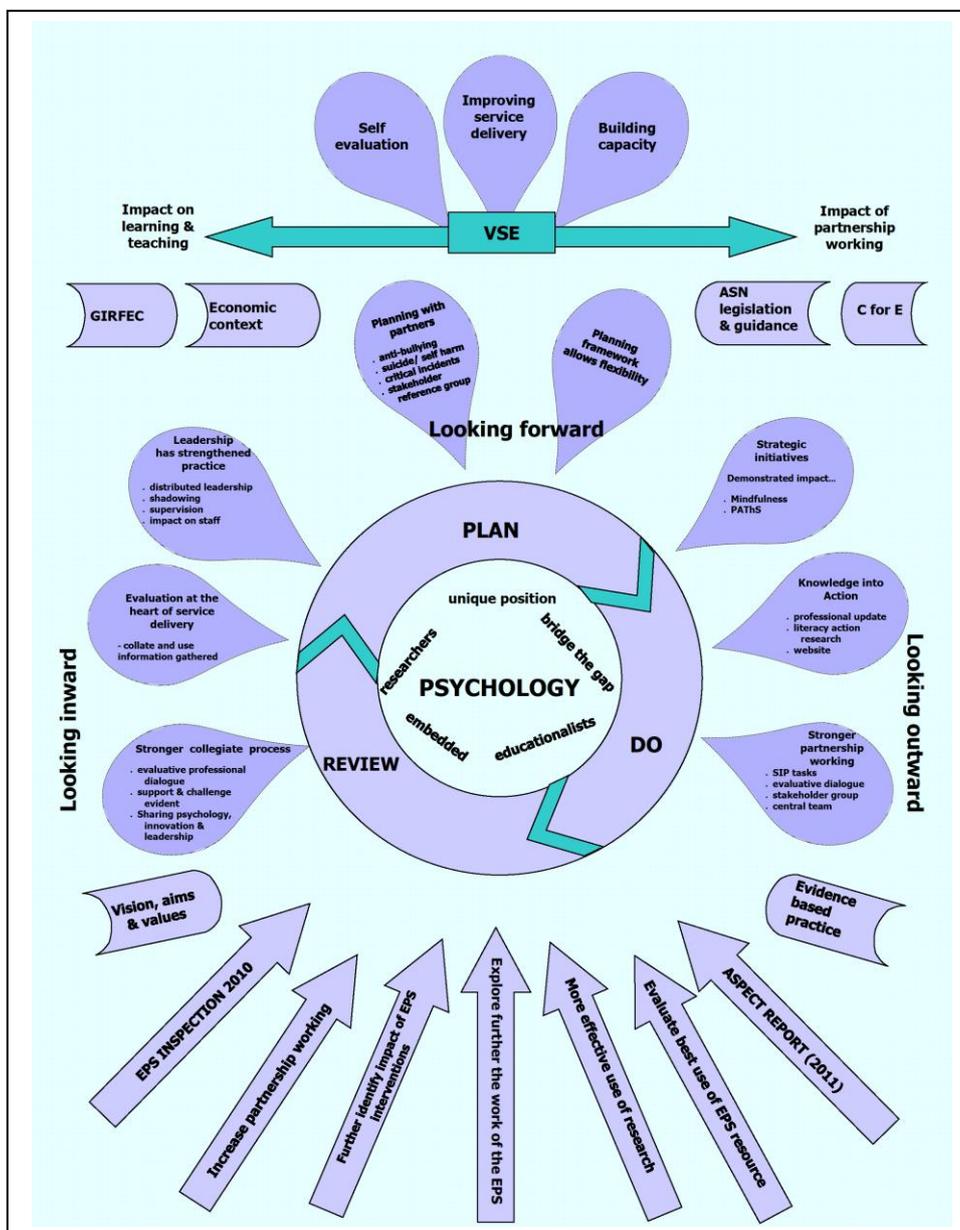




# East Dunbartonshire Council Educational Psychology Service

## Validated Self Evaluation



## **Validated Self Evaluation East Dunbartonshire Council Educational Psychology Service**

The following report is a summary of East Dunbartonshire Council Educational Psychology Service (EDCEPS) involvement in the Validated Self Evaluation (VSE) process in June 2015. During the period of preparation the team took a closer look at our process of self evaluation. We identified that we had already put in place a number of processes to strengthen and consolidate our self evaluation which were embedded within practice. In taking this look at our own self evaluation we were able to identify key strengths and areas for further analysis. Our examination of the two national VSE themes led us to choose areas of work for which the process of evaluation was more challenging but closely linked to key areas of our ongoing service delivery.

