

Aberdeenshire Educational Psychology Service Position document and practice guidelines

CORPORATE PARENTING - SUPPORTING LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AND OTHER VULNERABLE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

CORPORATE PARENTING

'Corporate parenting means the formal and local partnerships needed between all local authority departments and services, and associated agencies, who are responsible for working together to meet the needs of looked after children and young people, and care leavers.'

*Looked After Children and Young People: We Can and Must Do Better,
Scottish Executive*

Position Statement

Aberdeenshire Educational Psychology Service acknowledges the importance of effective partnership working, both with and relating to vulnerable children and young people. The service has an important role to play in contributing to the delivery of integrated services and child-centred collaborative planning, and in the evaluation of effectiveness and impact. All five core functions of an Educational Psychology Service, as defined by the *Currie report, (Review of Provision of Educational Psychology Services in Scotland 2002)*, are relevant in such work.

LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

Looked After Children (LAC) is a growing and particularly vulnerable group that includes Looked After and Accommodated Children (LAAC), as well as children who are looked after at home. (These groups are referred to hereafter within this document either as Looked After Children or LAC)

The needs of this group were highlighted in the HMIE Report, Missing Out (June 2006) which emphasised their low attainment and the effect of this on post school outcomes. Recent strategy papers (Looked After Children and Young People – We Can and Must Do Better, These Are Our Bairns, More Choices More Chances (MC²), The Educational outcomes of Scotland's Looked After Children and Young People – An new reporting framework, (2009) and GIRFEC) all aim to promote and develop integrated collaborative delivery of services to this group.

The ASL act (2009) notes the “presumption that a looked after child will have additional support needs”

OTHER VULNERABLE INDIVIDUALS

In addition to Looked After Children, other groups of vulnerable individuals should be considered and emphasised, as appropriate, in planning the delivery of integrated, collaborative services. Such groups may appropriately include young carers, children and young people who are at risk of having negative post school destinations; (More Choices, More Chances) and adopted children and young people.

ROLE OF THE EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY SERVICES

EPs are well placed to help to make a difference and to apply positive psychology to help this group of vulnerable children and young people to maximise their achievements and attainments. The Educational Psychology Service can work at different levels with Looked after Children.

- Individual child and family
- Establishment
- CSN
- Local Authority

Work at these levels is carried out through our 5 core functions as defined in the Currie report; (Review of Provision of Educational Psychology Services in Scotland 2002),

- Consultation
- Research
- Intervention
- Assessment
- training

Those working with Looked after Children should have an awareness and understanding of the theoretical constructs underpinning the emotional development and the difficulties experienced by these children and young people.

The British Psychological Society has produced a draft protocol for EP services as a guide for best practice in their work. This clarifies EP practice and responsibilities and helps to establish consistency through nationally agreed practice guidelines. The research and psychological theory that underpins psychological practice emphasises attachment theory, resilience, children's social and emotional development and well-being, and communicating with children.

It is recognised that early intervention work is crucial for supporting the development of healthy attachments in vulnerable families. This should be part of the Early Years strategy that is currently being developed by Aberdeenshire EL&L and partner agencies, including the EPS.

ABERDEENSHIRE EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY SERVICE

In response to the national recognition of need, Aberdeenshire EPS has clarified roles and responsibilities in relation to the different levels of working.

Aberdeenshire EPS has created a designated post at Senior Practitioner level for looked after/adopted children. This person has relevant knowledge of:

- Current legislation
- Child protection
- Review processes
- Research

The responsibilities of the designated Senior Practitioner include:

- Continuous improvement in terms of consistency of practice in relation to LAC across the service
- Taking the lead on professional development for the service on issues relevant to LAC such as attachment, resilience and loss.

Within their allocated schools/network each EP will:

- draw on knowledge and understanding of theories of attachment and resilience to inform assessment and intervention.
- be involved in the identification of vulnerable families within their network and to develop appropriate early interventions with partner agencies which may lead to multi-agency IAF action planning. In accordance with the ethos of "The Educational outcomes of Scotland's Looked After Children and Young People – An new reporting framework,(2009)", EPs will seek to work collaboratively with schools and other agencies to plan interventions at the levels of "individual child and family, establishment, CSN and local authority", on the basis of data gathered through the reporting framework.
- ensure that LAC pupils are highlighted in the planning process with all schools.
- liaise with staff in schools with specific responsibility for LAC to ensure they have information and an understanding of local resources and issues.
- ensure LAC is a standing item on the agenda of planning meetings in school.
- be involved in transition planning with carers, school, social work and partner agencies for all changes of placement, attending transition meetings as appropriate.
- help schools understand how they can promote resilience for all pupils.
- be involved in developing personal learning plans for LAC alongside other professionals.
- ensure there is early intervention with carers and that carers have sufficient information about the EPS and how to access the service.

Whenever possible, EPs will either attend or provide information for meetings relating to looked after children and young people; such as LAC reviews, transition planning and other meetings as appropriate. EPs may, on occasion, liaise with colleagues in other agencies such as SWD, in order to ensure that

EP attendance at such reviews is purposeful rather than habitual. The role of the Educational Psychologist may be one in which schools and other agencies and individuals are supported, through the consultation model of service delivery, in working with looked after children and young people.

COLLABORATIVE WORKING

The EP's contribution to the IAF process and children's services planning helps to ensure that the needs of these vulnerable young people are met.

EPs and other agencies work together to promote inclusive practice. It is desirable to meet children's needs locally. When this is not achievable, EPs have an important role, along with Social Work and Q.I.Os to find an appropriate placement or package for individual children. Effective collaboration of the 'team around the child' will ensure that their care, health and education needs are being met. The team around the child has a collective role to play in monitoring and reviewing these placements.

Discussions at Authority level regarding shared data systems with other agencies are ongoing.

SUPPORTING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT / TRAINING / PROJECT WORK

Joint training initiatives which help develop a shared understanding of what constitutes educational success for looked after children are essential. One aspect of this includes joint project work aimed at improving outcomes for LAC. One forum in which this could effectively take place would be via the Community Schools Networks (CSN).

EPs are well placed to:

- disseminate relevant research and information about national initiatives and examples of good practice.
- support the professional development of school staff with LAC responsibility regarding the impact of attachment and implications for learning and teaching.
- involve and include carers and partner agencies in personal learning planning and raising educational expectations.
- provide opportunities for consultation and joint working with adults supporting LAC and young people.

Examples of possible joint project work include projects aimed at:

- improving school attendance
- reducing school exclusions
- developing effective behaviour strategies
- enhancing well-being
- promoting achievement via appropriate curriculum and support
- helping with homework and supporting carers about homework
- developing after school activities to stimulate, engage and build self-esteem.
- supporting transitions

EVALUATION

Research to evaluate the impact of collaborative working, consistent EP practice around LAC and joint training with other agencies involved will be necessary to inform appropriate targets and longer term outcomes for LAC.

When planning an evaluation the following could be included:

- short term measures to inform specific targets
- long term strategies to consider outcomes over a period of time
- collaborative working and its effectiveness across agencies
- qualitative and quantitative aspects of intervention
- formative evaluation to aid forward planning

Evaluative processes should include views from all stakeholders, including children and young people, parents and carers, as well as colleagues in other agencies.