Education and Social Care

Local Integrated Assessment and Planning (LIAP) Processes

How schools involve children and young people in LIAP meetings

INTRODUCTION

This piece of research was carried out by the Moray Educational Psychology Service (EPS) between April and June 2012 and was devised in collaboration with Kathy Ross (GIRFEC Development Officer). The work was designed to complement other research conducted by Kathy Ross and Children 1st and to provide information about schools' approaches to consultation with children and young people. The specific research goals were to investigate:

- How schools decide if a pupil will be included in a LIAP meeting

- How children and young people are prepared for LIAP meetings

- Schools' understanding of the role of the child/young person in the LIAP meeting

- Current approaches to consulting with children and young people

- Identification of good practice and training needs

METHOD

Three secondary Schools and three primary Schools participated in the research. The information was gathered via semi-structured interviews which were conducted by Educational Psychologists (EPs). The six schools spanned four of the eight Associated Schools Groups in Moray. It is acknowledged that this is a small sample size and therefore the representativeness of the sample should be considered in reading this report – especially in relation to the primary school sample.

ANALYSIS OF RESPONSES

Content analysis was used to analyse data generated from the open questions. Responses were coded (independently by 2 researchers) according to the following categories:

Views – on the role of young people in their LIAP

Practicalities – time & other constraints that were highlighted

Methods – that were used to consult with children/young people.

RESULTS

Schools were asked how frequently they tend to include children and young people in LIAP meetings. The results are presented in Table 1 below:

Table 1

	Never	Occasionally	Most of the time	Always
Primary Schools		1	2	
Secondary Schools			1	2

Staff were also asked how often they gathered information from children and young people <u>before</u> each LIAP meeting. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

	Never	Occasionally	Most of the time	Always
Primary Schools	1		2	
Secondary Schools			2	1

During the interviews, staff were also asked to rate how successful they felt their school was in consulting with children and young people before LIAP meetings. The average rating for this question was 6.4. All the results are presented in Table 3 below. Primary schools rated themselves less successfully compared to the secondary schools and some argued this was because *'it often hasn't been appropriate to involve pupils in LIAPs due to their age and the nature of issues'.*

Table 3

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Primary					1			2			
Secondary							1		1		

CONTENT ANALYSIS: PRIMARY SCHOOLS

How often do you include pupils in LIAP meetings?

Views

In primary schools, the majority of staff reported that they judged each situation depending on the needs of the child or young person - and on the anticipated content of the meeting. Staff noted concerns about the impact on children and young people if they are exposed to inappropriate discussions in meetings or if they are very young.

Practicalities

Time constraints were the major practicality identified by staff; it was felt that there was often not enough time to include the pupils and their views as part of the meeting. In addition, a staff member in one school reported that 'the school had never regularly consulted with children'.

What factors influence your decision to include (or not) a pupil in their LIAP meeting?

Views

All primary schools suggested that their decision to include a child in their LIAP was judged on an individual basis. The age of the child was cited as a factor for two schools as was the 'ability of the child' and the 'potential impact on the child if the content of the meeting wasn't appropriate'.

Do you gather information from pupils before each LIAP meeting?

Views

Age was a factor commonly cited by staff as a factor in deciding whether to gather the views of pupils prior to a meeting

Methods

Staff members reported using 'informal questions' to gather the views of pupils. One school also reported on their experience of using an advocate from Children 1st to gain the views of a child.

If pupils are included in their LIAP meetings how do you prepare them for this?

Methods

In addition to 'informal methods and questioning', staff also reported that they would explain to children that a meeting was taking place and why and who would be at the meeting. One school also explained where people would be sitting and what each of their roles would be.

CONTENT ANALYSIS: SECONDARY SCHOOLS

How often do you include pupils in their LIAP meetings?

<u>Views</u>

One school reported that often they feel that "LIAPs should be just for professionals" whereas another school felt that they will "always include pupils if they are willing, we encourage them to but don't force them to."

What factors influence your decision to include (or not) a pupil in their LIAP meeting?

<u>Views</u>

The anticipated content of the meeting was cited as a factor by staff. Other factors which were identified included the young person's 'concentration span' and their 'self-awareness of their difficulties'. Parents who were 'supportive' of their children attending meetings was also a contributing factor towards the decision. All of the secondary staff reported that young people were generally included in at least part of the meeting. One school felt that the decision should be made entirely by the young people themselves.

How successful do you feel your school is in consulting with children and young people before LIAP meetings?

<u>Views</u>

In general, secondary schools felt that they were fairly successful in including pupils in LIAP meetings. One school reported that 'generally young people are keen to express themselves at a meeting, but this is dependent on the ethos within the meeting'.

