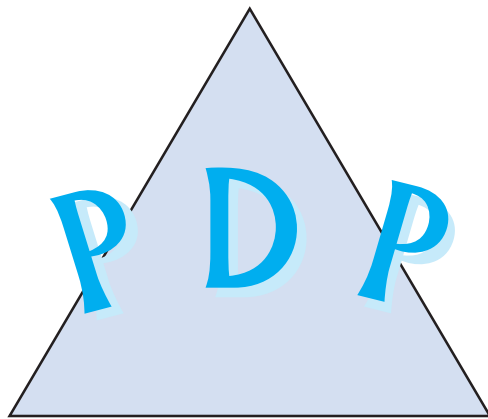


1996-1997



Professional Development Programme
for Educational Psychologists in Scotland

A Summary

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 1 The Professional Development Programme for Educational Psychologists in Scotland is managed by the Association of Scottish Principal Educational Psychologists.
- 2 The Professional Development Programme gratefully acknowledges the support of the Scottish Office Education and Industry Department in funding and promoting the Programme.
- 3 The cooperation of education authorities in agreeing the themes of the Programme and enabling educational psychologists to participate in the projects is appreciated. Psychologists carry out the research, development and dissemination work for up to twelve days in the yearly PDP cycle.
- 4 The further assistance of Stirling, East Ayrshire and West Lothian Councils respectively, for providing secondment of Dr Ian Liddle, Mrs Jean Kerr and Mr Charles Walker as Coordinators of the Programme is gratefully acknowledged.
- 5 The Association of Scottish Principal Educational Psychologists is gratefully thanked for the services of Mr Alan Haughey who has acted as Moderator to the Programme.
- 6 The Programme is subject to the scrutiny of a Steering Group which meets on three occasions during the year. The participation of local authority representative, Mrs Shannon Bigham (East Lothian Council), Dr Cyril Hellier, (British Psychological Society, Scottish Division of Educational Psychology) and Mr David Binnie (SOEID) is acknowledged with thanks. The Steering Group is ably chaired by Dr Bill Maxwell, HMI.
- 7 **The views expressed in the various reports and the conclusions reached are those of the authors and are not attributable either to employing authorities or to the Scottish Office Education and Industry Department.**
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The Professional Development Programme for Educational Psychologists in Scotland: A Summary of the 1996-97 Projects

Ian Liddle, Jean Kerr and Charles Walker, 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 Office Education and Industry Department. This is the second 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 from 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 1996-97 programme, namely **Collaborative Assessment: Issues in Context and Practice**, **Service Level Agreements and Negotiating Skills**, and **Early Identification and Intervention**. The purpose of this document is to draw the attention of colleagues in applied psychology, education and related fields to the valuable pieces of 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 which have been completed. A list of project participants and contact numbers is given at the end of this booklet.*



Professional Development Programme

COLLABORATIVE ASSESSMENT: ISSUES IN CONTEXT AND PRACTICE

Charles Walker, PDP Coordinator

Background

In the first PDP cycle (1995/96) a project group identified a number of issues for further enquiry in the area of assessment (Beck, Hewitt, Lamont and Littlefair, 1996). These were:

1. Elaborating the model for assessment in the area of children's social and emotional difficulties.
2. Investigating in more detail the psychologist's contribution in individual assessment of children's learning styles and the area of metacognition.
3. Identifying further issues in assessment which can be addressed through cross-boundary investigation.



Collaborative Assessment:
Elaborating the Model

ASPEP was aware of a continuing interest in these areas and invited participants in the current PDP cycle (1996/97) to contribute to them. The task of the participants in early group discussions was to clarify their respective interests in response to the ASPEP/PDP remit. Three sub-groups began work on different aspects of assessment related to these themes.

Collaborative Assessment in the Context of Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties

The group comprising **Jenni Barr, Elizabeth Lamont, Elizabeth McIntyre and Shona Munro (Clackmannan, South Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway and Fife respectively)** began their work by revisiting a topic from the previous year's PDP cycle. Barr (1996) had analysed the work of the educational psychologist as part of the multidisciplinary team in secondary school units for pupils with

emotional and behavioural difficulties. She identified a trend for work to become more consultative and facilitatory as roles became more coordinated and clarified. Was this something particular to the setting in which the study was conducted, or did it have more general applicability as a model of good practice?

