

Perth & Kinross Educational  
Psychology Service

Standards and Quality Report 16-17

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This report details all areas of development and improvement work for the Educational Psychology Service (EPS) during the session 16-17. It is divided into service development work, including Literacy and Numeracy and Health and Wellbeing and then service improvement, reflecting joint work with the Inclusion team and internally based processes and then stakeholder and evaluation work. The report ends with comment on capacity for improvement and a summary.

## Service Development

### Improvement in attainment, particularly in literacy and numeracy

#### School Engagement Action Research

This session, the focus has been to collate the learning and evidence from action research work in the area of school engagement, in order to share with schools as a resource for them to consider in relation to closing the attainment gap. This resource will be incorporated into PEF action research in session 17-18.

#### Improvement in literacy attainment

EPS supported literacy development specifically through the evidence based interventions of Pause Prompt Praise, Wave 3 and Hi 5. EPS provided training and support with evaluation, targeted in particular at the twenty 'Closing the Gap' (CtG) schools.

*Figure 1: Impact of Literacy Interventions*

Intervention	Target Group	Impact
Wave 3	P3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>increased recognition of high frequency words</li> <li>improved spelling scores</li> <li>greater reading accuracy</li> </ul>
Hi 5	P5/6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>gains greater than 6 months in reading accuracy as a result of a 6 month intervention</li> <li>average gain 1 year 5 months</li> <li>most children showed gains greater than 6 months in reading comprehension</li> <li>average gain 5 years, 2 months</li> </ul>
	P4/5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>gains in reading accuracy, average gain 6.5 months</li> <li>gains in reading comprehension, average gain 1 year 9 months</li> </ul>
Pause Prompt Praise	Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>enhanced parental approach to reading with their child</li> <li>observed improvement in child's reading at home</li> </ul>

## Closing the poverty-related attainment gap

### 'Closing the Gap' action research

The EPS organised and delivered action research sessions for the twenty 'CtG' schools, with a view to supporting headteachers to undergo a thorough needs analysis, use their data to identify gaps for intervention, and then identify and implement evidence-based interventions. On the basis of the intervention plans produced from these sessions, schools bid for funding to take forward CtG projects. Participants reflected on the action research process as a mechanism to support them to close the attainment gap. They reported it to be a challenging but useful process, which helped them to really understand their context before intervening and ensured they were channelling their intervention efforts in the right area.

### Figure 2: Evaluative Comments on the CtG Action Research Process

*"Went with an idea, pulled back layers of the onion, realised didn't have the answer. Stopped me doing lots of things, made me focus on one"*  
*"It gave clarity to the school about what to do"*  
*"Difficulty getting focused at the start, process helped to funnel, and to focus on one particular intervention and to gather data on that"*  
*"The action research built capacity for ongoing school development and increased confidence in explaining what the school had chosen to do and why"*  
*"Process is informing improvement planning in an ongoing way"*  
*"Our knowledge about what the data told us was strengthened through the AR process, helped us to explain to staff why we are intervening in this way"*

### Pupil Equity Funding

Over the course of this session the EPS worked with ECS partners and schools to consider the likely needs of schools arising from PEF funding and planned how these needs could best be met. The EPS contributed to the PKC PEF guidelines and took a significant role in the Headteachers Day in March 17, highlighting the role of action research in promoting sustainable, evidence-based and bespoke interventions to meet the needs within a school. PEF action research sessions were delivered in May and June to coincide with school improvement planning. The EPS bolstered a 0.75 vacancy with 0.25 fixed term post in order to be able to ensure that expected increased demand for self-regulation, Wave 3, High 5 and Pause Prompt Praise could be met to support the implementation of evidence-based approaches. This has involved a recharging component for these professional development activities, applicable to those schools in receipt of PEF funding.

### Self Regulation

Professional learning opportunities in self regulation (SR) took various forms this session, including introductory training, which was rolled out to various primary and secondary schools across PKC. Various SR projects also ran in parallel across the authority this session. This included one targeting the 'CtG' agenda, another for teaching and support staff within 1 primary school, and finally three SR projects for teaching staff from individual primary schools within a school cluster.