<u>Methods</u>

A number of practical points were highlighted which could be developed to improve the consultation process with children and young people prior to meetings. These included:

- Consulting with young people about venue issues
- Introducing prompt cards for young people to use in meetings
- Tighter organisation around the process of consulting with young people

Do you gather information from pupils before each LIAP meeting?

<u>Methods</u>

Only one school provided additional comment for this question. They reported that they often have a planning meeting with school staff, the parent and the young person before a LIAP meeting and this informs whether the LIAP happens and how the young person will be involved.

If pupils are included in their LIAP meetings how do you prepare them for this?

<u>Methods</u>

Schools identified a variety of different methods which are used to prepare young people for meetings. For example, one school uses various strategies with the aim of encouraging the young person to be involved (e.g. writing a guest list, making name labels, deciding where each person will sit). In addition, another school reported that one member of staff would meet with the young person to discuss the process and identify the points they wanted to raise at the meeting in advance.

DISCUSSION

How schools decide if a pupil will be included in their LIAP meeting

Various factors influence schools' decision to include children and young people in their LIAPs. The central issue identified by primary schools was the 'appropriateness of discussion'. Further research could investigate this in more detail (i.e. what schools' criteria are for including children; possibilities of including pupils in sections of the meetings; and if pupils are not to be included, to ensure that in all cases their views are sought and they are provided with feedback). Age was also a factor citied by primaries as it was felt that it was generally not appropriate to include younger pupils. Secondary schools cited 'concentration span' and 'awareness of their own difficulties'. One school also highlighted content of the meeting as an influential factor. In general, secondary schools included pupils in LIAPs more regularly. Age was not seen by secondary colleagues as a factor in this decision-making process.

How children and young people are prepared for their LIAP meetings

In the primary schools sampled, preparation of pupils for LIAP meetings was done in a more informal style and was focused on factual explanations, such as who would be attending and what would happen. Preparation generally implied a passive role of the pupil; schools did not refer to preparing the pupils to contribute to the meeting. The secondary schools tended to use more structured methods in their preparation for LIAPs (e.g. one used the 'My Meeting, My Say' form). Secondary Schools prepared pupils to take a more active role in their meetings (e.g. one school included the pupil in planning aspects of the meeting (e.g. name badges) giving them a sense of ownership.

Schools' understanding of the role of the child/young person in the LIAP meeting

The overall, subjective impression gained during these interviews was that primary schools were less likely to include pupils in their LIAPs and that pupils were more likely to be 'planned for' rather than 'planned with.' Again, this is related to the perceptions of age and appropriateness of discussions as a barrier to their participation in their meeting. Secondary Schools perceived the role of the child/young person as more active and did see them as contributors to the LIAP meeting and process - although issues such as concentration and understanding were seen as potential barriers to pupil participation.

Current approaches to consulting with children and young people to identify good practice and training needs

Primary schools' methods for consulting with pupils were, on the basis of this research, less structured. Secondary schools used more structured methods in addition to discussion including the 'My Meeting, My Say' form, scaling questions and smiley face charts.

IMPLICATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

- Consulting with children and young people should be an integral part of preparing for a LIAP meeting and the time requirements for this should be accounted for as part of the planning process.

- Further research could investigate how the content of LIAP meetings is fed back to children and young people, for those who attend their meetings and those who do not.

- Age has been cited as a barrier to gathering information from pupils and to including them in LIAP meetings. There is a key distinction to be made between including pupils in their meetings and consulting with them to allow their views to be considered in their meeting – while age and other factors may be a barrier to physically including them in their meeting, this should not present a barrier to gaining and representing their views.

- The research indicates that more training for schools could be beneficial in methods to consult with pupils, particularly at the lower age range. There is a wide range of resources available to gain the views of children as young as pre-school, for example talking mats, visual tools, active play methods. Further training in the use of these resources could be beneficial.

- Areas of good practice were identified that could contribute towards developing a central pool of shared resources to support professionals in consulting with and involving children and young people. For example:

- o Preparing pupils for the content and process of the meeting

- o Scaling questions

- o Prompt cards

- o Smiley face charts

- o My Meeting, My Say forms

- o Contributing to meeting organisation

- Appropriateness of discussion was a central factor identified by primary schools in including pupils in their LIAPs, and was also mentioned by one secondary school. This is a complex issue and one that needs further investigation and guidance.

- One Secondary School highlighted the role of parents in the decision to include a child in their LIAP, and further investigation into parents' views on this issue may be beneficial.

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