As the team pursued discussion on this question it became apparent that the most powerful influence on practice for members was the context within which they operated locally. This was despite the existence of a range of nationally recognised professional and legislative guidance. Using focused discussion to share experience they decided to direct their efforts towards a search for possible causes of the disparities.

The group noted first of all that there was considerable agreement between psychologists concerning a range of key issues in assessment in general. In particular, the shift away from within-child models implying *acts* of assessment towards a process of contextual and functional analysis seems to be almost complete in terms of a shared professional viewpoint. This applies as much to EBD as to learning difficulties (the traditional dichotomy in assessment-related analysis). Indeed, in assessment activities driven by the acknowledged needs of the child or young person, such distinctions may be of much less relevance than the need to achieve clarity about the tasks and roles required of the various professionals contributing to the process.

The group argues that, apart from policies and guidelines, there is a set of influences on practice in collaborative assessment. These stem from the perceptions of the participants as to what their roles are, the extent to which these are agreed and made explicit within the team, and the expectations which each team member has of the others. It is only when these forces are recognised and negotiated satisfactorily at a local level that progress can be made in the direction of more effective and professionally satisfying collaborations.

By engaging in reflective discussion to share experience and ideas the project group members have highlighted some important issues in the elaboration of models for assessment in the field of EBD. The unique contribution of the educational psychologist (and, indeed, of other professionals) is delineated in practice by reference to a variety of influencing factors. Any model of collaborative work must take account of these. However, local variations on models of best practice are likely to be more affected by the collaborative milieu than by wider considerations. The project group recognises a need for continued debate between psychologists and among collaborating professionals to improve understanding of each other's practice.

Affective And Metacognitive Aspects Of Achievement

David Gavine, Elaine Nixon and John Arnaud (City of Dundee, City of Edinburgh and Perth and Kinross respectively) formed a team which examined issues in affective dimensions of the learner and the learning environment. Their paper echoes the theme from Barr et al regarding commonalities of principle and the restraints imposed on this by variation in experience of work-related contexts. By offering a 'map' of assessment variables they provide guidance which psychologists might find of value in negotiating their role and contribution in the practice of collaborative assessment.

The first part of their work consists of a summary of theoretical perspectives (eg Feuerstein, 1980) which describes the affective character of the learner and the contextual variables which set the emotional tone of learning. They draw attention to the wide range of settings and client groups with which educational psychologists work and the concomitant complexity of the interventions which are possible. This complexity must be managed.



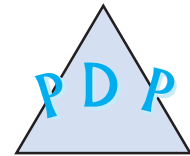
**Clarifying Roles
in EBD
Multidisciplinary Teams**



Affect and Context

It is argued that this may be aided by reference to four dimensions of assessment:

- ▲ focus (the type of interaction which is the subject of the intervention, eg between teacher and whole class)
- ▲ distance (the level of generality at which the intervention lies, eg direct observation, discussion with teachers regarding an observation)
- ▲ reference (normative/ipsative)
- ▲ domain (the area of development under consideration, eg language, play).



Dimensions of Assessment and Intervention

Plotting any assessment/intervention proposal against these four criteria will yield a rationale for its employment but, it is argued, there is likely to be considerable variation between practitioners in the prior learning that they bring to the choices. Emotional responses to any given situation might differ widely, thereby effectively shutting off certain avenues. The importance of acknowledging these differences and sharing their implications with colleagues becomes an issue in the reflexive consideration of assessment strategies.

The authors offer a set of statements of principle in assessment practice which assist in guiding the selection of appropriate techniques. These refer to the extent to which practice is: collaborative, naturalistic, transactional, solution-focused, holistic, layered and reflexive. They argue that a number of established assessment/intervention tools can be offered in line with these principles which allow psychologists to address the affective aspects of the learner and of the environment. These are:

- ▲ SPIN (Video Interaction Guidance) (PDP, 1996)
- ▲ Solution-focused approaches (Rhodes and Ajmal, 1995)
- ▲ Attunement Strategy (Hastings, 1992).

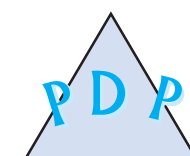
The first two of these are well known in Scottish educational psychology. The third is described in some detail in an appendix to the paper.

The participants' main practical interests lay in the area of solution-focused approaches and they began to develop materials for the introduction of these ideas to teachers in schools. This was not completed within the timescale of the project but is work which will be carried on. There is one case study included in the report.

