

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Staff Governance Committee
DATE	1 October 2019
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Professional Learning for Support Staff
REPORT NUMBER	OPE/19/360
DIRECTOR	Rob Polkinghorne
CHIEF OFFICER	Graeme Simpson
REPORT AUTHOR	Eleanor Sheppard
TERMS OF REFERENCE	4

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The Staff Governance Committee of 18 June 2019 requested a report detailing the work being undertaken by Integrated Children and Family Services to assist employees to de-escalate issues which can result in unacceptable behaviours being directed towards Pupil Support Assistants. This report aims to provide the assurance requested by Committee.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:-

- 2.1 note the content of this report; and
- 2.2 instruct the Chief Operating Officer to continue to monitor the impact of the actions detailed in this report and to provide a service update to Members and Trade Union Advisers in one calendar year.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1.1 Children and young people display distressed behaviour which can result in unacceptable behaviours for several reasons although the reason for the

distress can be hard to determine. This complexity can be further compounded by a lack of communication or age appropriate social skills. Around 30% of all children and young people are deemed to have an additional support need. Changes in behaviour can indicate to staff that the supports in place are not quite right. Although unacceptable behaviour is widely recognised to reflect a particular need in a child or young person, it is important that staff report incidents and are supported when unacceptable behaviour takes place. This reporting process ensures that valuable learning informs future planning for children and young people.

3.1.2 Trade Union colleagues raised concerns about the general awareness of reporting procedures around a year ago suspecting that some leaders and staff were unaware of the corporate process. As a result the Service worked with Trade Union colleagues to agree the wording of the circular to reiterate the need for accurate reporting and subsequent action. School staff were issued with the circular through normal channels and by Trade Unions at the beginning of session 18/19. It was felt that this would help to gather more accurate data which could be used to support service improvement.

3.2.1 Why do Children and Young People Present Unacceptable Behaviours?

All children and young people are individuals and as such it isn't possible to provide an exhaustive list of reasons why children would present with distressed behaviour, but some reasons include:

- A need for attention;
- A desire for something tangible;
- A means of escaping something;
- A sensory need;
- An inability to communicate needs to others and associated frustration;
- A mental or physical health need; or
- A need for security/safety or mistrust associated with a traumatic experience.

3.2.2 Given that there are a range of reasons for different behaviours it is important that the service continues to take a range of actions to enable the workforce to respond flexibly and proactively to any potential challenges.

3.3.1 Making Better Use of Data

Central Health and Safety and Education Officers have worked with Trade Unions over the last few months to agree a monthly report of violent incidents. The agreed format (which illustrated the number of broad types of incident in each school) is shared with Trade Union colleagues on a monthly basis. Trade Unions review the data and raise any issues for clarification with the Chief Education Officer. In addition to seeking answers to any questions the Chief Education Officer works with Quality Improvement Managers to understand and address any emerging trends. All information is shared verbally with Trade Unions in scheduled meetings which take place two weeks after the data has been shared. Although in its infancy this approach is proving helpful and has been well received by Trade Unions who also appreciate the opportunity to approach Quality Improvement Managers with any concerns for members.