### Figure 3: Impact on Staff of EPS SR Project Work

- Qualitative and quantitative evaluation data has indicated positive change in staff participants':
- Understanding of Executive Functions and how they contribute to children's' self-regulated behaviour.
  - Understanding of how children normally learn to self-regulate.
  - Ability to help children develop their self-regulation through routine coaching conversations, scripted conversation as part of a framework and also using visual prompts, resulting in improvements in pupils' ability to plan for and undertake independent work.
  - Ability to identify their own self-regulatory processes and explain that to others including other school staff, parents and carers.
  - Ability to plan and implement action research as part of 'Practitioner Enquiry' and to select and analyse appropriate data, document their Practitioner Enquiry and track its impact on pupil's educational experiences as well as an increase in their ability to support colleagues with Practitioner Enquiry.

Schools were required to measure the impact of their intervention, as designed through the practitioner enquiry process, and did so through qualitative and quantitative methods. Alongside this, the EPS undertook some small scale research to measure the impact of the intervention on the executive functions of the children involved in the CtG interventions. The BRIEF (Behaviour Rating Inventory of Executive Function) tool was used given its recognition in wider research literature.

BRIEF data was gathered at two time points, for a sample of around 40 primary pupils whose teachers were involved in the practitioner enquiry. The first was at the beginning of the process and the second some months after its completion. The results showed that for all pupils, overall levels of executive function improved significantly across the two time points. From further analysis, pupils from higher levels of deprivation benefited most from the intervention. Only those children from Acorn 4 and 5 showed significant improvement in emotional regulation, one of the components of executive function measured. In addition, large overall improvements in executive functions were reported for these pupils compared to medium overall effect sizes for those from lower levels of deprivation. Given the impact of executive functions on learning, the hypothesis would be that over time an impact will be seen on these children's' attainment, thus contributing to closing the attainment gap.

## Improvement in children and young people's health and wellbeing

### Critical Incidents

The PEP led a small working group, involving members of ECS, including one other EP and a representative from the voluntary sector. Critical Incident guidelines were drafted and finalised. The guidelines included a flowchart for schools around who to contact when and a suggestion for priorities for action. The guidelines were agreed by ECS Senior Management Team and the internal communications flowchart placed within ECS guidance. The guidelines were introduced at a headteachers' meeting, sent to schools and included in the administration manual for schools. Opportunities were given to comment on needs for further training and this aspect of follow-up will be taken forward next session, aligned to the work of the Schools Bereavement Project.

### **Schools Bereavement Project**

Over this session the Schools Bereavement Project, a liaison between ECS, CRUSE and NHS, has seen fluctuations in the chairing of the group, with two retirals and a further chair not being able to take up position. The group has nonetheless contributed to a short survey for schools and begun discussions with CRUSE on renewed training opportunities for grief and loss. It is envisaged that the survey, linked also to the Critical Incident Guidelines, will be completed early in session 17-18 which will then guide the work of the group as a new chairperson is found.

### **Restorative Approaches**

The EPS continued to take a leading role in authority-wide developments in restorative approaches (RA). Support for champions through training and network support was ongoing this session. Targeted training and practice sharing sessions were provided for PPSTs and PSAs, who often miss out on school-based training, as well as awareness-raising sessions for school crossing patrollers and janitorial staff. Champions reported change in attitude and practice by many teachers following training, with positive impact on relationships with young people. As a result of this attitude change, some schools are noting that behaviour management policies are incongruent with RA and looking to align them with the approach.

Development work took place to embed RA as a truly universal approach, with a short life working group of education practitioners pulling together, developing and trialling materials and approaches to involve children with additional support needs in restorative processes. These were presented to PSAs and PPSTs through 2 workshops and will be disseminated further through twilights this session. Education Scotland have offered to host the materials on the National Improvement Hub as they are seen to be of benefit to other local authorities across Scotland. This will be taken forward during session 17-18.

Local developments have been steered by the RA programme board. The Depute Principal EP was invited to be part of a national RA steering group which will provide opportunities for practice sharing and networking which will in turn benefit Perth and Kinross.

Next steps include development of information for parents, continuing to embed practice and considering further evaluation/impact measures, all via the RA Programme Board.

