

Middlesbrough Psychology Service's report to The Council's Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel's review of Mental Health in Schools

18th February 2019

1. How have schools become associated with mental health and emotional well-being agendas and what has been the link with Educational Psychologists (EPs)?

Schools and EPs have a history of supporting pupil outcomes beyond the confines of academic attainment. The origins of this can be seen in initiative such as:

- **Education Priority Areas** (1960s) and **Education Action Zones** (1998) introduced by the Labour government in 1998. EAZs brought together a group of schools with parents, community groups and businesses and aimed to attract sponsorship and investment from the private sector. The action was targeted at areas with high levels of deprivation. The policy was not deemed a great success, attracting limited sponsorship and achieving disappointing improvements, and was not continued beyond its initial 5 year term. Many areas employed EPs or assistant EPs.
- **Behaviour Education Support Team (BEST)** initiatives set up as multi agency (education, health and care) teams to support attendance, behaviour and emotional well-being. Many BEST areas, including Middlesbrough, employed EPs or assistant EPs until the end of dedicated funding in 2006. The evaluation indicated that,

“Local authorities could consider how this initial development work can be built upon, in order to reap the benefits of the resources invested in BESTs so far. Furthermore, with the end of dedicated funding in 2006, local areas may also need to give further attention to how the working practices, impacts and ethos of BESTs can be perpetuated, for the benefit of children, families and schools”.

- **Every Child Matters** (2004): Being Healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contributions, achieving economic well-being). The language very explicitly moves beyond the attainment agenda and re-positions schools' as having roles as partners in the corporate parenting agenda (see Appendix 1 for explicit cross-referencing to aspects of mental health and emotional well-being).
- **Targeted Mental Health in Schools** (2008-2011). The wording of this initiative makes explicit the focus on mental health and emotional well-being and the direct connection with schools. This government policy initiative was funded by DfE and its predecessor (DCSF). The programme formed part of the Government's wider programme of work developed to improve the psychological wellbeing and mental health of children, young people and their families. The aim was to develop innovative, **locally determined models** to provide early intervention and targeted support for children (aged 5 to 13 years) at risk of developing mental health problems and their families. TaMHS supported the duty of schools to promote pupils' well-being and built on existing universal work in schools to promote pupils' social and emotional development. For instance, TaMHS built on the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) programme, which could be run by school staff. Many areas employed or seconded EPs and assistant EPs for the duration of this initiative. In Middlesbrough, a full time EP was allocated to the multi- agency TAMHs initiative. This contribution and work stream came to an end along with the end of the funding.
- **Life after TaMHS** - From 2011, the new DfE Early Intervention Grant (EIG) brought together funding (£2.2bn in 2011-12) for early intervention and preventative services for children, young people and families. This included funding which, based on their local priorities, LAs could use to

provide early intervention and targeted support for children at risk of developing mental health problems and their families. In addition DfE was to provide support to build the capacity of the voluntary and community sector to support early intervention in mental health (DfE, 2011).

- The non-statutory document *Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools (2018)* highlights a range of key points and principles that schools should follow in relation to their responsibilities towards mental health and how they effectively identify and assessment mental health needs. Funding for this is not attached. EPs support schools to achieve many of those aims as highlighted in the following sections. The Middlesbrough Psychology Service’s framework for delivery reflects the British Psychology Service guidelines which supports a model of “contextualised assessment” with a focus on application and intervention and a strong emphasis upon assessment as an ongoing and collaborative process, linked to a cycle of planning, intervention and review.

The remit of EPs in the domain of emotional well- being is captured here in the DfES definition of EP Services,

“Educational Psychology Services promote learning, attainment and the **healthy emotional development** of children and young people aged 0–19¹, through the application of psychology, by working with early years settings, schools (and other education providers), children and their families, other local authority officers, practitioners, and other agencies. (DfES, 2005, p. 1, para.1)”

And more recently in the Division of Educational and Child Psychology ‘Guide for commissioners of educational psychology services’ (British Psychology Society, December 2018),

“EPs apply their knowledge and understanding of psychological theory and research to promote inclusion, learning, social and behavioural development and the **emotional wellbeing of children and young people, and the adults who care and work with them**. They work with individuals, groups, and communities and at organisational levels usually within schools but sometimes elsewhere with individuals. EPs can help promote the development of school staff knowledge and understanding and their capacity for reflective practice, thus improving the quality of teaching and pupil support. They can also support parent, carers and other adults working with children and young people. EPs can help all pupils, and particularly those with special educational needs, to achieve more and **develop good psychological health**”.