3.3.2 In addition to monthly reviews of the data, the Service continues to make comparisons with historical data.

Table 1

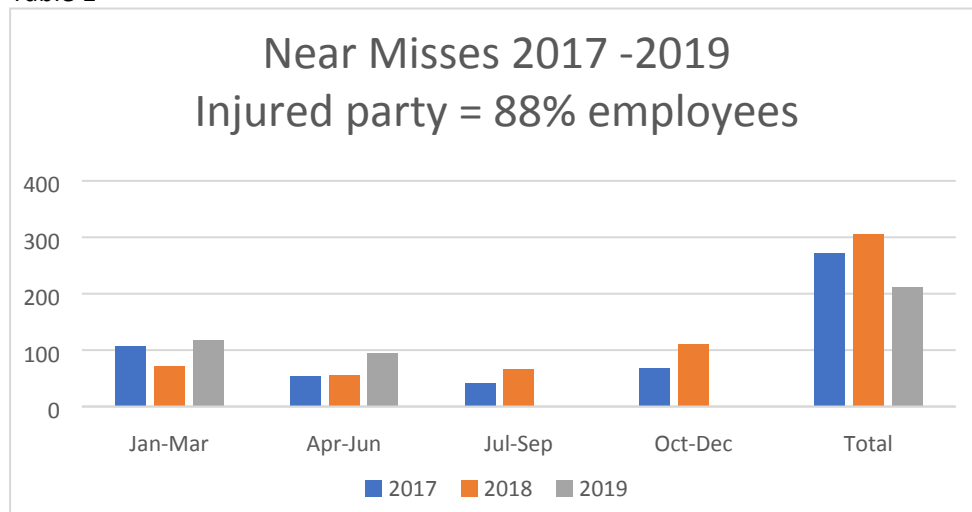
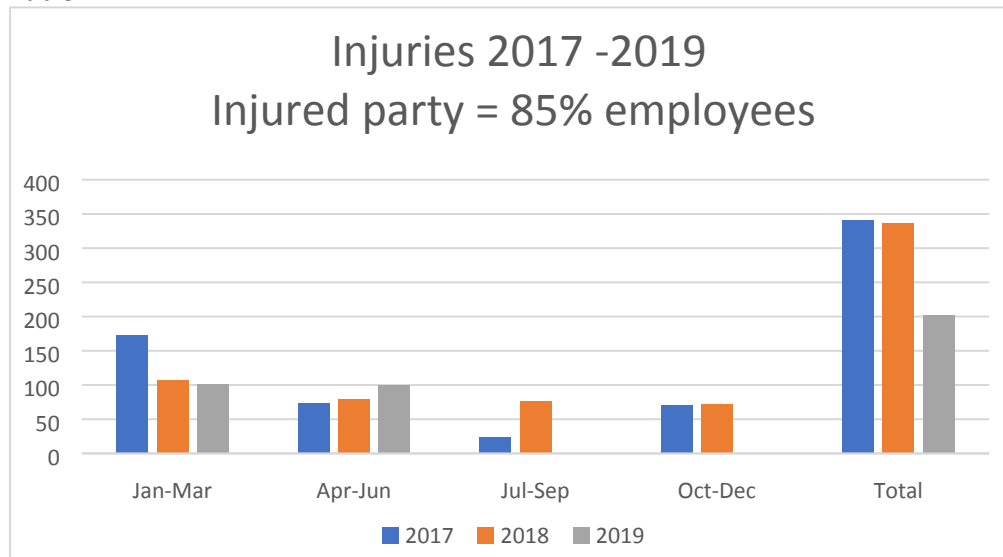


Table 2



3.3.2 The rate of near misses during the first two quarters of 2019 (January-June) is above the trendline set during the previous two years and this will reflect greater awareness and use of corporate procedures for reporting. There were 211 near misses arising from violence or aggression to date in 2019, this compares with 127 incidents in 2018 and 161 incidents in 2017 at the same stage. 88% of near misses in 2019 involved employees.

3.3.3 The rate of injuries as a result of violence and aggression increased in comparison to 2018 but is below the rate recorded in 2017. 202 injuries were recorded between January – June 2019 which compares with 187 incidents in 2018 and 247 incidents in 2017. Employees were the injured party in 85% of incidents in 2019 to date.

3.2.2 Although looking at long term trends are helpful, making effective use of monthly data enables the service to be more proactive. Emerging trends from

monthly reports have already resulted in a range of actions having been taken including:

- Reminding staff of the need to report incidents timeously;
- Working collaboratively with colleagues across Integrated Children and Family Services to address the significant challenges faced by some families;
- Working with school staff teams to better understand behaviours;
- Looking at how best to support the emotional wellbeing of children; and
- Ensuring our staff are supported through debrief and other supports as necessary.

3.3.1 **Professional Learning – The Introduction of ELSA**

Following on-going discussions with Trade Unions, there was agreement of a need to offer an in-depth training programme. The Educational Psychology Service were asked to identify an evidence-based programme to empower support staff to enable support children to understand and manage their own behaviours.