### **Suicide prevention**

During the course of this session, the PEP was asked to join a 'suicide contagion prevention' strategy forum, following rising concerns from the health service. This work was led by Public Health. Along with a further member from the EPS and CAMHS colleagues, discussions were had with DHTs (Support) from four identified schools with the potential for 'at risk' students. Following this information gathering exercise, it was clear that there was a wish within schools to look more closely at how 'high risk' scenarios are managed. It was therefore decided to invite two

members from each secondary school along to an initial discussion with EPS and CAMHS. A protocol for 'who to contact when' was written as part of the input and interactive discussion that took place. Feedback on this session demonstrated the value perceived in having discussions on a theme like this and a wish to carry this work forward. Plans are in place to therefore continue this work into next session, jointly with CAMHS, working to enhance capacity and address school specific needs.

### **Anxiety training**

Anxiety was identified by the Inclusion Training Group needs analysis process as a key priority for the Inclusion Service Professional Development Framework. Six 2 hour sessions were delivered jointly by EPS and CAMHS. The sessions were designed to give a broad overview of anxiety, common coping mechanisms and strategies for intervention.

#### *Figure 4: Participant evaluations of anxiety training*

*Feedback regarding what participants found helpful included:*

- *It was helpful, well delivered and interesting.*
- *Greater awareness of unhelpful behaviour towards children and how to have a helpful approach.*
- *Better understanding of anxiety symptoms and how children may display or hide this.*
- *Better understanding of the impact of stress and anxiety on the body and mind.*

*Feedback on what they would have liked included:*

- *More sessions to talk through strategies.*
- *Separate sessions for secondary to allow more context specific discussions.*
- *More opportunity for group discussion and to share ideas.*
- *Training at a more advanced level.*

Based on this evaluative feedback the next step is to deliver a more case-based session as part of the Inclusion Service Professional Development Framework using the group consultation model in 17-18.

### **Bounce Back**

Most primary schools (95%) have now been trained by EPS in Bounce Back (BB), a programme to promote resilience. This session, as well as ongoing initial training for those schools not yet involved, EPS offered support for schools to review the fidelity and effectiveness of their implementation of BB. The BB programme has been adapted for secondary school use with a view to being trialled in session 17-18. Consultation from EPS has also been requested by Early Years development teachers in relation to how BB may be implemented in preschool settings.

### **Resilience for Exams**

Building on work from the previous two sessions and evaluation feedback from young people and staff, EPS worked with support staff in two schools to build capacity to support young people in relation to exam anxiety. In one school, materials were jointly produced and then delivered by school staff to senior pupils

through personal support and social education, thus increasing the reach of the intervention. Curricular coverage in session 17-18 will take into account feedback from the pilot. Following these sessions, a small group of young people were offered more intensive and focused group support, by the EP and PT SfL. Young people noted that these were helpful as they learned how to relax, learned how to manage their thoughts, and generally how to cope with the pressure of exams. They felt the intervention would make a difference to them as they realised that other young people felt the same as them and that they now had strategies to help remain calm. Comments on improving the sessions centred on timing and number of sessions, and this will be taken into account for future planning. In another secondary school, materials were developed for implementation in personal support sessions, as an alternative to small group intervention.

### **Secondary Mental Health and Wellbeing**

Over the course of 16-17 discussion was had with target secondary schools over the potential to pilot secondary sector resilience work; unfortunately, for this session, work was not taken forward. The Secondary Bounce Back materials were however reviewed and updated. The PEP also took the work into the needs analysis and discussions to inform the writing of a Health and Wellbeing strategy.

## **Service Improvement**

### **Inclusion Service Working Groups**

There were four working group projects conducted across EPS and the Inclusion Team.

#### **LA/AC children and young people**

This group sought to clarify processes and roles in respect of specialist outwith placements and LA/AC children and young people. Links were made to Inclusion Management discussions with colleagues from the Children, Young People and Families service. Outcomes have included the EASO finalising procedures for review of requests for funding for LA/AC children and young people placed in other authorities, the agreement of EP and EASO roles around this population and the outline of duties for the EP acting as 'Education Reviewing Officer' for children and young people placed in specialist outwith placements under ASL legislation.

The EPS has a clear system of allocation of Reviewing Officers and educational links to social work for review of educational needs for LA/AC children and young people placed in specialist outwith placements for care reasons. Key education-based questions have also been drafted for review of these children and young people.

### **Inclusion Service Support for Schools**

The aim of the group was to produce a clear Inclusion Service support structure that assists schools to better communicate with families and improve wellbeing outcomes for children and young people.



