



Validated self-evaluation

**Perth and Kinross Council
Educational Psychology Service**

June 2016

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1. What is validated self-evaluation in Educational Psychology Services?

Validated self-evaluation (VSE) is an evaluative activity which supports and challenges the work of Educational Psychology Services (EPS) by working collaboratively. It involves a partnership between the education authority, EPS and HM Inspectors, Education Scotland. In EPS the VSE focuses on two key themes.

- Learning and Teaching.
- Partnership Working.

The themes reflect the Scottish Government's national priorities and relate to the contributions made by EPS to raising attainment, addressing disadvantage and supporting and implementing, *Getting it right for every child*. Both themes also allow EPS to evidence the impact and outcomes of early intervention and prevention across the full range of their service delivery.

In addition to the core themes, services can choose an additional one to reflect their own context. An additional area may relate to the core themes or reflect other quality indicators which impact on the service's ability to improve outcomes for its stakeholders. For example, leadership, or the delivery of the five Currie (2002)¹ functions of consultation and advice, assessment, intervention, professional development and research and development.

2. What was validated self-evaluation in Perth and Kinross Council's Educational Psychology Service?

Perth and Kinross Council's Educational Psychology Service (PKCEPS) used the VSE to build on their strengths and areas for improvement identified in their HM Inspection in 2009 and subsequent ongoing self-evaluation. The 2009 inspection recommended that the EPS 'develop a better understanding of how its research function can contribute to better outcomes for children'. The learning and teaching theme therefore focused on how effectively the EPS has contributed to learning and teaching in Perth and Kinross Council (PKC) through research and professional learning. The core questions investigated during the VSE were:

1. How effective are the service's contributions to authority wide learning and teaching interventions?
2. How effectively is the service in using data to measure effectiveness?
3. How can the service use the outcomes from 1 and 2 above, to increase the impact of EPS in learning and teaching?

The service chose to look at their impact in ten core areas of learning and teaching.

- School engagement action research (SEAR).
- Self-regulation.
- Wave 3 literacy programme.
- Nurture.

¹ Currie (2002), Review of Provision of Educational Psychology Services in Scotland. Scottish Executive.

- Developmental Milestones.
- Bounceback.
- Restorative Approaches.
- Promoting positive mental health at the secondary school stage.
- Curriculum for Excellence research.
- Part-time timetables research.

The interventions chosen represented an effective range of programmes, some of which were very well embedded, such as Bounceback, and others which were relatively new and small scale, such as self-regulation training.

In the partnership theme the service focused on their impact in small schools. The driving question which resulted from their recent stakeholder evaluations was: How effective is our service delivery to small schools? and how can we work with partners to improve? During the VSE, activities were designed to answer the following subsidiary questions.

- Is small school feedback representative of the views of all small schools within Perth and Kinross?
- Do the needs of small schools differ from others?

Both themes built very well on existing self-evaluation data and standards and quality reports. The activities were very well designed and used a project management approach to help collate information from the self-evaluation activities. This provided clarity for partners as they engaged in focus groups, observations of practice, analysis of existing data, and interventions such as consultation with a group of small school headteachers. All of the activities were very well planned and allowed the service to gather important evaluative data to inform next steps in both themes. The range of partners participating in the themed areas was appropriate and provided an effective group to help support and challenge. The learning and teaching theme used the organising structure of looking inwards, outwards and forwards very effectively.

3. What did HM Inspectors learn about the quality of self-evaluation in Perth and Kinross Council's Educational Psychology Service?

PKCEPS provided a very strong self-evaluation report to support the activities undertaken during the VSE. This allowed them to interrogate existing data forensically, and to use the outcomes from the VSE activities to inform next steps with confidence and rigor.

The leadership of the Chief Executive and senior managers in Education and Children's Service (ECS) is very strong and they demonstrated a clear understanding of the role of the EPS and what value it can add to Council and ECS priorities. The Director of Education and Children's Services and Head of Secondary and Inclusion provide strong leadership with appropriate support and challenge to help facilitate transformational change. In this context the EPS is well placed to deliver high quality educational psychology. The Principal Educational Psychologist (PEP) provides very clear direction for staff about the role of EPS in supporting teaching and learning and improving outcomes for children and young people. 'The aim is always to impact upon the

