

**THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL**  
**ADULT AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE**  
**21 AUGUST 2013**

Agenda Item	16.
Report No	ACS/76/13

**Psychological Service update and 2013 – 2014 priorities**  
**Report by Director of Health and Social Care**

**Summary**

This paper gives an update on the work of the Psychological Service during the 2012 – 2013 school session and considers priorities for the coming year 2013 – 2014.

**1 Staffing Developments in the Psychological Service**

- 1.1 Following the reported capacity and recruitment difficulties of the Service and the withdrawal of centralised funding for the professional MSc qualification in Educational Psychology, the Psychological Service undertook a review of how best to improve recruitment. It was decided that the way forward was to establish Educational Psychology Assistant (EPA) posts with the possibility of supporting EPAs through the training course.
- 1.2 The March meeting of the Adult and Children's Services Committee agreed to advertise and recruit up to four Educational Psychology Assistants. The Committee also gave leave to continue to pay EPAs through the duration of the MSc course, with a view to employing successful candidates as Educational Psychologists within Highland. This has been enormously helpful and supportive. We are now in the process of appointing EPAs, all of whom are skilled, highly motivated and already have links with Highland
- 1.3 The Highland Council is seen as leading on this initiative nationally. Other local authorities have indicated the likelihood of following Highland's lead to ensure a supply of skilled Educational Psychologists in the future.

**Psychological Service initiatives**

**2. Emotional Literacy and Wellbeing for secondary school staff**

- 2.1 The Psychological Service's ***Ways to Wellbeing*** handbook (summarised in **Appendix 1**) was launched last year and has been very positively evaluated. A paper outlining the research was published in Educational Psychology in Scotland (BPS Vol. 13.1).

- 2.2 Following the launch, the Quality Improvement Officer (QIO) lead on the Curriculum for Excellence Health and Wellbeing Strategy Group asked the Service to provide training on '*An approach to Emotional Literacy using the Ways to Wellbeing Handbook*' for secondary school Health and Wellbeing Coordinators as well as other interested members of staff In May 2013.
- 2.3 Evaluations indicated that participants highly valued the opportunity to reflect on their own emotional literacy and wellbeing, and gained ideas and resources to take into their schools. Many participants were of the opinion that such training should be rolled out further. Given the importance of Stress Awareness in the Council's employee training and development programme, and the fact that Education Scotland is looking at schools' responses to the Health and Wellbeing strand of Curriculum for Excellence, this continues to be an important area of development work for staff, children and young people in learning communities.

### 3. REsiLient Kids



- 3.1 UK Government statistics show that 1 in 10 children aged 5-16 in the UK has a clinically diagnosable mental health problem. Half of people with lifelong mental health problems experience their first symptoms by the age of 14. In Highland, the Resilient Kids (RK) programmes aim to develop emotional literacy and resilience in our children and young people.
- 3.2 Training for the **Resilient Kids Moving Up** pack has been rolled out this year in Highland. This pack builds on the previous two: **Resilient Kids to School** and **Resilient Kids Together**. RK is a universally targeted programme designed to develop emotional literacy (the EL in the title), positive peer relationships and social skills especially at key transition points in a child's life. A recent development is the greater involvement of parents in the programmes through information sessions.
- 3.3 **Resilient Kids to School** was updated this year and focuses on children moving from nursery into Primary One and **Resilient Kids Moving Up** is targeted at children making the transition from Primary 7 to Secondary 1.