Guidance was created to clarify roles and responsibilities within the Inclusion Service and to support effective partnership working. In addition, prompt questions accompanying the stages of intervention were created to support schools in planning effective support. This has been shared across the Inclusion Service and edit suggestions were incorporated. Next steps will be sharing the edited version internally and then with schools.

### **Inclusion Training Group**

The Inclusion Training Group prepared three in-service days of professional learning opportunities linked to the Inclusion Service Professional Development Framework and in response to a needs analysis with PSAs and PPSTs. EPS was represented on this group and made a significant contribution to workshop delivery to support the framework, including opportunities in Restorative Approaches, inclusive practice and supporting young people with anxiety. Further workshops are being planned for session 17-18 based on feedback and a renewed needs analysis process.

### **Inclusive Practice**

The focus of this group was on developing practice and confidence among school staff regarding inclusion at universal level. This work included consultation with our link officer from Education Scotland. The group researched a range of audit tools, became more familiar with ABLe (Addressing Barriers to Learning) as a resource to support classroom practice and developed a training package. This was piloted with two groups of PSAs and PPSTs on the April 17 INSET day. Based on evaluative feedback from those workshops, next steps in 17-18 include:

- Wider dissemination, by providing more workshops, e.g.
  - PPSTs (use as part of group consultation)
  - Learning hub twilights for class teachers/secondary support staff
- Awareness raising of ABLe as an inclusive practice tool via HT/DHT/PT meetings
- Promotion of ABLe through our casework with school practitioners

### **EPS Processes**

#### **Practice guidelines**

The EPS is seeking to review and update all relevant external and internal guidance. Practice Guidelines are written as internal guidance to promote a quality and consistency of practice. Over the course of this session two key areas were reviewed, that of assessment and reporting and of record keeping and information sharing. This process will continue in 17-18.

#### **Twitter**

During 16-17 the EPS commenced a Twitter account. Cognisance was taken of PKC social media guidance and of that produced by the British Psychological Society. The aims of a Twitter presence are to publicise the work of the service to promote future engagement and to share good educational and psychological practice and research with followers.



## Website

An overhaul of the EPS website was completed this session to support effective service delivery to stakeholders by keeping viewers up to date with the role of the Educational Psychologist, key documents, contact & other useful information and current EPS developments.

## Information sharing

EPS reviewed their information sharing practice at a CPD day, in the light of the Perth and Kinross Code of Practice: Information Sharing, Confidentiality and Consent document. Practice-related questions were subsequently the basis for a professional discussion with Legal Services and EPS guidelines in this area were drafted as a result.

## Electronic filing

A batch of EPS case files was scanned in Spring 17 and the remaining files prepared for scanning in August. CCM training has been provided for the team and once the necessary admin training and preparation has taken place EPS will adopt an electronic filing/casefile records management system. Once this is in place, duplication of effort should be minimised and casefile management should be a more efficient and user friendly system.

## Stakeholder and evaluation work

### Engagement

A key area of the Validated Self Evaluation (VSE) inspection the EPS underwent in 2016 was the recognised need to further develop a transparent and implementation science-based approach to the negotiation of key pieces of authority-wide intervention. The aim was to ensure that the EPS is able to prioritise for its most effective contribution and ensure best practice around evaluation and sustainability planning. During this session a small working group developed and began to pilot a project engagement tool.

### Group consultation to small schools

Through VSE, it was identified that small schools perceived the value and impact of the service similarly to that of larger schools but that small schools had different 'felt' needs. An agreed outcome of this process was to pilot the use of group consultation with small schools throughout the 16-17 session in order to deliver an effective but time efficient service to small schools. Termly sessions (3) at the end of the day (4.30-6pm) were planned and all small schools (with a roll of <100=33) were invited to attend at a central Perth venue. Two attendees signed up for the first session, however they did not attend on the day. The subsequent two sessions were cancelled due to lack of interest. Informal feedback from small school headteachers indicated interest in group consultation but that the central location was not ideal for those who had to travel considerable distance to attend.

The action for next session is to pilot group consultation to small schools based on locality model for 17-18 (possible cross cluster working with other EPs). This forum will be trialled as the main point of contact for consultation between small school headteachers and the EPS.