Following the austerity measures since 2010, EP activities in many services have been constricted to the statutory² functions they perform on behalf of the local authority. This has led to a narrower understanding of the role and potential contribution of EPs than the broader descriptions of the EP role captured here. Opportunities to work at early intervention, preventative and strategic levels in support of local priorities have been dependent upon the development of traded services. This is the case in Middlesbrough.

¹ With changes to the legislation and code of practice, the age range has increased to the age of 25 years.

² Statutory duties include: providing a contribution to the statutory assessment process to identify a child or young person’s special educational needs and the educational support that would best meet those needs; monitoring the progress of pupils with Education and Health Care Plans through the statutory Annual Review process; and providing specialist advice and support to a range of professionals including school staff as well as parents and carers etc., on meeting the needs of children/young people Education and Health Care Plans.

2. How do Educational Psychologists raise awareness and improve knowledge of mental health issues amongst school staff and support schools to raise awareness of mental health

EPs are highly trained and are often perceived and positioned as a specialist service to turn to once situations or circumstances escalate. They do, however, discharge their specialist skills at the 'Universal Plus' level and have a role at the level of **early identification and prevention**.

Through the application of psychological theory we can support schools to:

- create safe, calm environments where problems are less likely to emerge;
- analyse their own 'corporate intelligence' to develop whole school policies and guidance around pastoral care and behaviour management;
- assist schools in the application of tools to analyse behaviour data to better understand triggers and to deploy quality first teaching approaches;
- develop schools' curriculum offer around emotional wellbeing, thereby equipping pupils to be resilient, including teaching pupils about mental health through the curriculum;
- undertake action research to explore the emotional well-being of their pupil and staff populations to inform system level changes;
- recognise emerging issues as early and accurately as possible through our consultative framework – staff can raise children and young people for discussion at any point throughout the year- the EP service as a consultative service therefore does not hold 'waiting lists', rather children and young people can be prioritised;
- capacity build school staff (teachers, teaching assistants, dinner supervisors) as their own in-house resource through the provision of training on diverse topics; and
- make timely, appropriately detailed and evidence informed onward referrals to specialist mental health services.

3. An overview of how Educational Psychologists work collaboratively with schools to identify and support pupils with mental health needs.

In contrast to the varying practice of sole traders working within Middlesbrough, staff working within the council's psychology service all operate within an agreed framework for delivery. The Middlesbrough Psychology Service operates within a Consultative framework.

The principles behind the Middlesbrough Psychology Service framework for delivery:

- align with ethical service delivery considerations;
- align with procedural aspects and requirements highlighted in the SEND reforms; and
- emphasise the application of psychological theory (both evidence-based and practice-based evidence).

There are **benefits** of operating within a Consultative Framework. The use of a Consultative framework:

- supports appropriate identification of required involvement within a particular school / context and therefore the best / most appropriate use of resources;
- facilitates early identification, with schools / settings being able to use the Initial Consultation level to raise any child at any time;
- has a clear focus on action planning, evaluating work undertaken and evidencing the school / setting's graduated response;
- provides capacity building and CPD opportunities for staff;
- allows relationship building and clear communication with multi-agency partners;
- develops rich, contextualised understandings of children and young people; and

- provides a vehicle for meaningful child-centred planning.

Operationally this framework means the service would begin a contract by holding a start of year planning meeting with the appropriate school staff. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss and negotiate the work to be undertaken over the following term / year. Work prioritised could include psychological work at the strategic level of the whole school (such as training or policy development), the small group level (delivering and evaluating projects and conducting research), and the individual pupil level (usually consultation and assessment).

In considering individual pupil priorities, the time available to the school will need to be taken into account. Examples of those groups of children we expect to be prioritised by all schools with whom we work include those:

- where a request for statutory assessment is being considered;
- with an EHC Plan at points of transition e.g. key stage to key stage, and primary to secondary phase;
- with an SEN Support Plan and are considered vulnerable at primary-secondary transfer;
- annual EHC Plan reviews;
- who may require alternative provision e.g. placement planning requests, Base or Speech and Language Unit requests (where there are deadlines for application);
- at risk of placement breakdown e.g. fixed term exclusions, permanent exclusion; NEETS;
- identified as having significant, complex needs and who are not making adequate progress;
- accepted on the multi-agency diagnostic pathway for autism; and
- children who are Looked After.

