

Appendix A – Consultation with Learners in Language Support Provisions

Rationale:

Considering the transitional model of the proposed Early Intervention Service, with children spending time away from their mainstream home school it was felt important to consult with the demographic closest to this experience. The set-up and successes of the Language Support Provisions in providing language support and interventions for time limited periods before the learners' transition back to their mainstream home school seemed a good demographic match.

Learners were first selected by each Language Support Provision. Learners then gave their informed consent before participating in the activities with the Educational Psychology Service. This was sought by explaining, using visuals, the task and the purpose of the activity. All learners participated positively, without distress and showed and expressed enjoyment in the activities.

The Educational Psychology Service utilised tools from the Mosaic Approach (Clark & Moss, 2001) for engaging learners in meaningful data collection. This approach is now used with all ages but is recommended for early stages of education, and due to the language development stages of the settings this felt appropriate. The learners in each setting were anonymised and not identified. The two approaches chosen were visual, active and practical approaches that could be supported with visual aids that the learners were familiar with in each setting. They were not language heavy activities. The two approaches were “Photography Walk” and “Learning Map”. These two learner-led approaches were used alongside EPS observation (for triangulation purposes). This EPS observation comprised of the recording of - spoken phrases, emotional presentation, and engagement of learners.

The Mosaic approach brings together a range of methods for listening to learners about their experiences and what matters to them. This approach was felt to gather more meaningful and rich data from the learners, given their support needs around expressive (spoken) and receptive (understanding) language as opposed to asking direct questions or interviewing the learners. These tools were also viewed as being engaging and enjoyable for the learners involved. This was confirmed by the engagement, enthusiasm and enjoyment of learners evident in both parts of the consultation.

Process:

The Educational Psychology Service consulted with 10 (11 initially but 1 was absent at the ‘Maps’ stage) learners across the two Language Support Provisions in Aberdeen City. This was over 50% of learners who were currently attending these

provisions. The roll of these provisions is fluid as learners transition back to their home schools anytime from their 6-week assessment period to a few years after starting in the provision. The Language Support Provision has learners of a range of ages from Nursery Stage to Primary 3/4.

The learners directly engaged in two activities that were learner led, they had ownership of each activity, and the Educational Psychologist researchers were there to facilitate their experiences but not direct or lead them. The Educational Psychologists asked questions using visual prompt cards, such as “Where”, “Who”, “When” & “Why”? They also asked, using visuals, about emotions experienced. The learners used a picture-taking device independently and moved around their learning space, taking pictures of areas, activities, people and things that were important to them, and important for others to know about their school.

All the pictures each learner took were printed out, and the second part of the data gathering was for an Educational Psychologist to facilitate a map-making activity with each learner where they could create a “map” of their school. Learners liked the analogy of making a “treasure map” of their learning areas. Further visual aides were introduced at this time, including board maker symbols to support how activities or space were interacted with, and emotions experienced.

Data:

The table below shows the variety of themes gathered through the data. All items selected by the learners to use in their ‘learning maps’ were coded based on their responses, their previous photography walk, and the EP’s observation. Each label or code applied to their choices is presented in a different colour to aide distinction. The labels were then merged and collapsed into themes. Three groups of labels were not themed, due to their reduced frequency of occurrence. The themes are shown below, with five themes identified that had more than 2 codes attached.

The five themes (in numerical ranking) were:

- Developmentally Appropriate Play
- Acknowledging Success in Literacy & Communication
- Interactive & Accessible Displays
- Connection
- Food (snack time)

Developmentally appropriate play	Acknowledging Success in Literacy & Communication	Interactive & Accessible Displays	Connection	Food			
Toys (Traditional)	Own Work (literacy)	Whiteboard	Teachers	Snack Table	Jigsaw	Clock	Painting Over-all
Pretend Play	Books	Wall Displays	Friend	Food	Maths Activity	Bath-room	
Computer	Spelling	Phonics Wall	Funny	Snack Board			
Games	Communication Supports	Feelings wall	ME				
Tools	Colours		Outdoor Area				
Open Play Space	Learning Objects (soft toys)		Kitchen				
Sand Pit							
Construction Materials							
Lego							
Art/Craft Resources							

Example Learning Maps (faces and names have been obscured to keep the data anonymous):



Analysis and Reflections:

Learners told us through their actions and choices in those sessions that the following things are important to them:

- Opportunities to play – access to a wide range of appropriate (for their developmental stage) play opportunities - this could be imaginative, symbolic, sensory, arts and crafts, pretend, construction or toys
- Opportunities for success in their learning
- Their successes being recognised and acknowledged – e.g. displayed visibly or listened to, and/or rewarded with feedback and positive attention
- A learning space that supports their needs, with accessible work, shared targets and activities, and visible supports and help, including key adults to help them
- Connections are important to them
 - with key adults, including (for some) teachers from their mainstream home-schools
 - to have friends – access to appropriate peers' matter to them
 - to have access to spaces that support these connections, outdoor spaces, and play outside, alongside spaces internal to schools with friendly adults, e.g. dinner hall
- The opportunities for 'social snack' and food within their learning environment

Some learners the Educational Psychology Service engaged with, are in the process of transitioning back to their home schools. Three learners across the two provisions, and one pupil who has already transitioned back to his home mainstream setting but returns as a helper to the Language Support Provision. They shared excitement around having more friends and showing what they have learned during their time at the language support provision. One learner shared some anxious feelings around returning to their mainstream home school.

Next Steps:

The Educational Psychology Service will follow-up with three pupils who are transitioned back to their mainstream home-schools this term. This will take place in term 1 of the new academic year to allow for time to settle back into their new provision. The Photography Walk and Maps Activity will be repeated for them back in their mainstream home school to capture their important experiences and aspects of their learning and learning environments. This will give us data to compare, which can feed into the test of change regarding the transition of learners back to their mainstream home school. A further three other pupils will be selected who have historically transitioned back to their mainstream home school. This will give longer term data to consider.