

**Summary of evaluation of the
educational psychology service**



A report by HM Inspectorate of Education

**Perth and Kinross Council
16 March 2010**

Definition of terms used in this report.

HM Inspectors use published criteria when making evaluations. They are published as quality indicators which relate evaluations to six levels. HMIE began using a six-point scale to make evaluations in August 2005. The table below shows how the six-point scale relates to the four-point scale that we used previously.

Old level	New level	Description
Very good	Excellent	Outstanding, sector leading
	Very good	Major strengths
Good	Good	Important strengths with some areas for improvement
	Satisfactory	Strengths just outweigh weaknesses
Fair	Weak	Important weaknesses
Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Major weaknesses

This report also uses the following words to describe numbers and proportions:

almost all	over 90%
most	75-90%
majority	50-74%
less than half	15-49%
few	up to 15%

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1. The aims, nature and scope of the inspection

Recommendation 20 of the *Review of Provision of Educational Psychology Services in Scotland (2002)* charged HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE), on behalf of the Scottish Ministers, to provide an external evaluation of the effectiveness of the Educational Psychology Service (EPS) in improving the impact and outcomes for children, young people and families.

The inspection of Perth and Kinross educational psychology provision was undertaken on behalf of stakeholders. The evaluation of EPS was conducted within a framework of quality indicators which embody the Government's policy on Best Value. The inspection team also included associate assessors who were depute principal educational psychologists (DPEPs) serving in other Scottish local authorities.

This web-based report should be read alongside other strategic inspections of Perth and Kinross Council which sets out the wider context in which EPS are delivered.

The Educational Psychology Service

Perth and Kinross EPS was based in the centre of Perth within Education and Children's Services (ECS). At the time of inspection the EPS consisted of a principal educational psychologist (PEP), two full-time equivalent (FTE) DPEPs and 7.2 FTE educational psychologists (EPs). This included a 0.5 post for post school psychological services (PSPS) and a temporary 0.5 post for the development of a resilience programme (*Bounce Back*). The EPS was supported by allocated time from the ECS administrative team.

2. What key outcomes has the service achieved?

The EPS was central to a range of ECS developments that had shown improvements in performance over time. For example, development and ongoing support of the Re-integration Team addressing the needs of young people with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties had resulted in the numbers of young people placed in residential schools being significantly reduced. There had been a reduction in the recorded incidents of violence and aggression against school staff through EPS involvement in the development and evaluation of Crisis Aggression Limitation and Management (CALM) training. The EPS involvement in the development of authority guidance on part-time timetables and subsequent support to school staff had resulted in a significant reduction in the numbers of children and young people on part-time timetables. EPs had taken a lead role in nurture group developments and resilience building that had impacted on improved relationships and behaviour, increased attendance and reduced exclusion. The service had made strong contributions to the looked after and accommodated children (LAAC) strategy with improvement in attainment levels of looked after pupils. The EPS had contributed to sustainable post school destinations through direct work with post school providers including Perth College, Wellbank and Skills Development Scotland through PSPS. The EPS worked effectively with others to deliver better outcomes for vulnerable children and young people including valued contributions to youth work and family support. The service

engaged routinely with partner agencies and community organisations through various strategic planning frameworks, including the Additional Support for Learning steering group, the Senior Integrated Team, the Fostering and Permanence panel and Early Years Inter-agency panel.

The EPS had tracked performance over time through engagement with stakeholders to audit services delivered. Over a three year period there had been a marked increase in the delivery of training and EPS involvement in research. There had been an increase in parental satisfaction with EPS involvement, demonstrated through questionnaire feedback from 2007. EPs were involved in a wide range of strategic working groups to support the delivery of ECS priorities. EP contributions to groups were evaluated positively by the group chairs. The EPS was leading the delivery of the ECS *Curriculum for Excellence* development 'Improving Relationships, Improving Behaviour.'

The EPS effectively complied with appropriate guidance and legislation. There had been significant contributions to the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 implementation including development of protocols and delivery of training. Statutory requirements were well embedded in individual practice and service documentation. There was effective and appropriate guidance on giving advice and responding to requests from the Reporter. All staff had received appropriate levels of training in Child Protection.

