategic support from the service through consultation with the principal psychologist and the request for assistance process.

6. Quality Management

The service is committed to the development and implementation of robust and systemic self-evaluation in order to secure equity, excellence and empowerment through psychology for south ayrshire's children and young people.

The service utilises the quality management in educational psychology services framework to gather meaningful management information and evidence to enable the service to assess the effectiveness of its performance against six high level questions. These are:

- What key outcomes have we achieved?
- How well do we meet the needs of our stakeholders?
- How good is our delivery of key processes?
- How good is our management?
- How good is our leadership?
- What is our capacity for improvement?

Self-evaluation enables the service to identify areas for improvement, which are reflected in the service's improvement plan. The purpose of the improvement plan is to set out the actions the service will take to improve the quality of service and experiences for children and young people.

The service carries out a wide range of self-evaluation activities that draws on evidence from: performance data, stakeholder feedback, direct observation of practice and relevant documentation.

The service produces an annual standards and quality report that clearly, succinctly and evaluatively reports on progress with the service's improvement plan and the impact made in bringing about the desired improvements

All educational psychologists working in Scotland have a post graduate professional qualification in educational psychology (a Masters or Doctoral level qualification) and several years of experience working with children. Their training and experience focuses on using applied psychology to promote the achievement, inclusion and wellbeing of children and young people aged 0 – 24 years. Statutory regulation for psychologists in the UK was introduced on the 1st July 2009, which means that all qualified psychologists require to be registered to practice with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) (<http://www.hpc-uk.org/>).

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