3.3.2 ELSA, Emotional Literacy for Support Assistants provides a means of upskilling staff to better understand emotional literacy and to enable them to support children to recognise, understand and manage emotions by working with individuals and small groups. Support staff who embark on the programme will be trained by our Educational Psychology team and will receive on-going supervision as they deliver the programme.

3.3.3 The programme is wide ranging and includes modules on:

- Understanding emotional literacy;
- Understanding self-esteem and how to actively listen and communicate with children;
- Anger management;
- How to use social stories (with reference to autism spectrum disorder);
- Friendship skills/writing therapeutic stories.

3.3.4 ELSA takes a problem-solving approach and provides an opportunity for groups of support staff to share ideas through peer support systems. The programme has been used by other Local Authorities and has been found to help children to:

- feel more supported;
- develop greater self-awareness;
- learn to talk about difficulties;
- develop coping strategies;
- interact more positively with others;
- feel more confident; and
- manage better in schools.

3.3.5 ELSA is available to schools for the first time from August 2019 and represents a significant investment in our support staff.

3.3.6 Ongoing delivery of Emotion Coaching

Emotion Coaching is an approach whereby adults help children understand emotions and how to regulate them. This strategy helps the child to feel understood and learn the skills to recognise, understand and regulate their emotions. All Educational Psychologists within Aberdeen City (EPS) have been trained in Emotion Coaching by Licette Gus, co-founder of Emotion Coaching UK and this training continues to be available to all schools across Aberdeen City.

3.3.7 Emotion Coaching is also rooted in brain science recognising that when people are overwhelmed by emotions, they respond with the emotional parts of their brain. Children and young people find it very difficult to think logically and problem solve, because they don't have much access to these parts of the brain until they are able to calm down first.

3.3.8 There is overwhelming evidence that the effective use of Emotion Coaching can lead to:

- Improved Behaviour: Emotion Coaching strategies, when used by either parents or school staff, can lead to improved behaviour / reduction in disruptive behaviours.
- Emotional Regulation: Emotion Coaching supports children to process their emotional experiences and develop the skills to self-soothe and solve problems.
- Academic Attainment: Improved pupil attainment has been recorded within the schools in the UK. Pupils with better emotion regulation are better able to learn.
- Attachment & Connection: Emotion Coaching can strengthen communication between adult and child and can promote the development of a healthy attachment relationship.

3.3.9 Further Training Available from EPS Based on Local Need

The Educational Psychology Service continues to offer a range of training to staff groups depending upon the needs of the school community. Training offers are negotiated locally and can include:

- The Science of Behaviour;
- Mindsets;
- Resilience;
- Looking After Your Own Wellbeing.

3.3.10 Education Support Officer Professional Learning for Support Staff

Support staff often feel frustrated at the limited programme of professional learning available to them. Significant attempts have been made to provide a tighter programme which takes account of feedback from previous professional learning.

3.3.11 Identified Training has specific outcomes which relate to:

- Protecting the dignity, rights and fundamental freedoms of child/ young person, staff and school communities
- Effective use of de-escalation techniques, enhancing skills for resilience, relationships, knowledge and self esteem

- The use of the National Practice Model, Assessment, Plan and Person-Centred Risk Assessment
- Post incident debriefing and building networks of support

3.3.12 The full programme (see appendix A) has been shared with staff and many of the courses are already delivered annually. The focus and impact of the professional learning will be subject to on-going review to ensure that it meets the needs of staff.

3.3.13 A range of further training is available through our support services including Autism Outreach and Aspire. This enables staff teams to better understand additional support needs to consider how best to support them within their local context.

3.4.1 **Quality Improvement and Assurance**

The service has reviewed its Quality Improvement model and the use of data will be a more prominent feature in the model being utilised from August. This will include a review of violent incidents as the service works with schools to evaluate performance against Quality Indicator 3.1. This will enable further analysis of the extent to which our schools make effective use of established systems and process to ensure statutory compliance.

3.5.1 **Health and Safety Expectations**

In order to realise greater consistency and compliance, a suite of health and safety exemplars are in development. These will include an exemplar school health and safety policy and risk assessments.

