

# Developing Post-School Psychological Services



## **Interim Report (August 2003): Summary of Consultation Responses**



SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

## **Acknowledgements**

1. Feedback from colleagues in stakeholder organisations, together with ongoing support from the Scottish Executive Analytical Services Division and the National Development Officers, are gratefully acknowledged.

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## 1. Introduction

1.1 The Deputy Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning, Lewis Macdonald MSP, approved the setting up of 12 Pathfinders over 2004 - 2006 to demonstrate service delivery at the local, cluster and strategic levels. Pathfinders include Strategic Officer positions to support planning and delivery at each level. Post-School Psychological Services (PSPS), to be delivered by local authority Educational Psychology Services, will apply psychological knowledge and skills to support key stakeholders and clients to enhance lifelong learning through effective deployment of the full range of professional roles.

1.2 This document provides a summary of consultation responses to the National Development Officers' *Interim Report on Developing Post-School Psychological Services*, August 2003. It also sets out the Scottish Executive's response to the main issues and outlines the next steps in relation to Pathfinders.

1.3 The PSPS Interim Report should be read alongside this document in order to fully understand the context in which many of these comments and responses have been made.

## 2. Consultation Report

2.1 The following summarises the main issues that were raised by respondents. These fall into seven key areas:

- Staffing and resourcing
- Maximisation of resources
- Key roles of Education Psychologists
- Service Level Agreements
- Training and recruitment of Educational Psychologists
- Role and organisation of other service agencies
- Pathfinders

2.2 The report aims to give an indication of the main concerns and recommendations made by all those who responded and to present the Scottish Executive's response to them. Comments in **shaded boxes** are made by the Scottish Executive and not respondents.

2.3 Across the board, the PSPS proposal and recommendations were welcomed. In principle, the idea of extending the remit of Educational Psychologists specifically into the post-school/early adult age group is seen as a good one. Moreover, the strategic focus envisaged for PSPS is largely seen as pragmatic because it usefully sets realistic parameters for the service.

2.4 There were 33 responses to the Interim Report, mainly from Local Authorities (10) and the Further Education sector (16). There was also input from Executive agencies, including Scottish Enterprise, Careers Scotland, and national networks such as the Support Training Advisory Group (STAG). All the responses fitted broadly with the 7 key areas identified above.

### 3. Staffing and Resourcing

*“The model wisely takes full account of the importance of complementary interagency working at both strategic and local levels. The benefits of this are likely to be in building capacity within the FE sector for supporting the wide range of students, rather than focusing in a more limited way on individual clients.” (HMIE)*

3.1 The majority of respondents welcomed the fact that the proposal recognised the issue of maximising Educational Psychologists’ limited resources and acknowledged the value of strategic work. However, certain views highlighted a tension between the need to provide additional frontline resources as well as a strategic overview.

3.2 The Interim Report carefully considered this issue and how it might impact, in particular, on Educational Psychologists and the extent to which they will be expected to provide a direct, hands-on PSPS.

*“The College is very pleased to see incorporated within the Interim Report an illustrated training directory. It underlines the opinion of the College that inclusive recruitment initiatives must be supported by appropriate staff development.” (John Wheatley College)*

3.3 The commitment made to training in the PSPS Interim Report was welcomed, as was the illustrative training directory.

**3.4 The focus of PSPS will deliberately centre on strategic tasks in order to maximise and invest in the resources currently available. This will be kept in mind when evaluating and assessing the effectiveness of the Pathfinders.**

### 4. Maximisation of resources

*“How can the service effectively contribute to, and complement, existing developments within colleges, particularly in the area of emotional, social, and behavioural support, supporting students with mental health difficulties and the inclusion agenda in general?” (ASC)*

4.1 Many respondents working in Educational Psychology suggested that there should be increased emphasis on collaborative and partnership working encompassing relevant agencies in the post-school sector.

4.2 It is acknowledged that the legislative and policy context is a dynamic and changing one, including Beattie implementation, Currie Report recommendations for Educational Psychologists and the Education (Additional Support for Learning) Act 2004. All of these share an inclusion agenda to better support all vulnerable young people.

*“The Psychological Service is ideally placed within education to ensure continuity and progression into post school services and we are already undertaking some of these tasks.” (Glasgow City Council)*

**4.3 Any developments should take full account of existing good practice which should be disseminated as part of Pathfinder activity.**

**4.4 Providing a breadth and balance of psychological services, differentiated according to stakeholder need, should be the main aim of the Pathfinders overall. Maximising efficiency of limited resources, by addressing common needs collaboratively, will be an essential feature of success. This should be at both local and national levels of operation.**

## **5. Key roles of Educational Psychologists**

*“I am in agreement with the roles specified for the Psychological Services. These are very similar to the national roles currently identified for Psychological Services via the Currie Report.” (East Lothian Council)*

5.1 Respondents were keen to express their support for the development of the role of Educational Psychologists within PSPS. However, one point raised in a number of responses was that, given their number and scale, Educational Psychologists may not be able to carry out every one of the key roles during Pathfinder developments.

