

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL
EDUCATION, CULTURE AND SPORT COMMITTEE
22 MAY 2008

Agenda Item	
Report No	

Post School Psychological Service
Report by Director of Education, Culture and Sport

Summary

The Scottish Government has requested that all Scottish Councils develop a Post School Psychological Service and has provided funding for the equivalent of a full time Educational Psychologist from April 2008 – March 2011.

This report outlines the plans to build on the pilot project within Highland Council Psychological Service to develop a Post School Psychological Service.

1. Background

1.1 In April 2004, Post School Psychological Service Pathfinders were established for a two year period in 12 local authorities. The aims of a Post School Psychological Service are focused on the transition to post school opportunities, improving the skills of young people to enhance their employability. This will support post school support services through consultation, training and action research, to enhance developments locally.

1.2 These goals dovetail with the Authority wide focus on **Achievement** and **Transition** in relation to developing **A Curriculum for Excellence** and with the aims of the **Highland Getting into Employment, Education and Training Strategy**. These goals also make links with preventative strategies for Looked After Children, Looked After Accommodated Children and vulnerable groups of young people with a variety of additional support needs.

2. Pilot Programme

2.1 The Highland Council Psychological Service received additional funding from the Scottish Government to the equivalent of 1 FTE Educational Psychologist in January 2007. This was to take forward a project to begin to establish the post school strategy and improve the services it provides to 16-24 year olds. This funding was used to enhance the Service to allow additional time to be available across the Council, so that a wide range of services could be offered.

2.2 The Post School Psychological Service in Highland has made good progress. Links have been established with a range of post-16 providers who have not worked with Highland Council Psychological Service previously and requests for involvement are increasing. There has been a great deal of interest in the range of services the Service can provide. The Psychological Service's links to preventative work in schools and with other services such as the Social Work Service, Health and Voluntary agencies have been strengthened, with its representation at all levels of the Council's **Getting in to Education, Employment and training Strategy** being a particular driver in this.

- 2.3 The Service has increased its role in supporting transition through preventative consultation by Educational Psychologists and through its involvement with the service development of the Transition project. The Service has contributed to the consultation that has informed the process of transition and the guidelines being produced and trialled across the Council to support more young people to move on to positive and sustained destinations on leaving school.
- 2.4 Evaluation of this pilot project showed that for the Post School Psychological Service to move closer to its ideal service, the skills and expertise of a dedicated Educational Psychologist are required, possibly with support from an Assistant Psychologist. This would enable the development of a specialist role and knowledge that comes with this, with some protected time to provide training to post school providers.

3. **Proposals**

- 3.1 In March this year, the Scottish Government announced an extension to the funding allocation for all Scottish Local Authorities which secures funding in Highland for a full-time educational psychologist for the next 3 years. The Scottish Government's intention is to include funding thereafter within local government settlements.
- 3.2 In agreeing the continuance of this funding, Ministers recognise that a Post School Psychological Service has an important contribution to make to the delivery of the national indicator to increase the proportion of school leavers in positive and sustained destinations, by promoting partnership working and ensuring a stronger focus on improving interventions and outcomes for vulnerable young people at the point of transition from school and beyond.

Both the interim evaluation of the Post School Psychological Service Pilot Project in Highland and the full evaluation report covering the project from January 2007 – March 2008, can be accessed on the Highland Council Psychological Service Website – (<http://highlandschools-virtualib.org.uk/heps/>)

4. **Equalities Impact**

- 4.1 The proposal above will support the transition from school to adulthood and adult services for the most vulnerable young people in Highland, including young people who are looked after by the authority, young people with additional support needs and young people who are socially disadvantaged or socially excluded, who may require support to allow them to move to more positive post-school destinations.

5. **Financial and Resource Implications**

- 5.1 All costs relating to the appointment of a full time Educational Psychologist to support this new development will be covered by the funding from the Scottish Government.
- 5.2 This development will contribute to the delivery of the **More Choices/More Chances** agenda which seeks to ensure young people, on leaving school, move into education, employment and training.

6. **Recommendation**

- 6.1 Members are asked to note this new development and agree to receiving further reports on the progress of the Post School Psychological Service **More Choices/More Chances** Agenda which seeks to ensure young people leaving school move into education, employment and training.

Signature:

Designation: Head of Education, Culture and Sport

Date: 5th May 2008

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