3. How well does the service meet the needs of its stakeholders?

Children and young people had very good access to a wide range of services. Most felt included and involved in decision making and knew why the service had been involved. Children and young people reported that EP involvement helped them to develop strategies to manage their own feelings, behaviour and help them to progress in learning. School staff reported that the *Bounce Back* programme had supported children to be better able to talk about their feelings and deal with difficult situations. Almost all parents felt that the involvement of the service had been helpful to their child. Parents and carers engaged with the service in a range of ways including school-based review meetings, parent workshops, through voluntary organisations and by phone or email. EPs engaged effectively to support foster and adoptive parents. They supported schools to engage more effectively with parents including ensuring meaningful engagement in meetings to support their child. As identified in the service's own self-evaluation, the EPS should seek to further develop creative ways in which to consult with the most vulnerable children and young people and hard to reach parents.

The EPS had very effective working relationships with school and education staff who reported that the service brought a fresh perspective to understanding challenging situations and seeking solutions. Nurture approaches and restorative practices were recognised by schools as key initiatives that were being developed in partnership with them to make a difference to children and young people. Information about the service and practice guidance was clear and accessible for all education and community staff. The service was responsive to the views of its local community and took action to involve partners in joint planning to shape service delivery. This was valued by staff as

a means of reaching a better understanding of shared priorities and joint ways of working to deliver effectively for children and young people. The service should consider ways in which PSPS can become embedded across all EPs. Some primary school staff were less clear about the range of services available. The EPS should consider ways to raise awareness of the service's direction and strategic delivery with all primary schools.

EPs were involved in developments at a national level including *Curriculum for Excellence* health and wellbeing outcomes and development of self-harm guidance through the Choose Life strategy. The EPS had established effective links with voluntary and charitable organisations such as the Samaritans and Penumbra to support delivery of their aims in relation to emotional health and well-being. The service linked with SACRO, Tayside Police, and the Scottish Government's Positive Behaviour Team to help deliver restorative approaches across the authority. The service had disseminated and shared their practice in relation to *Bounce Back* through the national continuing professional development (CPD) conference and had been invited to present at a European conference to share findings on this initiative. The service now planned to identify further ways to share good practice beyond Perth and Kinross.

Within the EPS there was a strong sense of team with warm respectful relationships between EPs. All psychologists felt that the service was well led. EPs were actively involved in decision making and took part in a systematic professional review and development programme. Through the recent introduction of small teams the service had increased a sense of distributed leadership which was valued by EPs. This reorganisation of the EPS into small teams supported collaborative working and flexible service delivery to clusters of educational establishments within Perth and Kinross. The service had high staff retention and low absence rates. Psychologists valued the CPD sharing days. Administrative staff were not line managed by the PEP and were therefore not routinely involved in service planning and development. All administrative staff felt that regular communication through team meetings could facilitate problem solving of administrative matters and facilitate improved joint working.

4. How good is the service's delivery of key processes?

Through service review the EPS had developed an effective consultation service that was available to all stakeholders. The other core functions of assessment, intervention, training and research were effectively negotiated through consultation. Consultation was observed to be delivered to a high standard. The consultation service was well understood and valued by parents, schools, ECS staff and external agencies. The service also provided valued consultation to a range of strategic groups within ECS including the community support team and additional support needs staff. The service sought feedback from service users in relation to both satisfaction and impact of consultations, with this information used to inform future practice. Recording of consultation should be reviewed to demonstrate evidence of agreed goals, tasks and outcomes. Assessment guidance was consistent with the service vision, values and aims and reflected national guidance on EP assessment. There was an appropriate range of assessment tools and approaches available. Most primary schools and all secondary schools reported that the EPS provided effective assessment processes

which contributed to better outcomes for children and young people. Within integrated teams there was clear understanding of the EP role in contributing to joint assessment processes. The service had effectively contributed to procedures within ECS, including the development of assessment processes for use by support for learning staff and to Almondbank House, which offers support for young people with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties

