




Professional Development Programme



Professional Development Programme for Education Psychologists in Scotland

A Summary



1999-2000

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The Professional Development Programme for Educational Psychologists in Scotland: A Summary of the 1999-2000 Projects

Jenni Barr, Billy Bonar and Cyril Hellier, Coordinators

The Professional Development Programme (PDP) is managed by the Association of Scottish Principal Educational Psychologists (ASPEP) in collaboration with local authorities and funded by the Scottish Executive Education Department. This is the fifth cycle of the programme, which involves groups of psychologists in cross-boundary project work and other professional development activities, around agreed themes, over a period of about one year. The outcomes of this work are disseminated to colleagues and others in the field of education.

*This booklet gives a summary of the activities and findings of the three themes addressed by the 1999-2000 programme, namely **Managing Difficult Behaviour**, **Raising Achievement and Increasing Inclusion** and **Best Value**. The purpose of this document is to draw the attention of colleagues in applied psychology, education and related fields to the valuable work undertaken in these areas. Those wishing more information should contact the authors, who will be pleased to discuss their projects and provide copies of the more detailed reports and INSET materials. A list of project participants is given at the end of this booklet.*



Professional Development Programme

MANAGING DIFFICULT BEHAVIOUR

Jenni Barr, PDP Senior Coordinator

Introduction

In 1977 the Russell Report suggested that challenging behaviour might “...prevent participation in educational activities, isolate children from their peer groups and interfere with or affect the learning of other pupils”. A year later the Warnock Report (1978) identified emotional and behavioural difficulties as a source of learning difficulty. The Elton Report (1989) stressed a strong link between curriculum content, curriculum delivery and discipline.

Against such an analysis, difficult or challenging behaviour cannot be dealt with in isolation. Current initiatives and accompanying literature on social inclusion, alternatives to exclusion, raising attainment and new community schools are all highly relevant.

Richards (1999) identifies certain core principles which underpin inclusive strategies. Schools which provide successful inclusive environments for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties emphasise the importance of whole-school behaviour and discipline policies, adult-pupil relationships and pastoral care, as well as curriculum content, accreditation and teaching approaches. Supporting the adults as well as pupils and fostering structures for good record keeping and communication are two important elements of a successful approach.

Daniels and Williams (2000) examine the core beliefs that can contribute to a reduction in the instances of exclusion and isolation of children because of their behaviour. Two key features are: viewing children’s behaviour as central to the learning process; and recognising that problems in behaviour in educational settings are frequently a product of the complex interaction between the individual, the school, the family, the community and wider society. Principles for action which Daniels and Williams assert include: an emphasis on equal opportunity and maximum inclusion; organisational consistency and improvement; and appropriate and effective links with parents and support agencies.



Difficult behaviour and learning

Managing Difficult Behaviour

The eight psychologists who came together to consider this topic - **Martin Abramson, Mardi Alexander, Alison Crawford, Beth Hannah, Audrey Jenkins, Maureen Myant, Maggie Palmer and Derek Young** - chose to focus on those youngsters whose behaviour is at the far end of the continuum. They aimed to identify common threads and themes from the literature and to secure a working definition of difficult behaviour. The effects of complex relationships, working at the level of the individual and the environment, relating to home, school and the broader community were highlighted. Discussion also recognised the importance of individual perception as to what is deemed to be *difficult*, flavoured as it is by personal experience as well as by the prevailing values within the community or institution in which a person lives and works (Miller, 1999). The group eventually summarised the main characteristics of difficult behaviour as behaviour which:



Who defines difficult behaviour?

- ▲ has an influence upon effective teaching and learning
- ▲ causes harm or distress to the individual or to others
- ▲ challenges a teacher's skills
- ▲ is resistant to accepted strategies or management systems
- ▲ is beyond an acceptable level of intensity, duration or frequency.

Long and Fogell (1999) state, "One strong performance indicator of an effective school is its ability to turn potential conflict into creative energy". The psychologists were clear that they wanted to draw on the contributions from psychology to produce materials that would assist teachers, parents and others in understanding and responding to extreme behaviour in children and young people. There are several ways in which this can be approached.

