East Ayrshire Council

East Ayrshire Psychological Service (EAPS):
Title: Enhancing the Nurture experience for targeted groups of children

1. Supporting the development of teacher sensitivity and relationships in Nurture Groups through the use of Video Feedback specifically, Video Interaction Guidance Contact Principles.

2. Applying psychology (promoting attunement, empathy and well-being) to enable staff to better implement developmentally appropriate learning and teaching experiences.

What did we ask?

3. Can investment in the development of teacher-pupil sensitivity, via video feedback, result in the upskilling of key Nurture staff in terms of positive quality interactions and relationships?

4. Does the development of teacher – pupil sensitivity have a positive effect on learning and teaching, and therefore support closing the attainment gap for these children?

What is the evidence base? 300 words (319)

The protective factors that support the ongoing development of vulnerable children in the early years can be complex but are also well researched (Bromley, C. and Cunningham-Burley, S., 2010; Grunewald et al., 2012). The individual needs of children who have suffered from adverse childhood expereinces can be ameliorated by robust assessment and intervention. However social, emotional and behavioural needs can present in a variety of ways and often remain as a barrier to learning (Garner and Cairns, 1996). Nurture teachers and support staff are in a unique position to develop significant relationships with children in their care. Furthermore, teachers can also become attachment figures particularly with children who have insecure

attachment styles (Howes, 1999). Attuned teacher responses to children with social, emotional and behavioural needs can promote improved engagement in everyday learning experiences (Bennathan & Boxall, 2000). There is evidence from longitudinal studies that pupils who experience quality teacher-pupil relationships in the early years have fewer behavioural issues and better task performance (Hamre and Piata 2001; Rudasill et al 2010; Wu et al 2010). Furthermore, studies of verbal skills have found that positive pupil-teacher relationships can have a positive effect on early language development (Spilt et al 2015; Schmitt et al 2012). Although Nurture group principles provide a theoretical framework to support and develop positive relationships with children and families they do not address the actual skills of staff. Video Interaction Guidance is a relationship-based intervention proven to promote attunement, empathy and well-being (Kennedy, Landor & Todd, 2012) which could offer a possible method for increasing teacher – pupil sensitivity within nurture groups. A role for the EP therefore could be to facilitate peer supervision and training for staff working in nurture groups. Davies (2011) found that training models which involve greater opportunities for peer supervision and learning are more likely to facilitate successful practice, and ensure that learning derived from training and good practice are embedded.

What did we do? 200 words (212)

- Literature review relating to nurture, teacher interaction (sensitivity) and utilising video enhanced reflective practice as an intervention to promote more nurturing experiences for pupils
- Identified two target schools based on the following criteria:
  - Predominantly SIMD 1 and 2 catchment areas
  - Established Nurture Classes (two comparator schools)
- Agreed design and measures - Quasi-experimental design adopting a critical realist approach:
  - Video reflection and feedback of teacher interaction (sensitivity)

- o Contact principles – small tests of change measurement
- o Boxall Profile of children attending the Nurture class
- o East Ayrshire Early Level Literacy Assessment Tool of children attending the Nurture class
- o Teacher recording / assessment of children's overall progress and well-being against individual targets
- o Focus Groups – Teacher, pupils, parents to explain the rationale for the intervention
- o East Ayrshire Beyond the Boxall Tool (currently in development – draft format)
- o Coaching and modelling (not completed)
- Invited schools to participate – formal and informal contact with Head Teachers
- Developed and issued consent forms
- Developed initial awareness raising session and further training
- Developed and agreed implementation timeline
- Explored ethical issues
- Decision to continue with project when one school withdrew from research.

Due to internal and external factors that will be explored further in the next two sections we were unable to proceed beyond this point.

What have we found so far?

Implementation science aims to identify what is needed to transfer knowledge and evidence into real world change (Fixsen et al, 2005). In this instance we can reflect that the motivation or value attributed to our action enquiry proposal was not entirely embraced. Motivation for change, adequate resources, staff motivation and overall readiness all interact to determine a successful intervention and thus robust implementation. The Psychological Service had to overcome barriers to implementation that included:

- changes in the Senior Management Teams over a short period of

time resulting in changing ethos, priorities and readiness;
- current evaluation of nurture-based practice in the school suggests EP intervention may not have been wholly supported at this time. This was due to Nurture staff changes, confidence in practice, and impact on provision from changes in leadership, and as such there has been a shift in appropriateness of identified schools;
- overall school readiness for change was not assessed thoroughly enough in favour of identifying schools that met criteria (SIMD, Nurture class, consistent leadership);
- parental engagement relating to consent (including making video recordings) was more challenging than first anticipated;
- the ownership from target schools was disappointing, another indicator of where the schools were in terms of readiness for change.

What do we plan to do next?

There remains a desire in the Psychological Service to continue with this research whilst taking account of recent developments and subsequent learning. Discussion will take place with the Senior Management Team regarding project parameters and agreeing a constructive way forward. The project will require some redesign and may take on a wider school focus rather than primarily within the Nurture class. We view this as an opportunity to work with a new leadership team in the school and take account of the wider needs that have emerged across staff, with a further aim of improving whole-school approaches to inclusive practice. We would welcome any advice on how to progress our proposal further.

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