**Perth and Kinross Council Educational Psychology Service**
Validated Self-Evaluation  March 2016

**Context**
The EPS has 9.8 FTE EPs, including the PEP.  The PEP has a joint role as part of the management of the Inclusion Service.  The EPS has a DPEP who is 0.8 FTE; the DPEP allocation has reduced over time.  The staffing complement has remained stable over recent years and the Service currently has a probationer EP.  In 16/17 there is to be a reduction of 1.0 FTE, which will occur through a retirement.  This has arisen from council wide budgetary decisions.

The Service is part of the Inclusion Service with aspects of joint working.  It is located within Education and Children's Services, with the PEP part of one divisional management team, with access to the Senior Management Team.  Recently the EPS has worked on ensuring a clear focus for service delivery in schools on removing barriers to learning.  This has been approached by adopting enhanced self-evaluation as a learning organisation with a systematic review of effectiveness from the individual level up.  Based on its self-evaluation, the Service has clear strengths as a consultation based Service, in the breadth and quality of its Authority-wide interventions and in respect of collaborative working.

**Aims**
The goal for the Service was that VSE would be an opportunity to review and plan for service delivery under reduced capacity.  The Service aimed to be seen as an open team, willing for feedback to aid improvement.  It recognised the rare chance of concentrated time and focus to work alongside partners to gain their views on defined areas.  It aimed to achieve concrete and specific actions around data collection and service delivery processes that could quickly be taken forward.

**Theme Development**
Partnership working
Feedback from the schools survey (2015) seemed to indicate less satisfaction with service delivery from small/rural schools.  The EPS needed to gather some further information to indicate whether this feedback was representative of the views of small/rural schools more generally within Perth and Kinross. It needed to explore how the effectiveness of working in partnership with others to deliver services to small schools could be improved, and whether some processes used in other areas of partnership work, such as group consultation, might be beneficial. The EPS also needed to consider whether small/rural schools differed in their needs from larger schools, and whether this had any implication for service delivery. This work is continuing alongside agency- specific discussions to clarify EP role and effective joint working.

The driving question for this theme was: *How effective is our service delivery to small schools and how can we work with partners to improve it?*

Learning and teaching

Since an inspection in 2009 the EPS has continued to develop its strategic inputs and, as a consequence, has a breadth of Authority-wide initiatives aimed at supporting staff skills, knowledge and practice, to impact positively upon teaching and learning. Most recently there has been a focus upon action research and project implementation methods to support practitioner enquiry, adult learning and sustainable projects designed for schools to co-design and lead on their own development needs. The EPS has used interventions with a robust evidence base and has built in evaluation methods. It was also recognised there was potential to use more data available within ECS, particularly for those initiatives where the EP input is more removed from classroom practice.

The driving question for this theme, with a focus on Authority-wide initiatives was *'How effective is EPS contribution to learning and teaching and how can we improve this?'* with a sub question of *'How effectively are we using information and data in this process?'*.

**VSE Activities**

Partnership working

The first activity during VSE was a data analysis activity, scrutinising the data available about the pupil population and support staff in small schools, as well as EPS service delivery to small schools. The emerging theme was that, although small schools have a similar pupil profile to larger schools, they have fewer support staff hours, and difficulties feel magnified in a small school due to environmental and personnel factors. The second activity was a focus group with small school Headteachers and partners, to further explore the themes emerging from the data analysis and to discuss how to improve partnership working to small schools. Through this process, the flexible EPS model of negotiating service delivery with each school (as opposed to a time allocation model), each school having a link EP, and the cluster model, were valued as promoting effective practice. A theme emerged across the day about the questions asked as part of self-evaluation, and whether the framing of the questions in the school survey led staff to think about casework rather than the wider range of services, thus skewing reports in relation to feedback about the value of, and difference made by, EPS.

Day 2 began with a demonstration of group consultation as a potential way of delivering a more effective service to small primary schools, followed by an evaluation of the methodology and further exploration of the themes from Day 1. Headteachers involved indicated that the process was helpful and were keen to use the group consultation model again as an aspect of service delivery to small schools.