Martin Abramson has provided an *Issues Paper* and *Bibliography*, which offers an overview of the issues arising when the topic is looked at from various perspectives. These include: the influence of the media; the school as an ecological community; staffroom culture and its effect on teacher response; and cognitive behavioural approaches to difficult behaviour involving thinking styles, reframing, self-monitoring and self-management.



Issues and approaches

This analysis touches on materials and approaches already available and in use in some of Scotland's schools. **Maggie Palmer** sampled some of these, and has provided a brief paper which offers a description and a practitioner's critique of approaches as varied as Feindler and Ecton's *Anger Control Programme* (1986), *Video Interaction Guidance in Schools - SPIN* (Simpson, Forsyth and Kennedy, 1994), *Promoting Positive Behaviour in the Primary School* (McLean, 1991), amongst others.

Within the project group there were two clear subgroups of developed interest and expertise, which gave rise to two sets of training materials.

Training in Anger Management

Mardi Alexander, Beth Hannah and Maureen Myant had for some time been involved in running *Anger Management* workshops for secondary aged pupils using cognitive behavioural techniques. They used their involvement in the programme to develop a pack of training materials for teachers and parents, entitled *Training in Anger Management*. The contents are organised into four main units with additional introduction, evaluation and an appendix entitled *Materials for Use in Parents' Workshops*. Within each unit there are handouts, activities and materials for overhead presentation.

Unit 1: *Understanding Anger* draws on the work of Faupel et al (1998). It examines the stages of the *anger assault cycle* in order to understand and look at the effects of anger on the individual, relationships and society.

Unit 2: *A Whole School Approach to Anger Management* looks at the rationale, key features and components of a positive behaviour management policy and the process by which a school-wide anger management strategy can be set up as part of an overall approach to managing behaviour.

Unit 3: *Dealing with Aggression and Conflict* takes the classroom as its focus and offers practical techniques to teachers for managing each stage of the anger assault cycle. It includes a detailed section on responding in a crisis.

Unit 4: *Groupwork in Anger Management* provides both training in cognitive behavioural techniques for dealing with anger and advice to teachers on how to plan, organise and run a groupwork programme. A suggested outline for six sessions of groupwork is supplied.

These materials are provided both in text form and on CD-ROM (including Powerpoint materials and coloured print handouts) to enable customising for use in different settings.

Solution Focused Approaches to Difficult Behaviour

The members of the second subgroup - **Alison Crawford, Audrey Jenkins and Derek Young** - experienced in the use of *Solution Focused Approaches*. Their intention was to provide training materials that could be used by psychologists with teacher audiences to outline the contribution of using a solution focused approach to deal with difficult behaviour. Their materials fall into two parts:

(i) *Keys to Solutions*

An elaborate Powerpoint presentation with presentation notes and activity sheets to introduce the principles of a solution focused approach, using case study examples that all involve difficult or challenging behaviour.

(ii) *Additional Materials*

Additional Powerpoint materials and activities, developing further the application of the approach to the field of emotional and behavioural difficulties.

A basic assumption of this approach is that an emphasis on the past and on the details of a problem are not necessary for the development of solutions. There are always exceptions, that is times when a problem is less (or even absent) and these can be critical when identifying effective strategies. Fundamental to a solution focused approach is the belief that small changes can lead to more widespread changes. People have the resources to resolve their difficulties. The individual's own goal is central.

Again, these materials are displayed in the publication in text form, but the key resource is the CD-ROM.

For those unable to access Microsoft Powerpoint and Word, sets of coloured overhead transparencies and handouts for either training pack can be purchased directly from the authors at a cost of £15.