### Evaluation of outcome and impact of casework

Samples of casework were tracked for outcomes and evaluative feedback was gathered from key partners (parents, child/young person and professionals) on process as well as impact and outcome. A key theme continued to be supporting parental and school staff understanding of additional support needs, with developing the child's wellbeing and support for transition/identifying appropriate educational placement also key aims of casework. Evaluation of the casework *process* included appreciation of collaborative working with EPs as professionals external to the school, often in relation to bringing a different perspective, as well as providing an emotionally safe environment for young people, support and reassurance for parents, and a useful summary of the child's profile as part of the assessment process.

#### Figure 5: Casework outcomes

- *Identification of next steps for supporting a child or young person*
- *Improved relationships in school*
- *Improved emotional wellbeing for the young person.*
- *Improved engagement with school.*
- *Additional support needs being met more effectively.*
- *Development of skills and strategies*
- *Increased capacity of adults to understand and support the young person*

EP reflections on factors affecting the outcomes of casework included the reviewing officer role, and stakeholder readiness for engagement in casework.

### Consultation outcome and impact

EPs recorded consultations by school (defined as those consultations which were not part of casework and not part of a meeting such as an ITM, where large numbers of children and young people are discussed). There were a total of 491 consultations (for 15-16, the figure was 477) recorded across primary schools, secondary schools, specialist provisions, partner provider nurseries and Perth College. These involved 341 children and young people (15-16, 365). In the primary sector, the number of consultations per school ranged from 0-26, about up to 19 children and young people. In the secondary sector, the range was 0-42, about up to 27 young people. The average number of consultations in primary schools was six (15-16, 6), about five different children (15-16, 5). In the secondary sector, the average was seventeen (15-16, 12), about eleven young people (15-16, 6). Issues brought for consultation included emotional wellbeing, aggression, attendance, social communication and specific learning difficulties. There was a theme about the impact of parental mental health, substance misuse, domestic violence and incarceration.

The most commonly reported immediate impact of consultation was that consultees felt they were able formulate a plan following the discussion. Consultees also reported that the consultation had increased their understanding of the situation and reframed the problem.

Figure 6: Evaluation of the process of consultation

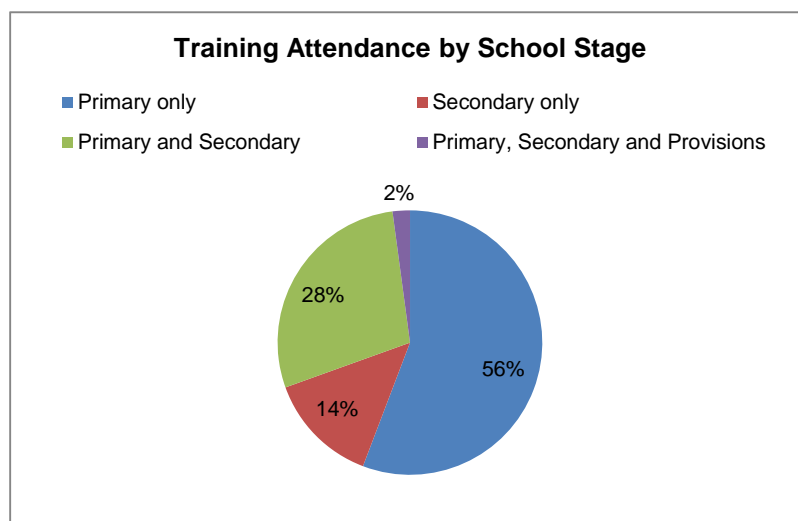
- The process of consultation was valued in particular for:
- Providing a time to reflect
  - The opportunity to talk through concerns honestly and feel listened to
  - Highlighting the wider context
  - Identifying what is going well as well as the concerns
  - Contributing to planning
  - Sharing a different perspective and knowledge

### Professional Learning Opportunities

The EPS delivered 30 training events over 66 sessions throughout 16-17. This is a significant increase from the previous 15-16 session (18) and can be accounted for by the continued development of restorative approaches and self-regulation, together with a new focus on action research to support closing the attainment gap, training in evidence-based interventions to support closing the gap, and support for the Inclusion Service Professional Development Framework. Training events were delivered by EPs individually (47%) and in collaboration with other EPs, as well as with a variety of partners (53%) including parents, school management, CAMHS, RA Consultants and Pupil Support Teachers.