The group confirms and extends the growing acceptance within the profession that there is no 'right' form of assessment. They help provide a rational, yet reflexive, basis for an eclectic approach in which the needs of the client are seen in context and in collaboration with others.

The Identification of Specific Reading Difficulties Through Assessment of Listening Comprehension Skills

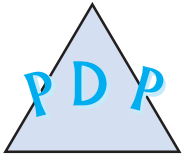
The final paper in the collection describes the construction of an assessment instrument in collaboration with learning support teachers across a wide area of Scotland. **Keith Wood, Douglas Fisher and Diana Fox (City of Edinburgh)** enter the area of specific reading difficulty well aware of the criticisms which have been levelled at the 'discrepancy' model in recent years (ie in which a discrete sub-group of children is delineated as having a specific difficulty, or dyslexia, on



Specific Reading Difficulties

the basis of a disparity between measures of IQ and reading age).

Their starting point, however, is that while the concept of specific difficulty is stated in law and education authorities must seek advice from psychologists regarding assessment and intervention, there is a need to continue to seek more relevant and defensible forms of assessment. There seems little doubt, from the participants' own findings, that there is a very wide range of approaches employed within Scottish services in response to this requirement. Furthermore, it is not an area in which policy seems to be well developed at a local level.



An Alternative Assessment Measure
for Specific Reading Difficulties

Following an extensive literature search and examination of a range of tests they settled upon the 'Meaning Identification Technique' (Marchant, Royer and Greene, 1988) as the raw material for their own work. In this paradigm a passage of prose consisting of twelve sentences is audio-taped and played to the testee. Twelve questions relating to the passage are then read. All of these are paraphrases of the originals, six of them having been subjected to significant alteration of meaning. The testee indicates which of the sentences she/he thinks has the same meaning as the original passage.

By presenting the test to a number of pupils (200 in all) it should be possible to develop a diagnostic instrument to detect specific reading difficulties. The working hypothesis here will be that children with more specific problems will score higher on such a test than those whose difficulties are more general. The test passages are adapted from assessment materials in use in the 5-14 programme in schools at Levels A and D and can, therefore, be said to be curriculum-referenced.

Packs of test materials have been distributed to school learning support teachers throughout Central Scotland and the early results have been encouraging. As with the other papers in the collection there will be further work by the project participants, with the possibility of future publications and other forms of dissemination.

Anyone wishing additional information should contact any of the participants listed at the end of this document.

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SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENTS AND NEGOTIATING SKILLS

Ian Liddle, PDP Senior Coordinator

Rationale

A major trend within the public sector in an age of accountability has been the introduction of business and management concepts such as total quality management, service planning and marketing strategies. In this climate the concept of psychological services operating service level contracts with local authorities was studied in detail particularly in England. The feasibility of applying such approaches in a broader-based Scottish context was worthy of consideration. At the same time, there has been some concern within Scottish services about psychologists' abilities to conduct the range of negotiations which accompany such agreements. The idea emerged of looking in detail at Service Level Agreements (SLAs) and Practice Agreements, as well as the skills involved in negotiating and implementing these.

The small group of psychologists working on this project therefore produced the following plan of action:

- ▲ the production of a discussion paper on the significance of Service Level Agreements to the work of psychological services
- ▲ a survey of the current usage of service level and practice agreements within Scottish services and a set of recommendations regarding good practice
- ▲ the development of a package for use by services in implementing such agreements and in other identifiable negotiating situations.

The Significance of the Concept of Service Level Agreements for Psychological Services

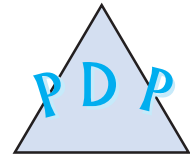
While the exercise of devising and implementing SLAs involves services in the valuable steps of stating aims, defining what services are on offer and stipulating standards for the delivery and the monitoring of services, a number of contra-indicators can also be identified, such as:

- ▲ the time and energy expended, usually by senior staff
- ▲ the size of services following local government reorganisation
- ▲ the danger of services becoming less flexible and offering less choice under the influence of formal SLAs.