Anger, aggression and conflict



Keys to solutions

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RAISING ACHIEVEMENT AND INCREASING INCLUSION

Billy Bonar, PDP Coordinator

The group was initially charged with looking at roles and perspectives in fostering inclusive education and in helping schools to raise achievement. It is obvious that this is an extremely wide remit and it was also clear to the group that, especially in the light of target setting, there is potentially a mutually inhibiting tension between these two key policy aims. The group took the view that while due weight must be given to the policy details which threaten to render raising achievement and increasing social and educational inclusion mutually contradictory, the way forward is to recognise that these two policy strands can be mutually enhancing. Indeed, that they are essential, practical manifestations, within a single process, of a progressive education system evolving to meet the needs of the citizens of a modernising democracy.

The balance of emphasis in the reports which form the main document, therefore, is on evaluative description of developments in effective teaching and learning and on practical means of helping teachers identify their own learning needs and of aiding them in taking forward the developments necessary in order to raise achievement while increasing inclusion. The group identified the key skills required by psychologists to play this role, in addition to training skills, as those involved in the process of professional consultation.

Individual differences in educational attainment: the interface of social inclusion and raising achievement

In this paper, **Dorothy Gallacher** offers a robust and challenging discussion of the tensions which can arise between the efforts to both increase inclusion and raise achievement, if the latter is distorted by too great an emphasis on meeting targets inappropriately set to measure the progress of the average child only. In the end, she sees this as demoralising and demotivating for both pupils and teachers. She argues that policy objectives which are expressed solely in terms of what can be readily measured run the risk of distorting the ethos not only of individual schools, but also of the entire education system. Instead of identifying and developing appropriate measures of what we value, we risk valuing merely the results of what may be readily measured, which can lead only to new forms of educational and social exclusion. She argues for a way forward which requires recognition and respect for human diversity and the consequent range of educational attainment. Schools might then be viewed as successful when results display a healthy normal distribution. She recognises that this is not merely a matter of policy adjustment, in that policy tends to reflect the values of society.

Taking on the challenge of exclusion and raising achievement

By identifying the consultative and training roles as those most appropriate for Psychological Services to play in addressing these issues, Dorothy Gallacher sets the scene for the work of **Jennifer Sutherland, Jane Smyth and Helen Mackay**. They begin by describing the philosophical and political context for social inclusion and raising educational achievement and go on to discuss the impact of target setting which, they argue, by focusing on attainment in literacy and numeracy, is running counter to the *National Guidelines 5-14 Curriculum* documents in failing to recognise both the range of human ability and the imperative to aid the development of the whole child within the developmental continuum.

Their discussion moves on to examine practical means by which raising achievement and social inclusion can co-exist. Principally these are by creating the right environment and by identifying the knowledge, skills and understanding required



Raising achievement
Increasing inclusion



Head-to-head or
hand-in-hand?



Resolution in action

by class teachers in order to create inclusive classrooms. The writers offer ample detail under each heading before arguing for the establishment of staff support groups in order to develop a context for addressing the challenges. Drawing on Stringer et al (1992), they assert that staff groups can:



Sharing the burden,
easing the strain

- ▲ reduce feelings of isolation and stress
- ▲ enhance the understanding of problematic or difficult behaviour and generate strategies for dealing with it
- ▲ enhance the development of interpersonal skills
- ▲ establish a supporting and trusting working relationship with colleagues where problems/concerns can be shared
- ▲ enhance an awareness of the ways groups interact and work together
- ▲ strengthen morale and increase self-confidence by empowering colleagues to resolve their own difficulties without taking responsibility away from them

The consultative role is seen as essential to prompting the development of staff support groups because it can aid teachers in action to:

- ▲ generate possible solutions to the particular problem being brought by the consultee
- ▲ enhance the consultee's ability to generalise to other situations the problem-solving process used within the consultation

At the same time, the consultee remains a direct agent of change.