To support the prioritisation process, a number of children can be discussed at an Initial Consultation level, where only limited and non-identifying information is shared. This level of consultation allows problem solving for a larger number of children, and helps the school / setting to order their priorities and plan for other, appropriate measures where EP involvement is not agreed. This supports schools to make the best use of EP time, and feel confident that they have action plans in place for a wider cohort of children / young people. There is no waiting list for children / young people waiting to see EPs.

Where the Initial Consultation identifies pupils as immediate priorities, the school / setting is committing to an 'assessment- plan-do-review' cycle of EP involvement, which harnesses the expertise and knowledge of staff, families and partner services. EP involvement begins with a Consultation attended by relevant school staff, family, and other involved partners. This meeting is facilitated and recorded by the EP. It has a clear focus on exploring the current concerns, identifying existing strengths, and formulating an action plan. Further direct work by the EP may, or may not, be part of the action plan. A Consultation Review meeting is subsequently held to evaluate the impact of the action taken and agree next steps. The requirement for further EP involvement is negotiated at that Consultation Review meeting.

Within the Consultative Framework it is possible to negotiate a range of professional activities including:

- providing psychological consultation and advice;
- conducting psychological assessments using a range of methods to inform intervention;
- using psychological interventions to promote the psychological well-being, social, emotional and behavioural development in children and young people;
- delivering professional development and training to support the learning of others in the application of psychological skills, knowledge, practices and procedures; and
- conducting psychological research and evaluation.

4. Information on the advice, psychological support and interventions provided by Educational Psychologists.

Within the council's core offer, EP work includes assessment of social, emotional, and mental health needs and the recommendation of strategies, resources and provision. We have also provided a crisis response service to settings, and strategic planning on topics such as suicide and foetal alcohol spectrum disorders.

The current work commissioned through Alternative Provision (AP) has included work over a range of levels:

- capacity building of school staff through the delivery of ELSA training (Emotional Literacy Support Assistant) and provides ongoing psychological supervision of those who have successfully completed the training;
- pupil inclusion panel processes and developing local practice around managed moves; and
- direct work around vulnerable pupils at risk of exclusion accessing AP.

Within the Migrant Project, EPs have devised and delivered capacity building training to school staff working with migrant families harnessing the local agreement to adopt restorative practices.

EPs have also delivered post diagnostic (ASD) support (Early Bird Plus) to settings and families in partnership with the Speech and Language Therapy Service.

Work to schools through the traded service means that negotiated work is bespoke to the needs of individual settings and could include: psychological work at the strategic level of the whole school (such as training or policy development), the small group level (delivering and evaluating projects and conducting research), and the individual pupil level (consultation and assessment).

Within the traded offer, we could provide a range of other work. Some examples include:

- Risk and Resilience training and profiling
- Analysis of behaviour that challenges
- Attachment and relationship based approaches
- Teacher stress training
- Managing exam pressures
- Psychological supervision of staff in partner agencies
- Emotional regulation
- Therapeutic listening
- Therapeutic story writing
- Understanding the teenage years
- Communicating with teenagers
- FRIENDS
- VIG and VERP approaches

5. An outline of how more effective joint working between schools and Educational Psychologists could be supported.

Not all schools currently purchase their EP time from the council's traded service. Some purchase time solely from private practitioners and others purchase time concurrently from both the Middlesbrough Psychology Service and private practitioners. The council's service has no jurisdiction over the work of private practitioners. The work of EPs employed by the council and schools would be supported through:

- continuing to develop our service' reach so that schools increasingly purchase EP time from us, not private providers/ sole traders;
- schools buying sufficient time / a level of service that allows for regular visits to develop both an understanding of the setting and the relationship with the setting. Service level agreements at no less than half termly are more conducive in developing that working knowledge and relationship
- natural healing time – schools have told us what they have missed during the period of service decline, 2010 to 2017: containment; advice; sign posting; training; and capacity building. Their confidence in what they are doing has been affected and this will take time to re-establish;
- bulk or block purchasing of EP time (rather than hopes of 'on spot purchasing' for 'one off' assessments mid commissioning cycle); and
- cycles of regular planning meetings with schools that invite and involve staff from partner agencies.