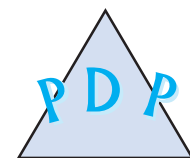
The balance of argument suggests that the pursuit of formal SLAs with authorities is not warranted; however, the concept of developing practice agreements with schools and other agencies is endorsed, together with the suggestion that it would be helpful for each service *to devise a framework for developing practice agreements to offer to schools and other clients, and to negotiate the authority's acceptance and promotion of this framework.*

A Survey of the Current Usage of Service Level Agreements and Practice Agreements within Psychological Services

One project subgroup, comprising **Stephen Kerr, Glasgow City** and **Lyndsey Oliver, Fife**, examined material produced to date by services in Scotland. While the vast majority of services are either using, developing or intending to develop



Professional Development Programme



Service Level Agreements
or Practice Agreements?

agreements of various kinds with consumers, especially schools, these were in the form of practice agreements rather than formal service level agreements involving authorities. A more detailed follow-up of responses from five services (Aberdeen City, Ayrshire East, Clackmannan/Stirling, Ayrshire North, and Fife) revealed that the most common features of such agreements were:



- ▲ a time allocation formula
- ▲ a range of services/service strands
- ▲ quality assurance/review/monitoring procedures
- ▲ complaints procedures
- ▲ a statement of statutory duties.

Mackay (1996) describes the comprehensive range of duties covered by the latter.

Negotiating Skills

The subgroup comprising **Wilson Frew, Ian Liddle and Jenny Wilson** (Angus, Stirling and Argyll and Bute respectively) critically examined the concept of negotiating skills in the psychological service context, developed and delivered a two-day workshop in those skills felt to be most pertinent to the psychologist's role and produced a range of materials to be customised by services for application in their own settings.

As with SLAs and other concepts imported from the world of commerce, the dangers of overemphasising the competitive aspect of negotiating are highlighted. Other observations are:



- ▲ the necessity for psychologists to distinguish between negotiation and consultation in their practice
- ▲ the need for psychologists to recognise and anticipate negotiating situations as they arise both formally and informally
- ▲ the importance of considering all three phases, ie preparation, negotiation and maintenance
- ▲ the need to emphasise the achievement of common goals, the interdependence of individuals and the effective delivery of appropriate services rather than a competitive model.

The workshop was conducted by the three authors in January 1997 with a group of volunteers from nine different authorities. It offered opportunities to discuss and practice the skills of preparation, negotiation and maintenance, including:



- ▲ code switching
- ▲ finding common ground
- ▲ conflict resolution
- ▲ arguing.

Employing various formats including brainstorming, scenarios and role play, the workshop received very positive evaluation from all participants. The customisation task at the end of the workshop asked participants to make use of materials from

the workshops, the pre-course reading, and the brainstorming sessions to assemble an action plan to take their own service forward. The extended write-up of the project includes all of these materials and sample formats used by different services across the country as appendices, as well as a range of pertinent references.

Anyone wishing further information on this project can contact any of the participants listed at the end of this document.

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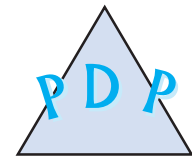
EARLY IDENTIFICATION AND INTERVENTION

Jean Kerr, PDP Coordinator

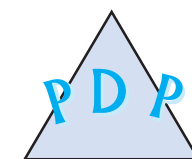
There has been a steadily growing interest in early intervention within education services across Scotland over the past few years. Several related initiatives have also taken place over this period: the development of the 0 - 5 curriculum; the facilitation of access to nursery education for all as well as a range of projects directed at raising standards of literacy through innovations such as phonological awareness training.

The model underlying these approaches is similar to that of preventative medicine, where factors which optimise health and development are seen to be beneficial for all. The expectation is that there will be a corresponding reduction in the need for intervention on a reactive basis. In educational terms, this translates into identifying the curricular content and teaching methodologies which will optimise the learning process.

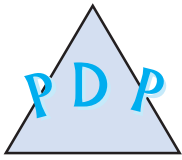
Pursuing the medical analogy, it is acknowledged that there will also be continuing need for intervention of an ameliorative nature where the needs of individual children will require to be identified and appropriate intervention supports put in place. Central to this approach is the need for effective identification procedures. The population to be identified is not, however, an homogeneous one. Two sub-groups can be identified, although these are not wholly discrete groups. Firstly, there are the children whose special needs are evident from infancy and who have disabilities which will require special learning and teaching provision to be made.



Workshop Materials



Professional Development Programme



Models in Early Identification and Intervention

The second group of children can be viewed as educationally 'at risk' due to adverse social, economic, familial or medical factors in their development. Durlack (1995) stresses that 'the effects of factors are often multiplicative rather than merely additive'. However, it is also acknowledged that ameliorating factors (eg from home or school) can minimise these effects (Desforges and Lindsay, 1995).