- 3.4 As well as Training for Trainers in November 2012, further courses primarily for teachers, covering all three packs, were held in Dingwall in April 2013. The training and materials remain very positively evaluated and are being delivered throughout Highland. The packs link well to building the four capacities, and the experiences and outcomes of Curriculum for Excellence. The group will be presenting a workshop at the Annual Scottish Educational Psychologists Conference in September, and hope to further develop the programme to support resilience building in the secondary PSD curriculum (see **Appendix 2.**)

#### **4. Improving Literacy through Parental Involvement**

- 4.1 The Psychological Service's training pack on ***Improving Literacy with Parental Involvement*** has been adopted as part of Highland Council's Literacy strategy and members of the development group were asked to report on this at the Scottish Division of EPs Literacy event in May. The pack forms a programme of sessions to encourage the active involvement of parents in their child's reading and focuses on the development of literacy skills at three key points:

- Pre-school **Shared Reading**
- Primary 1 **Reading Together 1<sup>st</sup> Steps**
- Primary 3 **Reading Together**

- 4.2 The group sessions can be run by schools with support from the Psychological Service and show how parents and children can work together on learning to read. The main principles underpinning the sessions have been well researched and documented over many years:

- Parents are the prime educators of their children and have a unique contribution to make.
- Group dynamics contribute to, and extend, the ability of parents to become positively involved in the reading process. They learn by doing the activity themselves, by observing other parents in action and by receiving feedback on the outcomes of the activity.
- Participation in the groups can have positive spin-offs in other areas of the child's learning and behaviour, primarily because the parent and child are involved in positive interactions together, enhancing the parent/child relationship.
- Research indicates that for children involved, the gains made in reading ability are maintained after the sessions end.

- 4.3 Initially, a relatively small scale project successfully implemented in several settings the Psychological Service has been tasked with rolling out this initiative pan-Highland from February 2014. (See **Appendix 3** for more information.)

## **5. Pan - Highland Solution Focused Training**

- 5.1 Over the past two years, the Service has rolled this training out in each of the four Areas. Designed as a positive way of addressing concerns and moving forward, the training is aimed at professionals in Education, Health and Social Care. The training links well with the updating of the Child's Plan and the approach is referred to in the Highland Practice Model (Girfec). Evaluations remain very positive.

## **6. Other Research and Projects**

- 6.1 As well as providing initial training and supervision for interested workers in Children's Services, the Video Interaction Guidance (VIG) Development Group has undertaken a project using VIG with potentially vulnerable new mums and babies. VIG is known to be an effective intervention to support the development of attachment and parental sensitivity. The group presented their findings to Dr Suzanne Zeedyk when she visited the Council in April 2013 and they are looking to support further development of VIG as part of the Early Years Collaborative.
- 6.2 Highland Council has a clear set of objectives published in response to the 2010 Equality Act to reduce prejudice-based bullying. During the 2012-13 session, a small group from the Service worked with colleagues in Youth Development and the Highland Youth Voice Executive to design a survey that can safely ask young people about their experiences and views with respect to homophobic bullying. The survey will be road-tested in a secondary school in September 2013 and then rolled out more widely. Information to help guide intervention will begin to be available from October 2013.
- 6.3 It is intended that the survey would also be a model for other work to understand the incidence and impact of other forms of bullying and inequality as for example, experienced by young people with mental health difficulties or from disadvantaged backgrounds. A briefing paper on homophobia in school settings is available from the Psychological Service.
- 6.4 The Service has benefited from the appointment of a Research Assistant during this year. As well as projects mentioned there is on-going research into the effectiveness of Cooperative Learning, which continues to be rolled out as a teaching and learning approach, to teachers and others, on a large scale across Highland.
- 6.5 Important research has also been carried out on the evaluation of Nurture Groups within an associated school group in Inverness. This research clearly demonstrates how the setting up of nurture groups can have a positive impact on children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, their families and schools. It is planned to present a poster on this at the forthcoming SDEP conference.
- 6.6 Moving from one school to another can be a difficult time for children. An EP in conjunction with the Interrupted Learning Development Officer has written a

'Welcome Pack' for teachers and others to use with children who are moving schools so that their emotional as well as their academic needs can be met and this will be launched in October 2013.

- 6.7 This year, the Pre-school Home Visiting teachers within the Service have focused on the development of materials to support Early Years staff working with children with complex additional support needs. This has included being involved in the development of overviews of the developmental skills of 3 and 4 year olds and subsequent staff training in their use.

