

VALIDATED SELF EVALUATION FOR EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY SERVICES

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Elected Members of the proposal by Education Scotland to undertake a process of Validated Self Evaluation (VSE) with all Scottish Educational Psychology Services over the next two years. This paper details the suggested themes for consideration during this process within Argyll and Bute.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Community Services Committee:
- Note the planned programme of VSE for Educational Psychology Services, in particular the proposed timescale for Argyll & Bute;
 - Agree the approach identified by Educational Psychology Services in response to the national programme; and
 - Agree that a further report on the progress of the VSE for Educational Psychology Services be presented to a future Community Services Committee.

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3.0 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 The VSE model aims to:

- build and support the capacity of EPS to evaluate their services and improve the quality of services they provide;
- support EPS own self-evaluation and quality systems;
- support, promote and develop good practice and best value in educational psychology;
- provide information to Scottish Ministers, the national Shared Risk Assessment process and the public on the quality of provision in EPS, and
- offer independent evaluation and validation of the processes of self-evaluation.

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 It is recommended that the Community Services Committee:

- Note the planned programme of VSE for Educational Psychology Services, in particular the proposed timescale for Argyll & Bute;
- Agree the approach identified by Educational Psychology Services in response to the national programme, and
- Agree that a further report on the progress of the VSE for Educational Psychology Services be presented to a future Community Services Committee.

5.0 DETAIL

- 5.1 In consultation with a national reference group and the wider educational psychology profession, Education Scotland identified two key themes, which will guide the selection of key areas to be explored through VSE. at Authority level. These are:
- i. 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, and
 - ii. Partnership working/Impact on the wider community to capture Health and Wellbeing, Getting it Right for Every Child and partnership working.
- 5.2 A pilot VSE was completed with Midlothian Council Psychological Service. This pilot informed the model which will now be implemented across the remaining services.
- 5.3 Five services will engage with VSE before the end of June 2015, with a further ten planned for completion by the end of March 2016. Argyll and Bute Psychological Service is scheduled to engage with VSE between September and December 2015.
- 5.4 The VSE process will have three phases
- Setting up the VSE and agreeing the focus – this will be organized by the Psychological Service but will normally involve two with the VSE lead from Education Scotland within the Psychological Service;
 - Fieldwork activities over a period of one week, and
 - Post fieldwork action planning – this will normally be completed within three weeks of the fieldwork phase
- 5.5 It is expected the service will establish thematic groups to take forward each of the themes identified. The purpose of these groups will be to conduct a formal self-evaluation. While the focus of the VSE is primarily the psychological service, there will be direct involvement of a broad range of stakeholders in the work of the theme groups, with significant engagement during the fieldwork week. This could include, for example:
- Educational psychologists;
 - Head teachers;
 - Education officers;
 - Education managers;
 - Social work colleagues;
 - Health colleagues;
 - Early years staff, and
 - Community learning and development.
- 5.6 At the conclusion of the process Education Scotland in conjunction with the Authority will prepare a short report which focuses on the scope of the VSE, the degree of rigour and challenge required, agreed strengths and areas for continued improvement. The agreed actions will be incorporated into the

Partnership Agreements currently being rolled out across Education Authorities. Education Services, as part of their Service Improvement process will incorporate any recommendations within the respective performance plans.

- 5.7 The recommendations arising from the VSE process will be presented to a future meeting of the Community Services Committee.
- 5.8 Within Argyll and Bute, through EPS processes of planning, intervention and self-evaluation, and in consultation with Education Managers, the following themes are recommended for further investigation through the process of VSE.
- Evaluate the impact of the Educational Psychology Service on the development of the literacy skills of learners at the primary stage.
 - Identify the impact of the Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS) programme on learners at the early years.
- 5.9 The themes within Argyll and Bute are recommended for the following reasons:
- i. The Educational Psychology Service guided the work of the Reading Initiative in Argyll and Bute, starting in 2009. Last session 5 years of data was analysed to consider the profile of reading skills of Primary 4 children across the authority. Over the last two years, this has included a focus on the literacy skills of Looked After Children at the primary stage. Further evaluation now requires to be undertaken to inform next steps towards closing the attainment gap and increasing the reading skills of the lowest performing 20%. It is anticipated that there will be a research focus to this activity to ensure identification of the impact for learners of interventions at school level;
 - ii. The Educational Psychology Service leads the implementation of the PATHS programme, including training and support for establishments. This work has been undertaken in partnership with the Early Years Collaborative Group and supports children's wellbeing at the early years. The development of the intervention has also been informed by work undertaken in West Dunbartonshire EPS, Glasgow EPS and Shetland EPS. The programme has now been running in a number of establishments for three years and a programme of self-evaluation has been initiated, with a particular focus on engagement with parents.

6.0 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 VSE offers 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.

7.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Policy – The outcome of the VSE may recommend changes to Service policy and procedures and will inform the improvement planning process
- 7.2 Financial – No implications beyond staff time across services
- 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 – A positive evaluation of the EPS
- 7.7 Customer Service –

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