The writers make the case that the inclusive classroom and inclusive school can provide a context through which the objective of raising achievement *can* be met. In order to help schools become inclusive organisations, they argue that teaching staff need opportunities to:



Doing better to get the best

- ▲ explore issues around inclusion and raising achievement
- ▲ develop their own problem-solving frameworks
- ▲ reflect on current practice in relation to what is known about effective learning and teaching
- ▲ share expertise
- ▲ discuss anxieties and concerns within a supportive environment

In order to meet these needs, the writers have devised a series of seven workshops, based on a professional consultation framework, entitled, *Getting the Best from Every Child in Your Class: Taking on the Challenge of Inclusion and Raising Achievement*. All seven workshop plans are fully laid out in an aims/objectives/methodology format in the main document. The workshops will be implemented in the 2000-01 school session and the authors should be contacted directly for news of their progress.

Raising achievement through transferable skills: promoting self-managed learners

While helping to create an inclusive context, it is essential to disseminate the theories, models and methods which may contribute to the effort at raising achievement. **Steve Trickey** offers a comprehensive, evaluative survey of what is available. In order to organise a richly diverse and complex field, he has devised a model which usefully distinguishes learning skills, thinking skills and social and emotional skills within the teaching and learning context, while keeping to the



Skills for learning,
skills for life

fore the actual process of their dynamic inter-relating. This model is set in the context not only of government policy, but also of the imperatives of the modern economy and the requirements of citizenship in the new century. The author cites Clackmannanshire Council's *Learning to Succeed* (1998) policy as a practical example of the teaching of skills in using skills, specifically *learning how to learn* and *learning how to think*, which is being implemented at a council-wide level.

The evaluative survey of approaches to raising achievement is divided into three main sections reflecting the authors' organising model, as follows:

- ▲ Raising achievement through accelerated learning
- ▲ Raising achievement through thinking skills
- ▲ Raising achievement through social and emotional skills

Finally, the author discusses issues relating to the psychology of change. The point is well made that the principles which underpin learning are the same for professionals as they are for infants. It is therefore essential to start where teachers are by meeting what they have identified as their own learning needs in a supportive, unthreatening context. This imperative clearly points yet again to the deployment of consultation and training skills by psychologists.



Learning for a change

Promoting understanding of the ways in which children learn

Harvie Cummings and Ken Sweeney take up the challenge of introducing practical measures of change aimed at raising achievement through teaching reading comprehension-fostering and comprehension-monitoring skills to children in a primary three class. This involved not only the classteacher, but also the children's parents and was based on *Mediated Learning*, which is an interactive teaching style which helps pupils develop a range of both cognitive and affective problem-solving skills, and *Reciprocal Teaching*, developed by Palinscar and Brown (1984) as a practical form of *metacognitive* learning. The *Reciprocal Teaching* intervention format involves teaching four strategies, as follows:



Mediating and reciprocating

- ▲ *Summarising*: identifying and paraphrasing the main ideas in a story
- ▲ *Question generation*: identifying the types of information about which questions should be asked
- ▲ *Predicting*: predicting how the story might develop
- ▲ *Clarifying*: identifying loss of meaning

In addition to being involved in the classroom component, the children's parents also attended a series of four workshops aimed at promoting their understanding of how their children learn. These are fully described in the main document in an aims/activities/discussion format.

This was a small-scale pilot project which yielded a wealth of information which will be utilised by the authors to refine future developments. Their observations, experiences and conclusions will be of value to other psychologists planning similar interventions. These include:

- ▲ parental participation is essential, as those children whose parents were most involved did best
- ▲ more sessions are required to allow more time for skills practice

- ▲ more sessions will also facilitate fuller responses according to the principles of reciprocal teaching and mediated learning
- ▲ top-up sessions are required to ensure optimal generalisation

Approaches to raising achievement: parts 1, 2 and 3

Although teachers may be enthused by many of the recent insights, concepts and approaches to effective teaching and learning, it is likely to be extremely difficult for teachers to find the time to develop critical perspectives and programmes of practical implementation. In this context, commercial teaching packages are highly attractive to teachers and it is important that psychologists are involved in the selection, adaptation, implementation and evaluation of such packages. **Catherine Paterson and Anne Yelland** have taken a close look at the implementation of one such package in both primary and secondary school settings. They concluded that life long learning skills must be developed through an awareness of the learning process, rather than the mere acquisition of content, and that commercial packages serve a purpose for teachers by stimulating interest and experiment and by raising teachers' confidence. They therefore provide teachers with a useful starting point for further development.