## **7. Other Psychological Service activity**

- 7.1 During this school year, there have been several tragic events in Highland, some of which have been covered by the media. The Service gives priority in such circumstances to supporting staff and others who are involved. Guidelines have been developed as a first response, and have been sent to all schools by the Director of Education, Culture & Sport.
- 7.2 In conjunction with coping with change, grief and loss, an Educational Psychologist regularly runs Seasons for Growth training which is a national evidence based programme which skills up staff to work with groups of children to help them deal with their experiences and related feelings. Educational Psychologists have also been working with the Fostering and Adoption Social Work Team to develop and provide training for foster carers on topics related to child trauma and neglect.
- 7.3 Details of on-going work and resources produced by the Psychological Service can be found on the website: - [www.highland.gov.uk/learninghere/psychologicalservice](http://www.highland.gov.uk/learninghere/psychologicalservice)

## **8. Priorities for the Psychological Service 2013 - 2014**

- 8.1 It is planned that the Psychological Service inducts and provides suitable training for newly appointed Educational Psychology Assistants (EPAs) with a view to supporting them through professional training to enable the growth of Service capacity.
- 8.2 Whilst operating under capacity, we need to manage expectations of the Service and attend to our core work in order to maximise our impact.
- 8.3 It is planned that the Psychological Service continues to roll out training on **Wellbeing for Staff** and the **Resilient Kids** programmes to promote wellbeing, emotional literacy and resilience in our school communities.
- 8.4 The Psychological Service will begin to roll out the **Improving Literacy with Parental Involvement** programme next year with a view to improving parental engagement in children's reading to help increase attainment and foster good relationships between parents and children and their schools.

## 9. Implications

- 9.1 There are no risk, resource, legal or climate change implications associated with this report. However, many aspects strengthen our commitment to equalities duties.

### **Recommendation**

Members are asked to note and comment on the work of the Psychological Service 2012 – 2013 and the priorities for 2013 – 2014.

Signature: Bill Alexander

Designation: Director of Health and Social Care

Date: 16 July 2013

Authors: Louise McClatchey, Principal Educational Psychologist,  
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Background Papers:

**Appendix 1** Ways of Wellbeing Handbook – An Introduction

**Appendix 2** Resilient Kids Courses – An Overview

**Appendix 3** Improving Literacy with Parental Involvement – A Summary

## Appendix 1 The Wellbeing Handbook – An Introduction



Wellbeing is defined as the state of being comfortable, healthy, or happy (New Oxford Dictionary of English, 2001) and in today's society wellbeing is highly desired and frequently discussed. It is especially crucial in learning communities; as workers in this area are often under immense pressure and suffer from high levels of stress. Previous research by NHS Health Scotland found that 44 per cent of teachers surveyed reported their job to be either very or extremely stressful.