The service had a clear strategy for intervention that promoted positive learning experiences and supported psychological well-being. EPs support and deliver a wide range of evidence based interventions including Circle of Friends and Friends for Life. Through PSPS developments, the local college had been supported by EPs to develop a resilience building programme based on materials provided by the service. Interventions were well considered, jointly planned and evaluated with stakeholders. There was an emphasis on ensuring sustainability of the intervention through working jointly with school staff and other agencies. The service delivered a very good range of training and professional development opportunities that effectively met the needs of stakeholders. Training requests were considered in terms of EPS and ECS priorities. The EPS provided valued input to the ECS Better Outcomes Conference and jointly ran a successful Health and Wellbeing Conference. Training was well planned and tailored to meet the needs of the audience and demonstrated a high level of skill and knowledge within the EPS team. The service should now consider how it will evaluate the long term impact of training delivered. The service had clear practice guidelines on research and development to support increasing service delivery in this area. Valued research had been undertaken to evaluate ECS initiatives for example integrated team meetings and early years initiatives. The service should support all EPs to work with partners, particularly schools, to have a better understanding of how the EPS research function can contribute to better outcomes for children.

The service promoted the development of inclusive practice and the principles of fairness through all areas of its work. The service used audit information to identify under represented groups of children and young people and worked with others in ECS to improve practice, for example reducing out of authority placements.

Features of good practice: *Bounce Back Resilience Programme*

EPs had been involved in the introduction of a whole school approach to resilience using the *Bounce Back* programme. The programme taught children personal coping skills and supported the creation of school environments that were conducive to pupils' well-being. This initiative helped deliver the *Curriculum for Excellence* experiences and outcomes for health and well-being. The impact of *Bounce Back* is being evaluated across 17 schools with positive early outcomes.

Features of good practice: Nurture Groups

The EPS had contributed significantly to the strategic development of nurture groups aimed at addressing the needs of the lowest achieving 20%. The service evaluated the progress made by children in the nurture groups and disseminated the positive results to ECS managers and the Council's Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership. Results from a range of assessment methods indicated that the children developed improved behaviour, better relationships with adults and peers and an increased ability to access the curriculum. The intervention had resulted in reductions in exclusion rates in the schools involved.

5. How good is the service's management?

The work of the service was directed by a policy framework covering all main areas of service delivery and responsibility, fitting within the wider ECS policy framework and coherent with the service vision, values and aims. Policies were generated by the team as a whole, with developments led by team members to promote ownership and increase compliance. Implementation of policies was monitored through peer support, supervision and team meetings, including planning for the effective induction of staff new to the service. The small team approach within the service had been used, along with policies, to increase consistency in practice across the EPS. The service should reflect on the range of policies to ensure that there is a clear and straightforward framework to help guide effective and consistent practice.

There was a strong service commitment to involvement of stakeholders in service developments with clear evidence of action being taken based on stakeholder views. The EPS had engaged with secondary school managers in relation to service evaluations and had adapted approaches as a result. There was a clear service statement on participation of stakeholders that included effective approaches to participation and engagement. This was evidenced in practice, for example, approaches to addressing anger with young people in secondary schools included effective engagement with the pupil council, and engagement of young people around a help seeking behaviour questionnaire. There was a wide range of regular consultation processes in place. These included a range of questionnaires to stakeholder groups, engagement with speech and language therapists around service issues following legislative change, discussions with child and adolescent mental health services and ongoing casework evaluation. A focus group had recently been set up to increase early engagement of stakeholders in service developments and respond to feedback from questionnaires. The service requires to review practice to ensure that information gathered across the groups relates directly to impact and outcomes.

The EPS meaningfully shared the vision of ECS and had generated clear aims to allow the service to deliver this vision. The service quality improvement plan is a live and meaningful document used by the full EPS team to focus the work of the service. All EPs are fully involved in service evaluation that feeds directly in to service planning and

links to the planning cycle in schools. Account is taken of less formal feedback from senior managers and stakeholders. The EPS contributed to the ECS Standards and Quality reporting. Helpful EPS newsletters had been generated to disseminate current issues in psychological research and new developments in the service. These were shared across ECS and other partner agencies. Consideration should be given to EPS reporting on its performance beyond the ECS reporting mechanisms to increase partners' awareness of the range of services available and the EPS contribution to ECS priorities.

