

VALIDATED SELF EVALUATION FOR EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY SERVICES

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Elected Members with details of the outcome of the process of Validated Self Evaluation (VSE) for the Educational Psychology Service (EPS), undertaken in conjunction with Education Scotland in November 2015.
- 1.2 There was very positive engagement between Education Scotland, the educational psychology team and partners throughout the VSE process. Helpful documentation on the service's self-evaluation journey were produced in advance of the process and demonstrated that the service has a well-developed approach to continuous improvement.
- 1.3 A number of action points were identified and these will be systematically addressed by the service. The education authority will now engage the EPS more closely in strategic partnership working to ensure that the service can continue to make a positive contribution to authority priorities to improve outcomes for children and young people.
- 1.4 At the end of the process, the Education Scotland team validated the EPS self-evaluation and produced a formal report, now published on the Education Scotland website.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Community Services Committee:
- Note the outcomes of the formal report produced by the Education Scotland team;
 - Agree the EPS report and action plan arising from the VSE process. This report and the associated self-evaluation documents are included in the appendices
 - Note the report and associated self-evaluation documents as referred to in the appendices

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3. INTRODUCTION

- 3.1 VSE is a collaborative, evaluative process. It aims to improve the quality of provision and outcomes for learners through providing support and challenge to the work of educational psychology services (EPS). The process is led by the EPS and involves a partnership in which Education Scotland staff work alongside the service, applying both their knowledge of education and expertise in evaluation. The purpose of this partnership is to support, extend and challenge the service's own self-evaluation thereby strengthening outcomes for learners and other stakeholders.
- 3.2 As outlined at the Community Services Committee on 12 June 2015, Education Scotland are engaging with all Scottish Educational Psychology Services to undertake a process of Validated Self Evaluation (VSE) over the next two years.
- 3.3 The VSE process in Argyll and Bute took place over October / November 2015.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 It is recommended that the Community Services Committee:
- Note the outcomes of the formal report produced by the Education Scotland team included in the appendices
 - Agree the EPS report and action plan arising from the VSE process. This report and the associated self-evaluation documents are included in the appendices
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5. DETAIL

- 5.1 In consultation with a national reference group and the wider educational psychology profession, Education Scotland identified two key themes, to guide the selection of key areas to be explored through VSE. The national themes and the Argyll and Bute EPS focus are both detailed below:

National theme 1: Learning and teaching, exploring EPS contribution to learning and teaching with a focus on raising attainment and achievement for all and closing the poverty-related attainment gap.

EPS focus: To review the impact of the EPS on the implementation of the Reading Initiative and to clarify the EPS role moving forward to improve outcomes for learners.

National Theme 2: Partnership working / Impact on the wider community to capture Health and Wellbeing, Getting it Right for Every Child and partnership working.

EPS focus: To evaluate the impact of the EPS involvement in the roll out of the Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS) curriculum across ELCC and primary schools.

- 5.2 Themed groups were established to allow educational psychologists to work in partnership with education colleagues and partner agencies to undertake a programme of self-evaluation activities under the two themes. The activity was aimed at informing next steps for both PATHS and Literacy developments, as well as forming part of the ongoing process of continuous improvement for the EPS.
- 5.3 The initial engagement between Roslyn Redpath, Principal Educational Psychologist; Nicola Robertson, Lead Facilitator from Education Scotland, and Ann Marie Knowles, Head of Education took place on 29 September 2015. The first full briefing and discussion took place on Wednesday 7 October 2015 and was attended by Ann Marie Knowles, the EPS team, members of the central education team and thematic group members across education and partner agencies. This was a very positive meeting with the commitment and quality of engagement of the EPS, education staff and partners commented on positively by Nicola Robertson.
- 5.4 During the week of focused activity (w/b 2 November 2015), Nicola Robertson, Lead Officer, and two Associated Assessors currently employed as principal psychologists in other Scottish local authorities, joined with the themed groups to undertake self-evaluation activity. During the VSE week, in order to ensure that the process helped to close the gap between where we are now and where we want to be, and assess our capacity for improvement, the EPS aimed to ensure:
- there was a reflection of the EPS team's commitment to self-evaluation
 - an appropriate range of activity was planned
 - a full and appropriate range of stakeholders were involved

