

Follow-through Evaluation of the Educational Psychology Service
Report by Mary Smith, Director, Education, Communities and Economy

1 Purpose of Report

This report outlines the outcome of the above inspection as carried out by Education Scotland in February 2014.

2 Background

2.1 HM Inspectorate of Education published reports on the inspection of Midlothian Council Educational Psychology Services (EPS) in June 2010, September 2011 and April 2013. HM Inspectors revisited the service in February 2014 to assess:

- the extent to which the EPS was continuing to improve the quality of its work;
- the quality of the service's leadership and management; and
- the impact of the service on stakeholders.

2.2 The Inspectors concluded that the service has improved its work considerably since the last visit by HMI and identified the following key strengths:

- greater ambition for Midlothian's children and young people and a clearer vision for education in Midlothian;
- strong leadership of the Principal Educational Psychologist and the pace at which she has driven improvements in the service in the last year;
- increased coherence amongst the team of educational psychologists and far stronger partnership with stakeholders; and
- much closer alignment of the EPS with the work of the council and increased synergy with council objectives.

2.3 In taking forward its improvement plan, Education Scotland has asked the Directorate and the service to:

- ensure that arrangements for the line management of the EPS remain stable and that appropriate support and challenge are in place to assist the service to continue on its improvement journey;
- explore approaches to improvement planning which are forward and outward looking, link to the council's Single Outcome Agreement and take account of best practice from outwith Midlothian; and

- continue to develop and embed the Single Level Agreement and keep the policy framework under review.

2.4 As a result of the significant improvements outlined in the report, Education Scotland will make no further visits in connection with the inspection visit of 2010.

3 Report Implications

3.1 Resource

There are no financial and human resource implications associated with this report.

3.2 Risk

As a result of the significant improvements outlined in the report there will be no further visits in connection with the inspection of 2010. The EPS will continue to engage in a process of self-evaluation and reporting. Monitoring and review by the Head of Education and Principal Educational Psychologist is in place.

The findings of the follow-through visit have been shared with the Local Area Network as part of the Shred Risk Assessment process. Aspects of the EPS work will be included in Midlothian's Partnership Agreement with Education Scotland.

3.3 Single Midlothian Plan and Business Transformation

Themes addressed in this report:

- ☐ Community safety
- ☐ Adult health, care and housing
- ☒ Getting it right for every Midlothian child
- ☐ Improving opportunities in Midlothian
- ☐ Sustainable growth
- ☐ Business transformation and Best Value
- ☐ None of the above

3.4 Key Priorities within the Single Midlothian Plan

As part of Midlothian Council's commitment to excellence, the service will take a robust approach to driving forward improvement and the Council will continue to challenge, support and monitor the service in relation to further improving performance.

3.5 Impact on Performance and Outcomes

The EPS is continuing to improve its approaches to recognising the needs of its stakeholders and the range of services provided has increased significantly. A stronger policy framework and increased consultation with stakeholders are helping the service ensure that its improvement planning is now more outcome focussed.

An example of good practice identified by the inspection team was the research carried out by the EPS and the Business Transformation Team to analyse the journeys of five children who were placed in residential schools outside the authority. This work is being used to

transform systems and processes to focus on desired outcomes for Looked After and Accommodated Children and to develop staff confidence and understanding of the impact of the decisions they make.

3.6 Adopting a Preventative Approach

Very effective initiatives by the EPS are helping to validate educational practitioners' practice and giving them confidence to continue delivering preventative services such as parental involvement activities and supporting Growth Mind sets. Psychologists are successful in ensuring that the findings from educational psychology research and literature are impacting positively on the work of the council through a stronger presence on strategic working groups. Examples include the raising attainment group, numeracy policy and supporting young people with social and emotional and behavioural needs.

3.7 Involving Communities and Other Stakeholders

A stronger policy framework and increased consultation with stakeholders are helping the service ensure that its improvement planning is now more outcome focussed. Improved inter-agency working by the EPS is impacting positively on children, young people and the community, for example working with partners to deliver effective training in Confident Staff, Confident Children.

In the past year EPS have put in place a user-friendly website and psychologists now produce high quality materials summarising key psychological concepts in accessible form. As a result of a number of initiatives implemented in the last year the EPS is impacting positively on children, young people and the wider community.

Copies of the report have been made available to Elected Members, service users and other interested parties.

3.8 Ensuring Equalities

Improvement planning will be screened for equalities implications.

3.9 Supporting Sustainable Development

Improvement planning allows for sustainable development and improvement.

3.10 IT Issues

There are no IT issues arising from this report.

4 Recommendations

Cabinet is asked to:

- (i) note the content of the follow-through evaluation report;
- (ii) pass this report to the Performance, Review and Scrutiny Committee for its consideration;
- (iii) congratulate the Principal Educational Psychologist and her staff on the progress made since the initial inspection visit of June 2010;

- (iv) note that officers within the Directorate will continue to challenge, support and monitor the service in relation to achieving excellence through further improving performance; and
- (v) instruct the Director, Education, Communities and Economy to ensure that the School Improvement Plan incorporates the recommendations of the inspection team.

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Declaration Box

Instructions: *This box must be completed by the author of the report. The box will be copied and saved by the Council Secretariat who will delete it from the report prior to photocopying the agenda.*

Title of Report: Follow-through Evaluation of the Educational Psychology Service

Meeting Presented to: Cabinet 22 April 2014

Author of Report: Peter McNaughton

I confirm that I have undertaken the following actions before submitting this report to the Council Secretariat (Check boxes to confirm):-

- ☒ *All resource implications have been addressed. Any financial and HR implications have been approved by the Head of Finance and Integrated Service Support.*
- ☒ *All risk implications have been addressed.*
- ☒ *All other report implications have been addressed.*
- ☒ *My Director has endorsed the report for submission to the Council Secretariat.*

For Cabinet reports, please advise the Council Secretariat if the report has an education interest. This will allow the report to be located on the Cabinet agenda among the items in which the Religious Representatives are entitled to participate.

Likewise, please advise the Council Secretariat if any report for Midlothian Council has an education interest. The Religious Representatives are currently entitled to attend meetings of the Council in a non-voting observer capacity, but with the right to speak (but not vote) on any education matter under consideration, subject always to observing the authority of the Chair.