*“The report has been given due consideration within a perspective of experience, based on working in a “best practice” area. The collaborative work done to date is at an operational level, where the need is, and so the emphasis in the report on a strategic perspective, due to staff shortages, appears contradictory.” (Glenrothes College)*

**5.2 It is acknowledged that in the Pathfinder period, there will be a tension for Educational Psychologists between more strategic roles and client-focused activity. The resultant balance struck will require careful reflection in the evaluation. However, as indicated in the Interim Report, the prime focus will remain a strategic one although linked to the engagement of - and outcomes for - individual clients. The evaluation will address the complexities of potential stakeholders and seek to reflect on outcomes for service recipients at all levels, be they other professionals or individual clients.**

## 6. Service Level Agreements

*“Service Level Agreements are crucial to a smooth service delivery.” (South Lanarkshire Council)*

6.1 While respondents were largely supportive of Service Level Agreements (SLAs), there was some debate around whether there should be a lead partner in negotiating SLAs and whether SLAs should specifically refer to the cost and resource implications of the service. Some respondents felt SLAs may be a useful way of identifying how PSPS can be sensitive to the different needs and workings of the various delivery agencies, such as school and colleges.

*“The Service Level Agreement shown in appendix 6 (in the Interim Report) could be problematic. It appears over exhaustive and would give responsibilities to a PSPS which are inconsistent with the Currie recommendations.” (Falkirk Council)*

**6.2 The majority of Psychological Services already use Service/Practice Level Agreements in their work with partner organisations. Where appropriate, Pathfinders will look to build on this practice. Other service providers, including Social Work, should be included in any activity that aims to promote better co-ordination. Pathfinder activity should highlight best practice in drawing up such Agreements relevant to the post-school sector, at local level and beyond.**

## 7. Training and recruitment of Educational Psychologists

*“It is not clear that the expansion of Educational Psychologist training which has taken place in recent years will be sufficient to meet the needs to service the current workload, and the expansion to providing a service for 16-24 year-olds looks highly problematic.” (Highland Council)*

**7.1 The training strategy for educational psychologists is of central importance in ensuring that Educational Psychology Services are appropriately equipped to service transition and the post-school sector. Close co-ordination between post-Currie Report developments and this initiative will be essential in order to maintain an accurate overview of staffing and training needs for the profession in the medium and longer term. Pathfinder activity will play an important part in supporting improvements in educational psychology training.**

7.2 The Executive has agreed to fund an additional three trainees, as a single cohort (bringing the total additional new trainees to 27), over the Pathfinder period. The Executive is in discussion with Dundee University about how post-graduate training will deliver a stronger focus on transition and post-school.

7.3 PSPS Strategic Officers will play a significant role in supporting ongoing pre-service training for Educational Psychologists in both Dundee and Strathclyde University training courses.

## 8. Role and organisation of other Service Agencies

*“There are now more agencies that have working with vulnerable young people as a key priority in their work than in the past. This is positive but it is important that these services work together in the interests of young people, not in competition.” (STAG)*

8.1 The need to recognise and understand how PSPS might link with and develop through other agencies, such as Social Work and Job Centre Plus, was expressed in some responses.

*“The proposal for clustering presents a real difficulty....it does indicate a need to be aware that at the geographical margins it may be more complex than is imagined...For one small authority to be clustering with three other authorities seems less than ideal.” (Argyll and Bute Council)*

8.2 **Building on current best practice** and co-ordination of activity across Pathfinder and all Educational Psychology Services is central to the PSPS strategy and its implementation. This will include better integration and maximisation of existing support services and systems. Co-ordination with other agencies and partner providers will be an important theme, including the development of joined-up working and effective information sharing at points of transition. These will all figure as ongoing issues in the evaluation of Pathfinder activity.

## 9. Pathfinders

*“The setting up of Pathfinder Services to demonstrate and build on good practice would also seem the appropriate way forward and we look forward to working with colleagues in the successful Pathfinder areas.” (Careers Scotland)*

9.1 Again, the general view was that the creation of Pathfinders was, in principle, an effective way of developing PSPS and generating and sharing good practice. However, a number of respondents felt there was a need for clarification of how the Pathfinders might be monitored and how good practice might be identified and disseminated amongst the relevant agencies.