Before setting out the main areas of focus and findings there are some key reflections relevant to the effectiveness of the VSE process. The process was prioritised by the authority managers and this ensured that partner colleagues were available to participate fully in the preparation, scrutiny process and the activities of VSE week. The Service was joined by teams of partners including education leadership team (ELT), primary head teachers, secondary depute head teachers, health and social work colleagues, early years workers and parents. These teams worked in collaboration with the EPS over the course of preparation and fieldwork phases of VSE. This ensured that our processes were developed in partnership and were sufficiently robust. It was a tribute to our strong working relationships that the partners involved approached the whole inquiry with vigour and enthusiasm. They willingly read a wealth of materials about the Service, attended a number of preparation meetings and carried out extra visits to familiarise themselves with the work of the Service.

**In short, this process of joint enquiry built on existing strong collaboration and ensured that all involved felt confident in creating a climate of support and challenge in order to further explore the self evaluation within the EPS.**

**Two themes have been set by Education Scotland for VSE in all Psychological Services.**

These are:

**Theme 1: Learning and teaching**

*(EPS' contribution to learning and teaching with a focus on raising attainment and achievement for all and closing the poverty-related attainment gap.)*

**Theme 2: Partnership working/Impact on the wider community**

*(To capture health and wellbeing, Getting it Right for Every Child and partnership working. Prevention and early intervention will be central to this area.)*

Within the two themes set out above, the EPS identified specific areas of work carried out by the Service for further scrutiny.

The aims of the VSE in East Dunbartonshire were to:

**Theme 1.** Evaluate the impact the EPS is having on learning and teaching with a particular focus on Literacy Action Research (LAR) and Addressing Barriers to Learning (ABLE).

**Theme2.** Evaluate the impact the EPS is having through partnership working with reference to autism training at authority level and through development of language and communication friendly nurseries.

In relation to the two themes we answered the following questions:

- Does the evidence we have gathered for the two themes validate our self evaluation?
- Are there changes to our self evaluation in relation to the two themes?
- What have we learned going forward taking account of the VSE process findings in relation to:
  - The self evaluation within the Service (looking inward)?
  - The self evaluation of partnership working (looking outward)?
  - The self evaluation of the development of the Service (looking forward)?

## **Does the evidence we have gathered for the two themes validate our self evaluation?**

The VSE teams analysed the existing evaluations of the four chosen areas of practice within the two national themes. Visits were arranged for the teams to schools and early years' establishments to interview staff (who had participated in the interventions), management and parents. Focus groups involving multi agency practitioners were also hosted by the Service. Education Scotland team members worked alongside the VSE teams to assist in asking challenging questions, identifying key themes from discussions and scrutinising data collected.

A range of evidence from all four areas of practice offered validation for existing self evaluation in the Service. There was:

- ✓ Strong evidence of significant staff development from the interventions.
- ✓ Good triangulation of evidence of reducing barriers to learning and accessing the learning environment.
- ✓ Confirmation of appropriate and timely use of evidence based data in planning, implementing and evaluating interventions.
- ✓ Substantiation that there is a clear rationale for any programme implementation including clarity of objectives.
- ✓ Verification that the use of professional evaluative dialogue has improved practice.
- ✓ Support for the identification of the unique contribution of the EP in negotiating the educational context thus facilitating improved partnership working.
- ✓ Evidence of a strong EP team with distributed leadership in which support and challenge is apparent providing a strong basis for critical self reflection.
- ✓ Confirmation that the skills of the EPS help to bridge the gap for staff in order to make learning links explicit between research findings and classroom practice and that the research skills of EPs support practitioners to develop an understanding of research methodology and its application in learning and teaching settings.
- ✓ Verification of the concept that EPS understanding of implementation science aids the critical understanding of why certain interventions are effective and under what circumstances.

## **Are there changes to our self evaluation in relation to the two themes?**

As a result of the VSE process the Service will:

Build on existing systems (e.g. Support for All/Pupil Support Groups) to enhance the monitoring of progress and impact of training and interventions.

Link timing of evaluations of interventions and further planning with the needs of the academic calendar and align this with authority planning cycles.

Ensure that increased parental engagement is at the centre of planning around project developments.

Clarify the differences in the four models of intervention in terms of when they work and under what circumstances. This will facilitate planning discussions with partners and ensure that in planning for other areas of work the model selected has 'goodness of fit' with intervention aims.

## **What have we learned going forward taking account of the VSE process findings in relation to the self evaluation within the Service (looking inward)?**

The VSE process has confirmed that the Service has a strong and motivated team of psychologists who benefit from enhanced professional dialogue which includes both support and challenge. The distributed leadership of the service was evident throughout VSE when all team members actively led or contributed to the process during the week.