Identification and intervention are, therefore, complementary processes, each contributing to the processes of optimising learning and teaching. Models employed in the process of early identification and intervention cover the spectrum from child deficit, through interactionist to curricular deficit. Identification without consideration of appropriate intervention systems can serve to promote child deficit models whilst interventions without strategies for identification run the risk of lack of clear targets and inefficient use of resources. Where teaching is based on ongoing formative assessment it can be argued that there is a blurring of the preventative and ameliorative distinctions.

The remit for the 1996/97 Professional Development Programme on Early Identification and Intervention was:

to identify and collate information on good practice in early identification and intervention in a form that will be accessible and practicable for services, authorities and schools.

With the foregoing issues in mind, the group addressing this task felt that it would be beneficial to focus on the 0-8 age range, examining issues at both pre-school and early stages primary. Screening initiated at the P3 stage was not examined within this study.

Four aspects emerged as being central to the topic and each of these has been addressed within a separate section of the full report. In addition, the group identified a small number of key references which are particularly pertinent to the topic of early identification and intervention. The sections of the report cover the following topic areas:

- ▲ a critique of assessment centre and pre-school community assessment approaches
- ▲ a critique of issues involved in 'educational disadvantage' involving differing identification and intervention strategies
- ▲ the nursery-primary transition process
- ▲ information on current initiatives across Scotland in respect of early identification and intervention
- ▲ key references.



Issues in Early Identification and Intervention

The PDP group worked collaboratively in the sharing and collation of information. Each group member then took responsibility for the final presentation of the specific sections of the publication.

Early Identification and Intervention: Differing Multidisciplinary Approaches

The group comprising **Margaret McGregor, Aberdeen City** and **Julie McPherson, North Ayrshire** focused on identification and intervention for children with marked disabilities. Their paper provides an overview of the benefits and limiting factors operating within assessment centre and pre-school community assessment structures.

In the assessment centre model, advantages included access to a variety of specialists in 'one stop' and enhanced communication opportunities for professionals. However, limiting factors were also identified. These included the danger that centralisation could result in fewer resources being available in local communities. It was also felt that there was a danger of a 'within child' focus predominating.

Advantages of the community assessment team model were seen in terms of its potential to provide more naturalistic assessments as well as affording greater flexibility in the processes of assessment, intervention and monitoring. Limiting factors included the possibility of longer timescales in operation, particularly in respect of the first meeting between professionals and parents. It was also felt that communication between professional groups had the potential to be more problematic.

The paper also outlines a range of support provision which can be directly linked to identification of needs. The authors feel that a variety of supports should be on offer to allow parents a choice to match not only the needs of the child at that time but the broader needs of the family itself. It is felt likely that in differing social, emotional and economic circumstances, families would select different items from the options available. The paper concludes with a set of principles of good practice for both the assessment/identification and the intervention processes. These include:

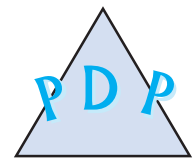
- ▲ ensure that parents feel valued, included and adequately consulted
- ▲ ensure smooth and adequate communication amongst professionals.
- ▲ provide a variety of available supports to enable parental choice.

Early Identification of Young Children Who are Educationally 'At Risk'

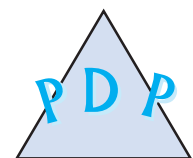
Engelina Davids, West Lothian and Margaret McGregor, Aberdeen City have examined the complex issues involved in the identification of pupils who are likely to be educationally 'at risk'. A critique of issues in both the identification and intervention process is provided. Problems of predictive validity in relation to screening systems are examined as well as difficulties which can arise from the need for a screening tool to be 'multi-purpose', ie:

- ▲ providing a profile of each child
- ▲ targeting resources
- ▲ identifying teaching methodologies
- ▲ providing a baseline for measurement of progress over time.

Benefits accruing from formative assessment through structured observations with associated record keeping systems are also highlighted. A range of preventative approaches are described (community-focused, parent-focused and curriculum-focused) with observations provided on benefits and limiting factors relating to each, eg the potential 'wash out' effect if intervention is not sustained for two or three years. The paper also provides a set of key points on educational disadvantage. These include:



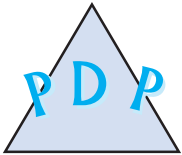
**Assessment Centre
or Community Assessment?**



Functions of Screening

Risk Factors Contributing to Disadvantage

- ▲ when cumulative, substantially increase disadvantage
- ▲ can be counteracted by positive conditions within the child and/or environment (school and home)
- ▲ are not stable over time: some are more predictive of developmental delay in the early years while others have more long-term educational implications.