9.2 The potential role of PSPS Strategic Officers should ensure that these issues continue to be addressed.

*“As well as particular Pathfinder roll out, ongoing development work should be continued at some level with non Pathfinder areas.” (Cumbernauld College)*

**9.3 The model of an extended local authority Psychological Service has been endorsed and will serve as the basis for Pathfinder activity.**

**9.4 As above, the PSPS Strategic Officers will link with non Pathfinder Services in order to maintain momentum and share best practice.**

## **10. The Way Forward - Evaluation and Monitoring of PSPS Pathfinders**

10.1 The Scottish Executive will commission an evaluation of the development and implementation of the 12 Pathfinders that will look to assess the effectiveness of PSPS in promoting improved services and better outcomes for young people.

10.2 It will identify and analyse the features of the 12 Pathfinders that help meet its objectives. It will therefore be concerned with both processes and outcomes to:

- assess the development of the PSPS at local, cluster and strategic levels;
- evaluate the role of the Strategic Officer and the part they play in planning and facilitating implementation of PSPS within Educational Psychological Services, as well as delivering services at national level;
- focus on service delivery in the 12 Pathfinders and the extent to which strategic development impacted on PSPS in practice;
- identify the extent to which the effective delivery of PSPS helped young people improve their outcomes.

10.3 The issues will be examined from a range of perspectives, from the people and agencies that will benefit from the service, as well as those who manage and deliver the service. Given the relatively short timescale and the formative nature of the initiative in starting up a new sector for the profession, qualitative data reflecting outcomes at several levels will be sought.

## **11. What Happens Next?**

11.1 Funding for Pathfinders allows for the appointment of additional Pathfinder staff (9.5 full time equivalent Educational Psychologists), as well as Strategic Officer posts (2.2 posts). The intention is to promote a breadth and balance of service focus across the 12 Pathfinders. Some Pathfinders started in April 2004; most will be operational by September 2004.

11.2 An inaugural meeting of all the Pathfinders Services took place in April 2004. A Pathfinder network will be supported by the Strategic Officers, as will a wider network for all Services.

11.3 Strategic Officers will support implementation of the overall strategy as well as providing services to stakeholder organisations at a national level. Several stakeholder groups, including Scottish Enterprise, Careers Scotland, Further Education, BRITE are being set up to advise on this level of work.

11.4 External evaluation of Pathfinder activity and outcomes is to be commissioned by the Executive by September 2004, with interim and final reports in 2005 and 2006 respectively. The outcome of the evaluation will inform decisions on the roll-out of Post-School Psychological Services across Scotland. An Evaluation Steering Group which will include representation from Pathfinder and non-Pathfinder authorities, will be set up to advise the evaluation process.

## 12. Concluding comments

12.1 The **model of an extended local authority Psychological Service** has been endorsed and will serve as the basis for Pathfinder activity. The proposed functions at both local and national levels will require careful scrutiny and evaluation given their new and innovative nature.

12.2 **Building on current best practice** and co-ordination of activity across Pathfinder and all Educational Psychology Services, is central to the PSPS strategy and implementation. This will include better integration and maximisation of existing support services and systems. Co-ordination with other agencies and partner providers will be an important theme, including the development of joined-up working and effective information sharing at points of transition. These will all figure as ongoing issues in the evaluation of Pathfinder activity.

12.3 It is acknowledged that in the Pathfinder period, there will be a tension for Educational Psychologists between more **strategic roles and client focused activity**. The resultant balance struck will require careful reflection in the evaluation. However, as indicated in the Interim Report, the prime focus will remain a strategic one, although linked to practical engagement of - and outcomes for - individual clients. The evaluation will address the complexities of the potential stakeholders and seek to reflect on outcomes for service recipients at all levels, be they other professionals or individual clients.

12.4 Pathfinder activity should highlight best practice in drawing up **Service/ Practice Level Agreements** at local levels and beyond.

12.5 Other service providers including Social Work should be included in any activity aiming to promote better coordination.

12.6 Providing a **breadth and balance of psychological services**, differentiated according to stakeholder need, should be the overall aim of the Pathfinder period. Maximising efficiency of limited resources, by addressing common needs collaboratively will be an essential feature of success. This should be at both local and national levels of operation.

12.7 The **training strategy for Educational Psychologists** is of central importance in ensuring that Educational Psychologists are appropriately equipped to service transition and the post-school sector. Close co-ordination between post-Currie Report developments and this initiative will be essential in order to maintain an accurate overview of staffing and training needs for the profession in the medium and longer term. Pathfinder activity in supporting both a quantitative and a

qualitative improvement in educational psychology training will play an important part in this process.

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