### WHAT IS IT?

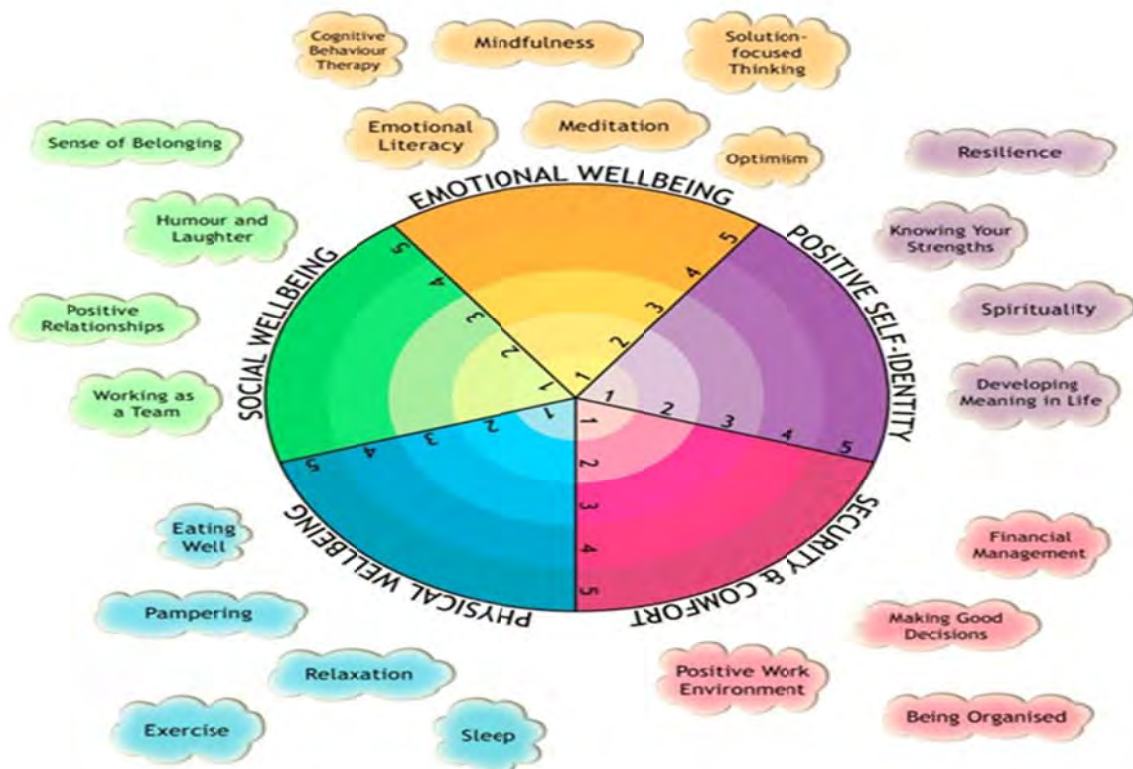
This Handbook consists of information and self-reflective exercises designed to enhance the wellbeing of adults in learning communities and beyond. It stems from the recognition that while the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) has provided a curricular framework to develop children and young people's emotional wellbeing, those working in our learning communities also need to address their own wellbeing to enrich their capacity to support those learners and to shape emotionally literate settings.

The contents are based on psychological theory, positive psychology, and activities people reported to be helpful. Prior research carried out by the Psychological Service included a questionnaire which was sent to a random sample of adults working in learning communities in Highland. An interesting finding was that although 93% of respondents indicated that a desired level of wellbeing in relation to their job effectiveness would be 8.5 out of 10 or higher; the average current level of wellbeing was rated significantly below this at 6.5. This implied that there was a need to support the development of wellbeing in learning communities from a psychological perspective. (A summary of this research is given in the Handbook and was published in Educational Psychology in Scotland; Volume 13 1 Autumn 2012)



## HOW COULD IT BE HELPFUL?

The 'Wheel of Wellbeing' below is used to identify areas for personal development and illustrates the contents on the five themes contained in the Handbook.

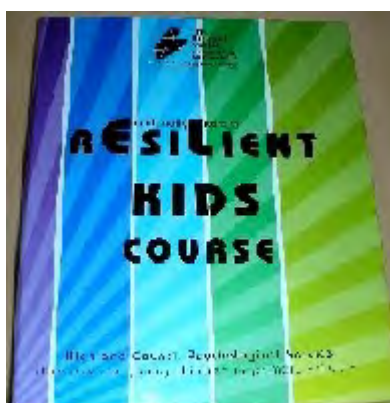


- Emotional Wellbeing –This is to do with finding inner peace and contentment.
- Positive Self-Identity- This is to do with self-esteem, confidence and being resilient.
- Security and Comfort- This is about the quality of your surroundings and lifestyle.
- Physical Wellbeing - This is about an individual's level of health and fitness.
- Social Wellbeing- This is do with positive relationships, both personal and in the wider community.

The sections have been developed to enhance wellbeing through a greater understanding of the choices we can make in life. It puts into words things people may think about but may not have acted upon. Holistic in approach its aim is simple – to help people live the best life they can by using all the inner resources they have!