Education is at the heart of cultural development and therefore is perpetually the subject of social, academic and political controversy. In the context of increasingly clearly defined and more confidently asserted rights, the papers presented by this group suggest that Scottish education can make a crucial contribution to an increasingly multicultural and tolerant community in a secure and prosperous Europe.

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BEST VALUE: WHAT IS IT AND WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR A QUALITY ASSURED PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICE?

Cyril Hellier, PDP Coordinator

Introduction

In common with other public services, accountability has become a significant issue for Psychological Services. Providing effective services and value for money are not new aspirations for Psychological Services, however the advent of Best Value transforms the aspiration into an imperative.

The participants in this strand of the PDP were drawn from all grades. They sought to outline the key concepts of Best Value with particular reference to their application to Psychological Services; to examine the process of a Best Value review; and to illustrate this through studying Psychological Services which had undergone or were about to undergo a Best Value review. The participants set themselves the task of providing a detailed guide to the performance indicators in *Quality Assurance in Education Authority Psychological Services* (Mackay, 1999), through listing ways in which services can evidence their practice. They have also produced staff development presentation materials, summarising the key elements of their work.

Background to Best Value

This subgroup comprised **Peta Barber, Laura Ann Currie and Peter Kaye**. It set the scene for understanding Best Value in terms of its four key principles:

- ▲ Accountability
- ▲ Transparency
- ▲ Continuous Improvement
- ▲ Ownership

The subgroup also elucidated the four “C’s” of Best Value:

- ▲ Challenge
- ▲ Compare
- ▲ Consult
- ▲ Compete

Challenge involves a service in questioning its function and purpose by means of an internal review linked to external consultation.

Comparing requires performance measurement and monitoring, which is fundamental to Best Value and should be generated as routine management information. Benchmarking is an essential tool for obtaining a comparative measure of the effectiveness of a service. It is concluded by the subgroup that benchmarking among services is in the earliest stages of development and that work requires to be done on deciding which are relevant and reasonable factors which might be compared across services. Meaningful comparison will require consistency of data collection across services as well as information on the reasons for current practices or levels of expenditure. Therefore, initially, comparisons are likely to raise more questions than answers which may prove a valuable exercise in itself.

Consulting involves seeking feedback from service users. ASPEP (1999) states that necessary, but not sufficient, indicators of performance would include feedback



Best Value: what is it?



Key principles



The 4 C's of BV

from schools as to whether the psychologist has developed an effective working relationship with them, and from parents and young people as to whether the psychologist has been helpful and their input useful. The SOEID (1998a) recommended that consultation should not only occur on outcomes, but should also involve stakeholders in “..identifying needs and setting objectives, priorities and targets...considering options for the delivery of services...[and]...reviewing services and past performances and setting out improvements to be made in the future”.

Competition, sensibly applied, is a vital element of Best Value according to *Circular 12/98* (SOEID,1998b). It indicates that services should aim to identify meaningful external comparators, including private and voluntary sectors where relevant. Borders Council did this through comparative costing of one-off assessments with voluntary societies such as the Downs’ Syndrome Association and the Dyslexia Institute.

The four C’s are interlinked processes. It is clear that *best valuing* depends on data and information that is not all immediately available to service managers, having never before been routinely collected by education departments or psychological services. However, information which is easiest to collect may be of little use in service evaluation, whilst information which is of greatest value is often difficult to collect. There is currently wide variation across services as to what is routinely collected and what use is made of it. As Best Value develops, the need to identify clearly what is relevant data and how this can be collated, in order that comparisons about service delivery can be made, both within and between services, remains a core issue.

Psychological Services Experience of Best Valuing

The second subgroup comprised **Shona Crawford, Shona Isbister and Gordon Trahar**. Practitioners actively involved in best valuing in three different psychological services were asked to provide reflections in order to illustrate issues in practice. Three principal psychologists were asked to describe how they had approached Best Value. The same structured interview was conducted with a senior and main grade psychologist to elicit views on the Best Value process from non-management personnel.