Self Regulation (8), Resilience & Wellbeing (7) and Restorative Approaches (7) continued to be predominant themes for training. Throughout 16-17, EPS delivered introductory and refresher training sessions to school staff to support the ongoing implementation of Bounce Back primary schools. Also, two EPs collaborated with CAMHS to deliver training to primary and secondary support staff to increase confidence in supporting wellbeing and reduce anxiety in school.

All training events involved a local audience. The majority of training events (93%) were delivered to school staff although Education Managers, Education Support Officers, Speech and Language Therapists, Community Link Workers, parents, school crossing patrollers and janitorial staff also participated. Attendance at EPS training events varied across educational stage (see below for more information) with the majority of training received by staff in the Primary sector (87%).



Evaluation of training is built into the sessions, either by EPS or partnership agencies. Evaluation addresses whether agreed outcomes have been achieved, the likely impact from the training and whether further support is required. Overall, EPS training was rated very favourably with most individual training objectives being achieved.

#### *Figure 7: Evaluations of EPS professional learning opportunities*

*Participants valued:*

- *“Being able to understand the approaches and gain ideas of how to implement these within the class room and school environment”*
- *having “a far better understanding of what self-regulation is about and some strategies for helping children in class”*
- *“Sharing experiences with other teachers – listening to what they are doing”*
- *“The relaxed atmosphere and freedom to ask questions”*
- *Stimulation to “re-focus, think about my practice”*
- *“Time to discuss with peers and reflect on how to move forward with Bounce Back”*

#### *Figure 8: Next steps identified as a result of professional learning opportunities*

*Training often led to the formulation of a clear plan of what actions they would take next in their setting:*

- *“Support my dept. to trial an area of peer tutoring”*
- *“Continue to use Restorative Approaches and use it more confidently and be able to deliver to other members of staff”*
- *“Read over notes, study slides. Set up a plan of training to staff. Evaluate how we are doing once everyone has been trained”*

#### **Feedback from establishments - evaluation of service delivery to schools 2016-17**

Towards Easter, educational establishments were sent a ‘survey monkey’ questionnaire to gain evaluative feedback on service delivery, to aid planning both at a service level and for individual school working. In the previous session feedback had been gained by a semi-structured formative discussion and for this year it was planned as a survey, to give establishments an opportunity to feedback in a different format, since it is recognised that this can produce different responses. Questions were worded to ensure the same rating scales as previous years and also revised following feedback from previous surveys.

Establishments were asked to consider all aspects of EPS service delivery, covering aspects beyond the role of the link EP.

#### **Respondent information**

Completed evaluations were received from three specialist establishments, 28 primaries and 3 secondary schools, a lower coverage than when interviews are undertaken.

#### **Evaluation aims**

The aims of the evaluation were to answer the questions:

- How much of a difference did EPS involvement make?

- How much was the work valued?
- How satisfied were establishments with communication?
- What if anything needs to be different to improve effectiveness?
- Any comment about management of absence?

There was a further aim for schools to note any relevant aspects of their Improvement Plan they wished to discuss with EPS.

#### *How much of a difference did EPS involvement make?*

55.5% of respondents rated the difference as being 4 or 5 out of a 5 point rating scale (where 5 is high). *“Staff involved in consultations have benefited from strategies and resources to support children with anxiety and responsibility issues. This is beginning to have an impact on the children involved.” “Excellent input”*. There was also however a theme of absence impacting upon potential impact.

#### *How much was the work valued?*

85% of respondents rated the value as being 4 or 5 out of 5. *“Professional dialogue’, “The expertise and focus of another professional was great”, “Support with family with children with ASN as it has been an on-going source of stress and workload. Support and advice has been invaluable”*. The value of authority wide interventions such as Restorative Approaches and self-regulation are mentioned here. The primary theme however is one of the impact of support through the consultation service to the ‘every day’ work done in schools.

#### *How satisfied were establishments with communication?*

67% rated communication as 4 or 5 out of 5. It is clear however that there was less satisfaction than last year and that there has been an impact through absence and cover arrangements. There is an inevitable loss of knowledge concerning a child/family in such instances. Where it works well, regular planning and reviewing meetings with a key person in school is helpful. This is an area that the EPS will pay particular attention to over the coming session.

