**Background**

Recent policy recommended that all Educational Psychology Services in Scotland needed to evaluate the impact of their work so that outcomes for children and families were improved (HMIe, 2007; 2011). The Highland Council Psychological Service Self-Evaluation Development Group emerged in response to the HMIe Self-Evaluation Report (2010), strategic planning priorities for For Highland’s Children 3 (2009-2012) and The Highland Council Single Outcome Agreement (2009).

This Development Group (2011-2014) was tasked to devise ways to encourage greater consultation and participation with children and young people (C/YP).

**Aim:** With a view to ensuring that C/YP could contribute to the development of the Service, C/YP were asked about issues that affect them and how adults around them could help.

**Method**

Following a literature review of listening to C/YP and a scoping exercise of previous self-evaluation methods, guided discussion groups and questionnaires were selected to use in this project.

**Participants**

A combination of systematic and random sampling was used to select 76 pupils aged 7-17 years, living in urban/rural, advantaged/disadvantaged areas across Highland.

**Design and Procedure**

A pilot study informed the method. An inductive mixed method approach was used comprising 15 guided discussion groups and 51 individual questionnaires. Each Primary pupil was invited to draw an imaginary C/YP. They were then asked what issues the imaginary C/YP might experience and how adults could help. Secondary pupils were asked the same questions and their responses were recorded on post its placed around a displayed outline figure. Following the discussion C/YP completed a questionnaire with three areas identified from the pilot (learning, friendship, feelings). A 5-point Likert Scale was used to measure the level of importance for each of these areas.

**Analysis**

Information from the discussion groups was collated and analysed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Statistics were used to explore the questionnaire results.

**Results**

**Questionnaires:** Both Primary and Secondary aged pupils thought help with learning, friendships and feelings were equally important.

**Discussion Groups:** Thematic analysis identified 7 key issues (as outlined around the figure below) related to all of these ways adults can help (as illustrated in speech bubbles).

**Mapping Exercise:** Existing Service delivery projects were then mapped onto the ways adults can help.

**Discussion & Implications**

**Results**

The issues and ways adults can help identified by the C/YP provided a needs analysis for the Service. Existing Service delivery was mapped onto the issues and ways adults can help.

Examples of existing Service delivery include:
- Improving Literacy with Parental Involvement
- Nurture Group (e.g. Shaver & McClatchey, 2013)
- Resilient Kids
- Seasons for Growth
- Solution Focused Approaches (e.g. Alexander & Sked, 2010)
- Video Interaction Guidance (Shed & McClatchey, 2014)
- Ways to Wellbeing (McClatchey, 2012)

Results will help to inform future development planning. Service development will base equal emphasis on supporting feelings, friendships and learning. Gaps in Service delivery were also identified e.g. input to teacher training, and these are being addressed.

Findings were fed back to the C/YP, their schools and the Service.

**Method**

The approach used allowed pupils to have a depersonalised, free and rich discussion.

Thematic analysis was completed collaboratively however it was not possible to establish inter-rater reliability due to time constraints.

**Future Research**

The sample could be extended to include early years pupils and C/YP with severe and complex needs. Gathering the views of adults around the C/YP e.g. parents, school staff and allied professionals, could provide more comprehensive information to inform Service delivery. Future research may also wish to explore the views of C/YP regarding the methods adopted.

**Guide to Gathering the Views of C/YP**

How to Gather Views of Children and Young People: A Helpful Guide was developed during the research process. This Service pack contains a discussion of research articles, ethical considerations, discussion group scripts, permission letters, guidelines for running focus groups and thematic analysis processes.

**Conclusion**

Overall this research has supported the Service in meeting HMIe recommendations. The C/YP in Highland are telling us how adults can help and this is informing the future direction of Service delivery.

---

**References**