In terms of evaluation; the launch and further training have all been very positively evaluated with over 90% of participants indicating that the training had helped them reflect on their own wellbeing and that this approach should be shared with colleagues.





### REsiLient Kids

The Resilient Kids Courses comprise:

- **Resilient Kids to School:** - a pack to support young children as they make the transition from nursery to primary school.
- **Resilient Kids Together:** - a pack for the middle stages of primary school
- **Resilient kids moving up:** - a pack to support P7 children as they make the transition to secondary education.

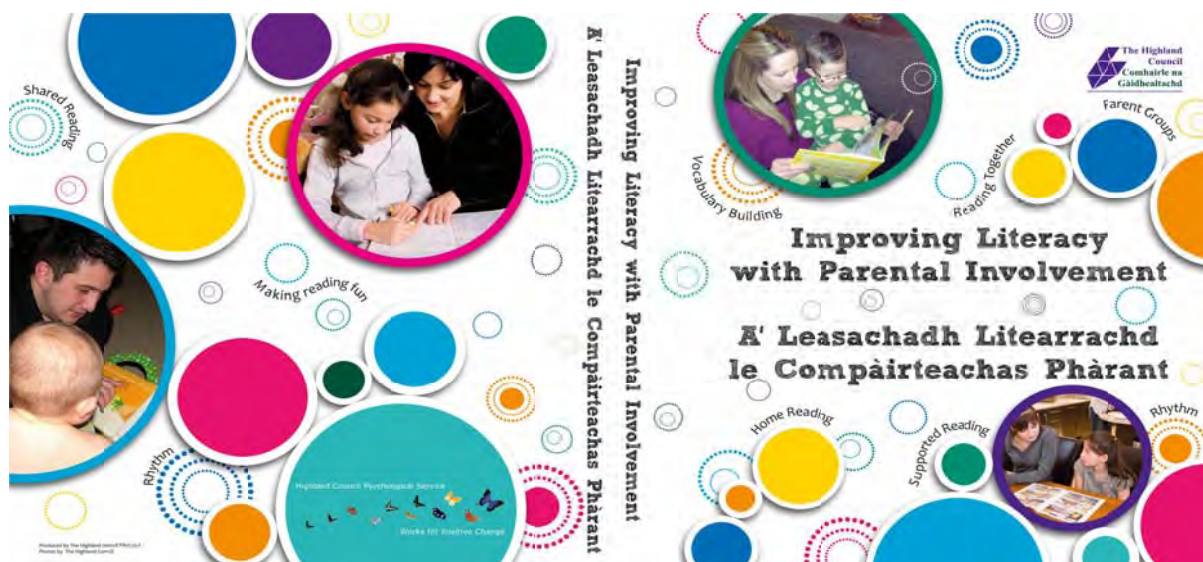
Programme development has been led by Educational Psychologists in conjunction with Preschool Home Visiting Teachers, pupil support teachers and Children 1st practitioners following needs analysis and consultation with school staff, parents and young people. Packs were written and piloted in collaboration with schools and training was delivered. Training evaluations have been very positive and the three packs are widely used by teachers.

The aim is to help children become happier, more confident, more included and more relaxed, with better peer relationships and awareness of and ability to manage feelings. In relation to a Curriculum for Excellence, the Resilient Kids programmes meet a range of targets in the 4 competencies of *Successful Learners; Confident Individuals; Responsible Citizens and Effective Contributors*. Each course targets all pupils in a class, rather than just a small group, and involves the participation of the class teacher.

The underlying ethos of the programmes is that every contribution is valued and where focused group work is offered effectively without excluding or stigmatising vulnerable groups. All children in classes are taught important skills in a context where empathy and positive attitudes are fostered.

It is now accepted that when emotional intelligence is targeted within a school curriculum, academic achievement is raised, that nurturing builds resilience, that appropriate responsibilities help children feel valued, recognised and respected and that being included has a positive effect on emotional wellbeing and behaviour.