educational context and support improvements in teaching and learning'. She has identified very well the core areas for improvement which will make the greatest impact in the context of PKC. The leadership of the PEP and Depute Principal Educational Psychologist and direction is central to a continuously improving service with a high priority placed on building capacity for shared leadership. Almost all interventions delivered by EPS link well with ECS objectives as set out in the Education and Children's Services Business Management and Improvement Plan and reported in the Education and Children's Services Standards and Quality report. During the VSE it was recognised that the EPS and ECS should continue to strengthen joint planning at strategic levels even further and within the context of reduced staffing to ensure sustained impact. Consideration should also be made as to how other agencies can be involved more in planning with the EPS at strategic and school levels. For example, health, social work and other agencies involved in improving learning and teaching. The service's self-evaluation framework provides very good guidance to staff and was being used well. Self-evaluation is a well-integrated process which the service uses very effectively to inform improvements. For example, the evaluation of consultation and casework has resulted in changes to service structures and is continuing to inform areas of improvement such as the small school service delivery that was investigated during the VSE. EPS staff involved in the VSE demonstrated strengths in the interrogation of data to inform future practice and to engage in highly effective self-regulatory behaviour to improve their self-evaluation systems and processes. The service is aware that they now need to build on their very strong self-evaluation systems and use of data to enable them to link impact data with outcomes. For example, many of the authority initiatives report on the impact of training and delivery by Educational Psychologists (EPs) on their skills. However, there is more limited evaluation of how an increase in skills is leading to improvements in practice, which would ultimately lead to improving outcomes for children and young people.

The quality of the psychology used in interventions and drawn from a robust evidence base, was very well demonstrated during the VSE. Senior managers and partners recognised the value added by the EPS in developing practitioner enquiry and supporting teachers to have a better understanding of their practice as outlined in the General Teaching Council for Scotland Standards and Education policy.

The service was very well engaged in key strategic objectives and making significant systemic impacts. For example, through the Wave 3 literacy intervention, Restorative Approaches and SEAR.

During the VSE EPS staff and partners engaged in very high quality professional dialogue. All team members helped to provide clarity about the key areas for improvement and how these could be linked more strategically through existing structures. The depth of thinking around EPS service delivery, how they could plan more effectively using existing ECS processes such as that for schools, and the contributions which EPs could add to the key National Improvement Framework drivers was very good. The service is aware of the need to ensure that sustainability planning is built into interventions at the outset so that they can determine appropriate exit and re-entry points for engagement.

The range of self-evaluation activities struck the right balance between direct observation of practice, the use of focus groups, and analysis of existing data.

Self-evaluation methodologies were highly effective and implemented very effectively. For example, the café approach, data plan, and the Myers 2012 framework as an organiser for improvement. The self-evaluation taking place during the week was iterative, building on knowledge gained from activity to activity, which resulted in a dynamic and organic process which was honest and meaningful. Core teams demonstrated very well-developed skills in the synthesis and analysis of intelligence gathered during the week, helping to provide depth to the process.

Overall, the service's self-evaluation, impact on learning and teaching and service delivery to schools is very effective. The use of robust and rigorous research methods to inform future improvements is very well developed.

4. What does the Educational Psychology Service plan to do next?

PKCEPS has developed a comprehensive Action Plan from the VSE findings which can be seen on their website <http://www.pkc.gov.uk/eps>. The service agreed that they now need to build on their very strong self-evaluation systems and use of data to enable them to:

- integrate their data with existing data systems such as CHIRP and A Classification of Residential Neighbourhoods, to help measure effectiveness efficiently and to enable outcome data to be collected more;
- refine joint planning and ensure that sustainability planning is built into interventions at the outset so that they can determine appropriate exit and re-entry points for engagement;
- consider how they can use data more overtly to demonstrate year-on-year improvements in core areas of service delivery;
- build on their partnership working;
- continue to focus on key priorities whilst scanning for the future; and
- continue to develop capacity within the EPS team to ensure continuous improvement.

5. What is Perth and Kinross Council's Educational Psychology Service's capacity for improvement?

PKCEPS has a very comprehensive and rigorous self-evaluation process which is used very effectively to inform practice and ensure continuous improvement. There is a strong culture of effective self-evaluation within the council leading to transformational change. As such, Education Scotland validated the service's self-evaluation. The PEP

and her management team have a clear vision for the service and have the capacity to continue to make significant contributions to improving learning and teaching and reducing inequality for children and young people in PKC.

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3 June 2016

Further information about the EPS VSE reports and self-evaluation can be found on the service's website <http://www.pkc.gov.uk/eps>

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