- an appropriate range of evidence was explored
- strong evaluative questions were asked
- there was appropriate challenge
- there was a sustained focus on outcomes for children and young people

During the sharing of learning from this process, the EPS, partners and the Education Scotland team agreed that these aims had been met. The Education Scotland team confirmed that the service's self-evaluation had been validated.

- 5.5 A number of features contributed to the success of the service's engagement with the process of VSE, including
- The psychological service's commitment to ongoing self-evaluation over time
 - The chosen themes reflecting a point in time on the service's self-evaluation journey
 - Willing and reflective engagement by partners across education, social work, health and community learning and development
 - Rigorous preparation in advance of the week of focused activity
 - A range of well planned, meaningful self-evaluation activities taking place
 - The preparation of effective document to support the process
 - Support from Chief Officers within the Council
 - Rigorous support and challenge from colleagues within the Education Scotland team.
- 5.6 The Education Scotland team produced a short, written report that was published on Education Scotland's website in January 2016. Argyll and Bute EPS also produce a report on the experience and outcome of the VSE activity that has been made available on Argyll and Bute's website.
- 5.7 Education Scotland reported that they are confident that the EPS has a strong capacity for improvement. In particular, Education Scotland identified that evidence based expertise within the service is strong, and staff contribute with skill and confidence to improvement planning and evaluating service delivery. It was noted that there is close synergy between the service's work and the educational priorities of the council. It was reported that the education authority should now need to engage the EPS more closely in strategic partnership working to ensure that they can continue to make a positive contribution to authority priorities.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 VSE provided a positive opportunity for the psychological service and wider Education Service to engage with Education Scotland to support processes of self-evaluation and improve outcomes for children and young people. Both identified themes reflect authority wide developments and are captured within Education Service and Integrated Children's Service planning.
- 6.2 The following next steps were agreed to further improve the self-evaluation processes.
- Continue to utilise and develop an implementation science approach or other robust framework, to further embed initiatives and build capacity in others.

- Work with partners to consider how to use and share data more effectively to inform future developments and exit strategies.
 - Utilise the psychological knowledge and expertise of the service to make a strong strategic contribution to national policy initiatives, including Scotland's Attainment Challenge, particularly in relation to health and wellbeing and closing the poverty-related attainment gap.
 - Continue to work with partners to consider the most effective way to maximise the impact of the service across Argyll and Bute by consistently delivering on key strategic objectives, taking account of the unique geographical challenges.
- 6.3 The willing and high quality engagement of partners, from both within education and beyond, was a significant factor in the success of this process.
- 6.4 It was identified that the EPS has a strong capacity for improvement. A robust cycle of self-evaluation, planning and reporting will continue to ensure the EPS continues to make a positive contribution to authority priorities to improve outcomes for children and young people.

7. IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Policy – None

7.2 Financial – No implications beyond staff time across services to deliver on next steps

7.3 Legal – None

7.4 HR – High level of engagement from staff within Education and beyond over a focused period, with associated time and travel cost implications

7.5 Equalities – ensure any recommended policy / guidance change is equality checked

7.6 Risk – Potentially reduced ability to deliver next steps should the team reduce through Service Choices

7.7 Customer Service – Further engagement with stakeholders to inform future service delivery

Cleland Sneddon
Executive Director of Community Services

Councillor Rory Colville
Policy Lead for Education
 21 January 2016

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APPENDICES:

APPENDIX 1: Psychological Service Self-Evaluation Report

APPENDIX 2: Education Scotland Self-Evaluation report for Argyll and Bute
Educational Psychology Services