SLT will:

Ensure collegiate understanding of findings of VSE, implications for practice and that the whole Service takes the actions forward.

Involve the whole team in professional dialogue around focusing the work of the Service in line with the strategic ASN review.

Use the strong reflective processes evidenced and strengthened by the VSE process to further develop the self evaluation processes of the EPS.

Use an appreciative enquiry approach into the impact of the VSE process on team building and look at strategies for further development.

### **What have we learned taking account of the VSE process findings in relation to self evaluation in developing partnership working (looking outward)?**

The Service benefits from close working relationships with professional partners in both education and the wider context. The VSE offered a unique opportunity to engage in reflective practice with a variety of practitioners in a manner that facilitated a shared understanding and learning on how to further enhance partnership working and improve service delivery. The positive impact of the Service across the authority has been acknowledged through the VSE process.

The dialogue with peers, assisted by the VSE process, supported the Service and partners in identifying next steps in partnership working to enhance service delivery. One partner proposed that the process had created a 'space' for multi agency dialogue and reflection not routinely available in everyday practice. Next steps identified include:

- Build on increased engagement with parents and young people as partners.
- Continue building on joint strategic planning with key members of the Education Leadership Team.
- Revisit the Stakeholder Reference Group on a regular basis as set out in Quality Improvement Framework.
- Take into account participant recommendations on widening participation in key areas of development with reference to GIRFEC.
- Extend key aspects of work to include the secondary sector.

### **What have we learned going forward taking account of the VSE process findings to inform self evaluation of the service (looking forward)?**

The VSE process confirmed that there are appropriate self evaluation frameworks in place for future planning. As a result of Service involvement in the VSE process key areas of priority for service development were identified. In particular it was noted that the EPS has a critical understanding of implementation science and the Service will develop materials to support a wider and deeper understanding of this framework to support strategic development.

The Service will continue to embed self evaluation at the core of its work through service improvement planning and quality improvement processes and will in turn evaluate its self evaluation to ensure a firm basis for continual improvement.

The Service will continue to plan development of key authority initiatives with partners to effectively meet the needs of children and young people.

The psychologists working within the team noted that there was a particular benefit gained from the opportunity to engage in critical reflective dialogue with fellow professionals from

the Education Scotland team. This has been seen as akin to a peer mentoring or supervision type model which has greatly impacted on the team reflections on practice and has helped focus a shared understanding around areas for Service development.

**The action plan set out below details the priorities for the EPS from participating in the VSE process:**

Action (across themes)	People and Partners	Timeframe	Success Criteria
The EPS will develop materials to support a wider and deeper understanding of implementation science to support strategic development.	EPS and education leadership team.	2015-16	An implementation framework will be produced and shared with education leadership team.
Include secondary colleagues in planning development work.	EPS, QIOs and secondary DHTs (pupil support)	2015-16	Examples of pieces of work will be evident which include secondary colleagues as partners.
Increase engagement with parents and children as partners	EPS, parents and children	2015-16	Increase in parent engagement events and evidence of planning including parents.
To focus the work of the Service in line with the ASN review	EPS, education leadership team.	2015-16	Service working priorities will reflect the ASN strategic review.
Continue dialogue with ELT regarding focusing and prioritising work of service and formalising this through exploring links with professional update and accreditation.	EPS, education leadership team	2015-2017	Service working priorities will continue to be aligned with authority priorities and accreditation pathways will be evident.

Action (specific to projects/interventions)			
To complete the ongoing evaluation of ABLe and continue to contribute to the authority working party on support planning	EPS, education leadership team.	2015-16	Report of working party completed and shared with education leadership team. Good practice implementation guidelines produced and disseminated via EPS section of council website
Development of good practice guidelines in Action Research. Further development of Knowledge into Action website	EPS, practitioners, education leadership team.	2015-16	Practice guidelines shared with education leadership team. Published on Knowledge into Action page of EPS section of council website
Immediate implementation of PASAG/NASAG recommendations including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exploring links with parents</li> <li>• Extra time for planning to involve wider partners</li> <li>• Questionnaire for baseline measures to link with outcomes</li> <li>• Use of PSG/SFA meetings to monitor progress</li> </ul>	Multi-agency team QIO	2015-2016	Evaluation evidence gathered from participant questionnaires and feedback forms and dialogue via PSG/SFA
Development of implementation framework for LCFN including evaluation/validation guidance and materials	EPS/QIOs/ELT Speech and Language Therapy	2015-2016	Plan for implementation and evaluation available.