The council's service has developed a professional structure supportive of career progression to ensure succession planning within the service. We also support the grass roots development of the profession through our recruitment and retention strategy and close links with Newcastle University, the local training provider for Educational Psychology. The aim of this work is to promote Middlesbrough as an attractive service in which to work, and ensure a supply of qualified staff.

6. It would also be helpful if the scrutiny panel was informed of which schools the Council's Educational Psychologists are currently supporting.

We currently provide services to:

- any setting where a statutory assessment of Education, Health and Care needs has been initiated;
- specialist settings (time depending on capacity and statutory demand);
- settings where Middlesbrough have commissioned places (i.e. High Needs Bases) (time depending on capacity and statutory demand); and
- settings which purchase EP time – during this, our first year as a traded service, we have delivered a service to 22 Middlesbrough schools, 2 Redcar schools, The Virtual School, Alternative Provision and the Migrant Project.

7. The Vision and Direction for the Middlesbrough Psychology Service

- Currently comprising EPs and TEPs, the service aspires to develop an enduring structure enabling it to be recognised as and function as a community resource and a professional partner to local area partners.
- We want to develop a robust regional staffing structure which continues to move the emphasis from an assessment based model of service delivery to an intervention and prevention based model, which centres on early intervention and improving outcomes for children and young people. The framework aims to deliver both bespoke setting specific interventions as identified through consultation and planning with those individual settings, and to also contribute towards local area strategic priorities.
- The aspiration is for the newly developing service to closely align with other pupil support services within the Children's Service Directorate. The service hopes to employ a blended staffing model which utilises the skills, knowledge and experience of a range of staff, including Psychology Assistants / Interventions officers, which are matched to a range of tasks (school, home and community based such as professional supervision, consultation, project work, research, assessments, observations and interventions) that are required to deliver an effective and efficient Service; and facilitate transformation in the context of wider Children's Directorate.

The service strives to enhance the scope of the work which it can undertake to ensure better outcomes for children and young people.

The service is active in raising its profile and engagement at national level; our Specialist Senior EP is Vice President of the Association of Educational Psychologists and the Principal EP represents the NE region at the National Association of Principal Educational Psychologists.

8. Challenges

- The sole trader EP scene in Middlesbrough reflects that schools (as currently the main purchasers of EP time) perceive a need for a higher level of service than is available within the current resource / capacity of the Council's psychology service.
- The provision of service through such a large number of private practitioners leads to a fragmented offer and a lack of consistency in the delivery of psychology services across Middlesbrough's settings.
- Whilst a staffing group has been re-established in the council's service more recently, becoming truly established requires raising the profile of the service and broadening partners' understandings of the potential contribution of EPs to local priorities, beyond that of statutory functions. Our potential contribution is more far reaching.
- The current funding model for the Council's psychology service lends itself to an unpredictable commitment to the provision of a consistent resource and with that, it lends itself to an uncertain contribution towards local priorities.
- There has been a national shortage of EPs. The DfE has recently commissioned research into EP workforce planning (Middlesbrough EPs contributed to that research to emphasise shortages within the NE region) and the DfE have agreed to fund the training of an additional 40 places (an increase of 25% nationally). The NE region will need to support the local training provider (through supporting / providing practice placements for trainees).

APPENDIX 1

Be healthy so that they are physically, mentally, **emotionally** and sexually healthy, have healthy lifestyles and choose not to take illegal drugs.

Staying Safe from maltreatment, neglect, violence, sexual exploitation, accidental injury and death, bullying and discrimination, crime and anti-social behaviour in and out of school, have **security and stability** and are cared for.

Enjoying and Achieving so that they are ready for school, attend and **enjoy school**, achieve stretching national educational standards at primary and secondary school, **achieve personal and social development and enjoy recreation**.

Making a Positive Contribution so that they engage in decision-making, support their community and environment, engage in law-abiding and positive behaviour in and out of school, **develop positive relationships**, choose not to bully and discriminate, **develop self-confidence**, **successfully deal with significant life changes and challenges** and develop enterprising behaviour.

Achieving Economic Well-being so that they engage in further education, employment or training on leaving school, are ready for employment, live in **decent homes and sustainable communities**, have access to transport and material goods, live in households free from low income.