Education Disadvantage:
Key Points

Early Identification/Screening

- ▲ the earlier identification takes place, the less reliably predictive of longer-term educational failure
- ▲ early identification is more likely to be linked with appropriate intervention if it also involves teacher observation and record keeping, leading to curriculum planning and evaluation
- ▲ norm referenced screening involves significant over and under identification
- ▲ there is a danger of skills based screening perpetuating a deficit model, self-fulfilling prophecies and narrow teaching focus.

Preventative/Intervention Programmes are likely to be most effective when they

- ▲ involve parents
- ▲ start in the early stages of education
- ▲ are long term (at least two to three years).

Pre-School to Primary Transition: A Critical Stage

Margaret Crankshaw, East Ayrshire has examined the topic of pre-school to primary transition. This is perhaps a timely study, when greater continuity between the sectors is occurring. Previously the discontinuity had almost been celebrated as a 'rite of passage' with entry to education clearly focused on P1 intake.

The paper examines two important points:

- ▲ increasing curricular continuity between nursery and primary schools with implications for the liaison process
- ▲ induction procedures in the primary school.



Pre-School to Primary Transition

The author places the curricular and ideological mismatch between nursery and primary sectors in historical context and identifies the factors contributing to change over the past few years. Record keeping within pre-five establishments is examined and previous barriers to the effective transmission of information between the sectors are identified. Induction processes are examined, together with the central role played by parents.

Key recommendations for good practice are identified. These include:

At Local Authority Level

- ▲ produce policy guidelines on the transition process and on structure and content of written records
- ▲ appoint staff development advisers/officers for 0-8 years
- ▲ encourage dialogue and joint initiatives between sectors.

At Primary School Level

- ▲ develop intake induction programmes
- ▲ identify children who may be educationally 'at risk'
- ▲ establish contact with parents at an early stage
- ▲ use pre-five profiles in curricular planning and resource allocation.

At Pre-School Level

- ▲ facilitate 'school' skills (eg listening in groups)
- ▲ collate objective, meaningful information about each child and transmit this to the appropriate primary school
- ▲ identify children 'at risk'
- ▲ participate in joint agency planning.

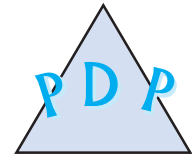
What Parents can do

- ▲ contribute to the child's profile
- ▲ participate in parent programmes, visits and curricular workshops
- ▲ familiarise the child with any new care or transport arrangements well in advance.

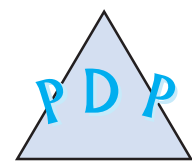
Early Identification and Intervention: Database of Current Practice in Scotland

Information was gathered by **Cedric Cramer, Glasgow City** and **Sandra Papworth, City of Edinburgh** on current and new initiatives in early identification and intervention taking place in education authorities across Scotland. The aim of this task was to facilitate the exchange of information between authorities, as well as examining existing trends or patterns. A database has been compiled, providing a brief description of each of the initiatives, together with geographical location and a contact person who will provide further information.

Responses were received from 26 authorities in which current or planned initiatives in the field of early identification/intervention were described. Some authorities had more than one project operating and there are 38 entries on the database.



Principles of Good Practice



Sharing Information

Of these, 18 are focused on early literacy, the other 20 initiatives cover the following range of categories :

- ▲ multi-disciplinary approaches
- ▲ screening procedures
- ▲ pre-school - primary liaison
- ▲ parents' groups (including parenting skills training)
- ▲ language development
- ▲ social, emotional and behavioural supports
- ▲ special needs
- ▲ early entrant programmes.

It has not been the intention to provide an exhaustive list of all projects currently taking place across Scotland but, from the responses received from authorities and psychological services, to provide data which will facilitate the exchange of information on current developments.

Some Key References

A final section by **Sandra Papworth, City of Edinburgh** and **Cedric Cramer, Glasgow City** also sets out to provide information which would be helpful to colleagues wishing to further their knowledge in the area of early identification and intervention. The authors provide a short list of key references in this field, together with a brief outline of their contents.

For further information on any of the individual papers, please make direct contact with the authors. A list of participants in the 1996/97 Early Identification and Intervention group is attached at the end of this booklet.

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Additional Sources of Information

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