There was clear policy guidance for both staff and partner agencies on partnership working. Almost all partner agencies reported a consistently high level of satisfaction with the service and the contribution made to integrated working. Questionnaire returns showed the service's role in training and research to be less well understood by external agencies. Through further development of the partners' focus group, the EPS plans to enhance the shared understanding of the wider strategic role of the service.

Features of Good Practice: Stakeholder participation

The psychological service had deployed a variety of effective methods and approaches to engage stakeholders in considering the aims and priorities for the service. The service had a well planned and systematic programme in place to seek the views of stakeholders on their experience of the service they received. Action identified from surveys and evaluations were incorporated into the service's quality improvement planning process. The service had developed a practice guideline on participation of stakeholders with the aim of designing a service more closely matched to the needs of stakeholders and improving engagement across agencies.

6. How good is leadership?

The service aims were generated by the full EPS team and were linked directly to the wider ECS vision. This had fostered a strong sense of common understanding to deliver effective services for children and young people in Perth and Kinross. There was strong leadership to take forward service planning. Senior ECS managers were aware of EPS developments and the contribution to ECS priorities. A range of strategies were in place to promote distributed leadership including all EPs being supported to develop specialist and strategic responsibilities. This enhanced succession planning. There had been careful consideration of issues of sustainability particularly in relation to short-term funded initiatives for example PSPS and *Bounce Back*. Service managers provided strong leadership in targeting resources at key objectives. The planning framework took clear account of wider authority planning. The service was risk aware and this information was taken into account when reviewing services and planning future developments. The service knew itself well and had effectively used self-evaluation to guide service developments.

The PEP and DPEPs worked effectively as a management team and provided strong direction for the service. They each had lead roles in ensuring appropriate support and

challenge of EPs through monthly supervision, annual professional review and regular team meetings. EPs were encouraged to continually develop their skills and reflect on their own practice. EPs reported the PEP and DPEPs to be very supportive while having consistently high expectations of them, providing challenge to ensure continuous improvement. Appropriate support and challenge was also provided to the EPS by Senior ECS managers. Senior ECS managers reported that the EPS responded positively to challenge and had been proactive in considering ways in which it could effectively support developments within ECS to enhance the experiences of children and young people. Creativity and innovation were welcomed and encouraged and EPS managers had a clear view of what constituted best practice. Change was led and managed effectively and managers looked ahead to respond proactively to changing circumstances within ECS. The EPS should continue as planned, to evaluate the small team approach to ensure that this continues to have the desired impact on continuous improvement.

Key strengths

The service had:

- developed clearly articulated vision, aims and values that guided service delivery to meet the needs of children and young people;
- contributed strongly to improvements in performance for vulnerable children through development of nurturing approaches in early years and primary;
- shown a strong commitment to engagement with stakeholders and partner agencies in jointly delivering integrated services to improve outcomes for children and young people; and
- a collective strength characterised by trust, respect and effective distributed leadership.

Main points for action

The service should:

- develop a clear policy framework that guides service delivery and supports continuous improvement; and
- actively seek to share its effective contribution to ECS developments more widely within the authority and beyond.

As a result of the EPS high performance and very good understanding of their strengths and areas for improvement we have ended the inspection process at this stage.

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Directorate 5
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Appendix 1

Quality Indicator	Evaluation
Improvements in performance	Very good
Fulfilment of statutory duties	Very good
Impact on children and young people	Very good
Impact on parents, carers and families	Very good
Impact on staff	Very good
Impact on the local community	Very good
Impact on the wider community	Good
Consultation and advice	Very good
Assessment	Good
Intervention	Very good
Provision of professional development and training for other groups including parents, teachers and health professionals	Very good
Research and strategic development	Good
Inclusion, equality and fairness	Very good
Policy development and review	Good
Participation of stakeholders	Very good
Operational planning	Very good
Partnership working	Very good
Leadership and direction	Very good
Leadership of change and improvement	Very good

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