#### *What if anything needs to be different to improve effectiveness?*

Around two thirds of respondents chose to comment on this. Most comments were about the desire for more time, which would be used for early intervention, school improvement or systemic developments and engagement around individual pupils. There was a recognition that absence had impacted upon the time available.

#### *Any comment about reduced capacity and absence management?*

Again around two-thirds chose to comment, some referring to what they had stated earlier about a desire for more time. Some schools stating no impact, others noting impact on relationships and therefore support to staff and ‘wait times’ for meetings. Most acknowledging the difficulties and understanding the ‘stretch’ but also a theme about wanting to see delivery that is effective as possible – suggestions, ‘floating EP’ and termly group meetings.

There was one further comment to emphasise the impact of absence, another about the value in training on effective teaching approaches to build capacity. Most chose to use this opportunity to emphasise the value placed on the service and the perceived worth of a consistent link EP.

### **Partnership working with CAMHS**

During 16-17 the PEP met with the lead clinical psychologist from CAMHS and ways of enhancing working relationships were discussed. It was agreed to bring the teams together to hear about roles and areas of work in order to look for appropriate opportunities for effective joint practice and set the scene for a cross-service practice agreement. Before this event took place collaborative working did evolve naturally through the suicide prevention work mentioned above. In May the two full teams met. Presentations were given on ways of working and theory bases along with the chance to network across teams. It was agreed that this was an important and useful first step and that from this more could be done with schools to clarify the respective roles and aim to reduce inappropriate referrals to CAMHS. It was also agreed to seek further pieces of joint work and a drafting of a practice agreement in 17-18.

### **Capacity for Improvement**

Session 16-17 was a year of significant absence for the EPS, at a time when the service was also adjusting to reduced capacity. When service delivery is highly valued and recognised as making a difference, as the evaluation data here shows, it is to be expected that stakeholders notice an operational impact. The EPS will continue to review service delivery for the most effective methods, along with reviewing how it manages absence.

It is important that a focus can be maintained on the most vulnerable children and young people and key decision making points. It was equally critical to continue work across the Inclusion Service to improve mechanisms for this work, such as clarity of role and expectations, to ensure a foundation for effective mainstream practice. Likewise, the EPS, in times of absence must still ensure that initiatives impacting on wider pupil populations and staff skills can be maintained. Largely systemic work continued to be maintained, demonstrating an ability to prioritise and respond flexibly, but strategically, to changing demands. The EPS has continued to work to the principle of utilising feedback to review and adjust where appropriate, this year this included a formal questionnaire for all schools, specifically asking about impact on school based delivery. The learning from this review will be taken forward over 17-18 and includes the principle of planned meeting or contact points for all schools. This and the focus on full and permanent recruitment for 17-18 are two indicators of on-going capacity for improvement for the EPS.

### **Summary**

During the session 16-17, the EPS has continued to engage in a wide range of development work in response to local and national priorities, with work in the area of Restorative Approaches and self-regulation highly valued. Initial evaluation of the self-regulation work was able to demonstrate an enhanced impact for children from areas of deprivation. This work has continued despite the adversity and staff absence experienced. Schools did notice an impact on service delivery as a result of absence and some areas of work such as strategic support for parenting were unable to be taken forward. At the same time, the link educational psychologist role

remained highly valued with evaluated differences for children and young people noted in improved wellbeing, engagement and attendance.

There has also been a continued focus on supporting more positive outcomes for our most vulnerable children. The 'Education Reviewing Officer' role for children and young people placed in outwith authority provision has become more formalised and while it can be time and resource intensive, provides an additional quality control and safeguarding mechanism for those young people who often have the most significant needs. The current context has required the consideration of creative means of responding to demands on the service and supporting innovative interventions, such as a recharging model and group consultation for small schools. These will be reviewed in terms of their impact and effectiveness during session 17-18.

While the service has historically had a strong focus on the promotion of emotional wellbeing and resilience, there is a growing emphasis on mental health and adverse childhood experiences across the country that EPS will continue to keep abreast of and respond. The creation of the Tayside Collaborative has strengthened pre-existing links across the three Tayside EPSs, and exploration of what value can be added by collaborating across the services will be explored further moving forward.