Conclusions from the interviews suggest that although Best Value is new, the concepts and processes involved are not. Services have undertaken reviews of service delivery in the past and, in effect, have been committed to continuous improvement. The impact of Best Value on practice is that it provides a structure to ensure a more comprehensive survey of service delivery, development planning and implementation of performance improvements. It is apparent that there is no universal template as the Best Value process will vary in detail depending on the size of the service, its previous experience with review processes and external influences.

There were two factors common to all three services which appeared to be particularly challenging:

- ▲ the time commitment required from all members of staff
- ▲ the difficulty in developing realistic and relevant benchmarking measures

The Best Value process can be a positive means of encouraging team building and



enhancing communication within a service. Benchmarking can assist communication and the sharing of best practice among services.

Quality Assurance and Best Value

The third subgroup comprised **Fergal Doherty, Roslyn Redpath and Chris Scott**. This subgroup aimed to encourage psychological services to articulate service structures and practice within the context of both the performance indicators presented in the recently published quality assurance document (Mackay,1999) and Best Value. The framework derived offers the opportunity for practice and planning within a service to be mapped on to three different types of measurement.



Conclusions

It would be a mistake to adopt a merely quantitative approach to Best Value which seeks not to “...measure what is valued...” but rather to “...value what may be easily measured...” (ASPEP,1999). Best Value can be embedded within service development planning as part of an on-going cycle of planning and review. It would also be sensible to locate Best Value and quality assurance within the review mechanisms of overall council strategy and education service management planning. Certainly services will want to articulate their development planning in terms that are compatible with Best Value and which reflect the four key areas of performance indicators outlined in the *Quality Assurance* document (Mackay,1999).

It is essential that services ensure that participation in development planning is accessible to all staff. Targets agreed should be clear, achievable and easily matched to the core service priorities. Best Value will therefore raise some crucial issues for psychological services.

The ability to contemplate change. It will be important for services to be able to look at aspects of service delivery and assess whether the service is valued (*consult*), necessary (*challenge*), ask if it can be done differently (*compare*) or if others can offer the same service (*compete*).

The reaction to change. A Best Value review is likely to engender stress and anxiety in individuals and services as a whole, as many externally imposed accountability measures tend to do. Individual styles and responses to coping with change are largely ignored in the literature related to Best Value, yet should be integral to the process. Psychologists should be more aware than most of the psychology of change, they should be more aware of such responses and be willing to act accordingly.

The increasing standardisation of Psychological Services. The increasing use of benchmarking may lead to pressure to ensure that data collected is consistent across all services. Benchmarking, however, offers the profession the opportunity to engage in development and interventions across council boundaries and to become a coherent voice in demonstrating clarity of purpose and quality throughout Scotland. Given the diversity of psychological services, a degree of standardisation may be welcomed. However, nationally imposed standards may conflict with local decision-making about service delivery.



The interface between the service and its users. Best Value places significant importance on user feedback. However, there will always be areas of operation where service users' wishes will not be in accord with the policy and philosophy of the council or psychological services. There may also be conflicting aims among

major users of the service, creating conflicting demands.

An applied psychologist has to have the skills and ability to think critically, to reflect on alternative options, to use information from other areas, to seek the views of clients, to consult with service users, to challenge existing assumptions, to set goals, to evaluate interventions and to act as an agent for change. Essentially, Best Value asks psychologists to apply psychological skills in their own services. In so doing the process should be enabling for individual psychologists and services as a whole. This paper suggests that the challenges of Best Value should not be perceived as threats, but rather as opportunities to be creative in implementing positive change within services.



Psychology for Psychological Services

The CD-ROM provided with the PDP publication provides a Powerpoint presentation which highlights key points made throughout the main document. It is intended that services wishing to conduct staff development in the area of Best Value could use this directly or adapt it to meet their own needs.

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