Learning and teaching

The first activity during VSE was the analysis of an overview of self-evaluation data held for each of the Authority-wide projects. The concept of EPs working in a chain of impact was explained. The overview analysis sheet was explained as one imperfect way of presenting an overview. The importance of the 'engagement' or 'project negotiation' phase emerged as a theme from this initial activity. On Day 2 there was a focus group activity of past and present participants in the 'School Engagement Action Research' projects. From this, a theme emerged to highlight the potential of longer-term outcomes data collection to simultaneously support project sustainability. There was then a small focus group meeting

with key senior personnel from ECS.  Themes noted here related to the impact EPS has had, through action research, on the culture of staff development.   The EPS use of implementation factors in negotiation and planning was also viewed as valuable.  On Day 3 there was a wide group activity involving past and present participants of Self Regulation projects.  The group, including an academic from the University of Edinburgh, were given a clear steer to focus on future improvements for such projects.  Themes that emerged included positive and helpful methodology for staff development, the importance of being clear and transparent about readiness factors prior to school involvement, which school managers can find helpful, how best to target self-regulation, and discussion about appropriate tools to measure direct impact.  A need to bring coherence for schools around the different agendas was also highlighted.  The final activity was a 'world café' review with key stakeholders focussed upon clarification of achievable actions. Working EPS prioritisation and engagement into existing ECS planning mechanisms was a strong theme here, as was working with others within ECS to aid outcome evaluation.  The methods for this should be agreed at the outset and include collaboration with those involved in supporting sustainable outcomes.

**Reflections**

The EPS found the VSE process to be highly effective and useful.  Specific, concrete and achievable actions were agreed as a result.  Importantly, the process supported honest feedback, authentic dialogue, solution-focused thinking and relationship building with key stakeholders.  There was a greater understanding among partners of the work of the EPS as a result and helpful discussion on ways of working, beyond content-based discussions.  The EPS felt very well supported by ECS colleagues and wider partners, which promoted an ability to be honest about development needs.  VSE took place at a very useful period for the EPS, coming as it did at a time of planning for changes to service delivery due to a forthcoming reduction in capacity.  The amount of time given, however, was felt to be more than sufficient.  Participating partners fed back that the EPS had embraced the spirit of VSE, being welcoming of challenge and flexibly responding to themes as they arose, as well as noting the distributed leadership across the team.  Partners found the process to be professionally valuable.

**Action Plan**

| Area | Outcome | Actions – Term 4 15/16 | Actions - 16/17 |
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| Continued refinement of self-evaluation | Self-evaluation and improvement framework that supports effective negotiation for year on year improvements | Adjust formative interview questions for educational establishments | Adjust educational establishment questionnaire Monitor small school data for trends |
| | | Review prompt | Produce clear, concise |

| | | questions for engagement with Authority-wide project work | guidance on implementation factors for participant readiness for project engagement |
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| | | | Adjust project evaluation proforma to match engagement criteria and needs analysis, and take account of NIF outcome data collection |
| Continued review of service delivery | Small schools evaluation of impact and value is consistent with larger schools | Adjust formative interview questions for educational establishments | Pilot group consultation. Contact EP given in cases of absence. Piloting of Facetime. Review opportunities to deliver some aspects of delivery through ITMs. |
| | Effective service delivery maintained under reduced capacity | Clear communication to HTs over service delivery strategy in relation to reduction and need for feedback | Stakeholder group established to help evaluate impact of change. |
| Planning for development contributions to ECS priorities | Self-sustaining project plans with clearly defined outcome measures | Team-based discussion for HoS agreement prior to ECS planning day | Agree ECS-based planning timeline to ensure requests are agreed with sufficient time for needs analysis and to plan for coming Session |
| Collaborative and effective use of data | Service evaluation and improvement framework that details range of outcome measures and demonstrates year on year improvements | Seek QI0s and EPS meeting to explore more collaborative ways of working to support schools | Proceed with agreed ways to monitor and review work with schools and jointly held data |
| | | Team based discussion on CHRP data use in relation to school planning and allocations | Agreed methods in use for formative planning with schools, clear expectations for outcomes, data for SIP discussions, and link with QI0s. |

| Continued EPS professional development | EPS continues to bring intervention suggestions for ECS priorities. EPs contributing to Service developments and demonstrating positive wellbeing at work. | Discussion and planning for moving forward under reduced capacity. Clear communications to HTs in respect of priorities. | Stakeholder group established to help monitor impact of change. |
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