3.6.1 **Person Centred Risk Assessment**

Understanding the root cause of behaviours and mitigating any risks is central to our approach as we have evidence that a 'one size fits all' approach to mitigating risks is not effective. School staff are supported to undertake a Person Centred Risk Assessment when the root cause of behaviours is hard to determine and this may include completion of an analysis of behaviour (often referred to as an ABC to understand what happens immediately before an incident and immediately afterwards) so that patterns can be identified and addressed.

3.7.1 **Utilising skills across the Service**

There are a number of staff with particular specialism across the city and colleagues are increasingly utilising the skills of key individuals appropriately. An example of this in action would be the utilisation of a member of staff who is training in VIG (Video Interactive Guidance) when it is thought that this approach could help identify the root cause of behaviour. As the central team are making better use of data it has become easier to signpost colleagues to expertise across the city.

3.7.2 The recently published Scottish Government's Trauma Training Framework stipulates the level of training all categories of staff working with children and young people require. Early use of the assessment tool accompanying the guidance clarifies that Pupil Support Assistants will require second level training and this is currently being scoped by the service and will be put in

place over session 2019/2020.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The expertise of the service is being fully utilised to support sustainable professional learning. All costs are met through established professional learning budgets.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 (as amended) clarifies expectations of staff working with learners with additional support needs. An updated Code of Practice widens the definition of 'additional support needs' to include those with wellbeing needs. This has implications for how we work to support children with emotional needs which may be as a result of trauma or from a mental health need.
- 5.2 The Council also has duties under the Health, Safety and Welfare at Work Act to protect the health, safety and welfare at work of its employees. The professional learning being provided assists in the fulfilment of these duties.

6. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

Category	Risk	Low (L) Medium (M) High (H)	Mitigation
Financial	Risk of increase in out of authority placements if staff don't have the skills they require to support children.	M	Training programme in place and Quality Improvement Framework will help evaluate the effectiveness of systems and processes in schools.
Legal	Risk of not meeting statutory obligations for children with additional support needs.	M	Quality Improvement Framework will help determine the level of compliance with legislation and enable proactive action to be taken
Employee	Risk of staff feeling at risk.	M	Ensuring compliance with agreed procedures to ensure that an incident is used to inform future planning.

Customer	Risk of children not being given every opportunity to thrive in their local school	M	Quality Improvement Model will enable proactive action to be taken if agreed processes are not in place.
Environment	N/A		
Technology	N/A		
Reputational	Risk of schools not being viewed as inclusive	M	Professional learning offer in place to ensure staff are aware of a range of additional support needs.

7. OUTCOMES

Local Outcome Improvement Plan Themes	
	Impact of Report
Prosperous Economy	The proposals within this report support the delivery of LOIP Stretch Outcome 1 – 10% increase in employment across priority and volume growth sectors by 2026 as the professional learning offer will enable schools staff to support positive engagement with education and therefore improve their long term life chances.
Prosperous People	The proposals within this report support the delivery of all Children & Young People Stretch Outcomes 3 to 7 in the LOIP as children require to be well supported in school to be able to realise the stretch outcomes identified in the LOIP.
Prosperous Place	Increasing attainment and achievement through positive engagement with education will help improve the prosperity of Aberdeen City.

Design Principles of Target Operating Model	
	Impact of Report
Customer Service Design	The Professional learning offer is shaped around the current needs of customers and will impact positively.

Organisational Design	The offer takes account of the range of expertise across the Council in keeping with the principles of the Target Operating Model.
Governance	The data will be monitored through monthly collaborative meetings with Trade Unions, through established Senior Management meetings and through the Quality Improvement Framework. These will provide sound governance and quality assurance.
Workforce	The professional learning and monitoring arrangements will reflect positively on the workforce due to a quality professional learning offer and mechanism to take action if risks are not mitigated. This will provide a higher level of protection to staff.
Partnerships and Alliances	Expertise from NHS Grampian and colleagues in Children's Social Work will be utilised wherever possible to improve the quality of the offer.

8. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Equality & Human Rights Impact Assessment	Not required
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required
Duty of Due Regard / Fairer Scotland Duty	Applicable

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

10. APPENDICES

Appendix A – Professional Learning Programme

11. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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Appendix A

