



Comhairle nan Eilean Siar Educational Psychological Services

PRACTICE GUIDELINES

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Western Isles Educational Psychological Service: An overview of practice principles and theoretical perspective

Mission Statement

The mission of our service is to offer effective, evidenced based psychological services to children, young people and those who support them, to make a positive difference to their lives. The child is central, and the work is undertaken in the spirit of collaboration, co-operation, and respect.

Vision

The vision is to provide accessible, equitable services to children and young people and their families/carers and to the agencies that support them. The vision is to be dynamic, innovative and focussed on early intervention, prevention, strengths and capacities for change.

Purpose

This paper outlines the overarching theoretical perspectives that inform and influence the practice of Western Isles Educational Psychological Service (WI EPS). The purpose of the paper is to describe the link between the theoretical perspectives that guide our work, and the implementation of these in practice. This is summarised by the Service's mission statement. This paper functions as an introduction to all other practice guidelines.

Practice Principles

The theory base which informs the Service's practice reflects the ecological foundations of contemporary educational psychology. Consequently, the work of educational psychologists in the Western Isles takes account of the variety and complexity of social contexts in which children and young people live and learn, the unique individual characteristics which children and families present, and the interaction between these factors.

The development of our thinking within WI EPS is strongly influenced by:

- social learning theory
- social constructivist theory, incorporating both ecological and systems approach

These theories then impact directly on service delivery, as evidenced by taking a 'least intrusive/most effective' perspective when engaging with our client groups combined with using contextual assessment processes to inform our practice.

Psychologists within the Service bring an understanding of systems and organisational theory in their approach to work at all levels including the Council, the Education Service, schools, children and families. This approach sits comfortably alongside person and family-centred planning principles which place the child and/or family at the core of their work.

Psychological Service practice aims to build on strengths and solutions rather than deficits and problems; solution focused theories and problem-solving frameworks are an integral part of practice. Real life hypothesis testing, based on evidence and reflection, underpins all aspects of practice. A central principle of the work of the Service is to focus on making a positive difference for our stakeholders through the least intrusive intervention approaches.

Applying Theory to Practice / Practice Principles

In applying theory to practice, psychologists should act in a manner which represents the most effective and least intrusive intervention in a young person's life. This often results in a psychologist working both to empower and facilitate others in direct day to day contact with the child, and also to impact on organisational systems. Psychologists bring a unique contribution to multi agency working in relation to their knowledge of child development, overview of child, family and education systems, applying psychological theory to practice and effective teaching and learning approaches. In practice, our most intensive work should be focused on the needs of the most vulnerable children and families within society. This links to our view that improving outcomes for the most at-risk groups such as Looked After and Severe and Complex children are at the core of our work.

Most of a psychologist's work will be in collaboration with others and in many situations, best practice will see the delivery of strategies and advice, based on applied psychology, being channelled through those best placed to achieve sustainable positive outcomes for young people.

Educational psychologists can therefore expect to be working and interacting with their partner agencies and families. They need to be able to recognise and negotiate respective roles and clearly articulate the practical implications to allow effective case management and ensure best outcomes for service users. When supporting institutional change, psychologists will use their knowledge of psychological perspectives to work alongside Education Service colleagues to support systemic development.

The Psychological Service provides a universally accessible service to the children, young people and families in Western Isles. A Service priority is to ensure that every educational establishment will always have access to a link psychologist. This process is managed using a staged intervention model; however, more rapid response will be offered through an open consultation approach, via our Friday Telephone Surgery, as well as ready daily telephone and email availability.

A feature of our work is to regularly seek and evaluate feedback from service users and professional colleagues from partner agencies. This feedback is highly valued by the Psychological Service and represents a crucial component of the Service's ongoing improvement and evaluative planning processes.

References

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