### Improving Literacy with Parental Involvement



The Psychological Service's training pack on '*Improving Literacy with Parental Involvement*' has been adopted as part of Highland Council's Literacy strategy. It is intended to begin to roll this programme out across Highland from February 2014.

The pack itself was developed by a Service development group led by Ken Crossan over a three year period. It forms a programme of sessions to encourage the active involvement of parents in their child's reading and focuses on the development of literacy skills at three key points:

- Pre-school **Shared Reading**
- Primary 1 **Reading Together 1<sup>st</sup> Steps**
- Primary 3 **Reading Together**

The group sessions are run by schools and show how parents and children can work together on learning to read. The main principles underpinning the sessions have been well researched and documented over many years:

- Parents are prime educators of their children and have a unique contribution to make.
- Group dynamics contribute to and extend the ability of parents to become positively involved in the reading process. They learn by doing the activity themselves, by observing other parents in action and by receiving feedback on the outcomes of the activity.
- Participation in the groups can have positive spin-offs in other areas of the child's learning and behaviour, primarily because the parent and child are

involved in positive interactions together, enhancing the parent/child relationship.

- Research indicates that for children involved, the gains made in reading ability are maintained after the sessions end.

Research into the benefits of the programme was reported on at the Scottish Division of EPs' Literacy Conference in May 2013.

The purpose of the study was to assess whether Reading Together 1<sup>st</sup> Steps parent groups, which enhanced parental skills to read at home with their children, had a positive effect on children's reading attainment. A total of 65 Primary children participated across three classes in three different primary schools in Highland. 18 had parents who had attended the Reading Together 1<sup>st</sup> Steps groups, and the remaining children's parents had not ( $n = 47$ ).

The three Primary schools had similar socioeconomic backgrounds, and the parents were recruited using self-selection as invitations to attend the groups were sent to all the parents of Primary 1 children across the three schools.

#### *Reading Together 1st Steps Parent Groups*

The Reading Together 1st Steps parent groups were targeted at the parents of the children who had just started school (approximately 5 years old). The parent groups were implemented in each of the three schools chosen, with a total of 18 parents in attendance (5-7 parents in each group). The groups comprised of four one hour sessions delivered on a weekly basis, with two Educational Psychologists running the sessions during the school day. At the end of each session the children of the parents were allowed to participate in activities. The parent groups focused on learning through demonstration, discussion and practice and the activities focused on during the sessions were to be practised by parents at home with their children during the week, with feedback being provided at the start of the following session.

Reading attainment was assessed eighteen months after the parent groups using the Group Reading Test II (6-14) (NFER-Nelson, 2005). Results found that children in the experimental group, whose parents had attended the Reading Together 1<sup>st</sup> Steps parent groups performed significantly better than children in the control group whose parents had not attended the parent groups.

Follow-up tests carried out two years later showed that children whose parents attended the groups still performed significantly better in comparison to controls. This suggests that helping parents to develop their skills to read with their children, and encouraging them to do so, can have a positive impact on children's reading attainment.

Parents also evaluated the Reading Together 1<sup>st</sup> Steps parent groups very positively and rated the usefulness of the material highly. When asked what had been most useful, one parent wrote, "I think all parents should have access to this scheme. It has really helped me understand how my child is learning".

Due to the high level of positive feedback from parents and the positive impact on children's reading scores it can be noted that the materials used in the Reading Together 1<sup>st</sup> Steps parent groups were very effective. Some parents also reported having a closer relationship with their child as well as noting the benefits of being part of the parental reading group.

This research is in line with a wide body of research which has consistently found a significant relationship between parental involvement programmes and higher academic achievement e.g. Jeynes (2012).

As noted, it is intended to begin to roll out the Improving Literacy with Parental Involvement packs from February 2014.

Jeynes, W. (2012). A Meta-Analysis of the Efficacy of Different Types of Parental Involvement Programs for Urban Students. *Urban Education*, 47(4), 706-742. doi: 110.1177/0042085912445643