

**To:** Education and Children Policy Board

**On:** 18 August 2016

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**Report by:** Director of Children's Services

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**Heading:** Validated Self-evaluation of Educational Psychology Services

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## **1. Summary**

- 1.1. In April 2016 the educational psychology service within Children's Services undertook a validated self-evaluation in partnership with Education Scotland.
  - 1.2. Validated self-evaluation is a process where Education Scotland supports and validates an individual service's processes for self-evaluation and improvement and assesses its capacity for further improvement for the benefit of learners. Validated self-evaluation is not an inspection however Education Scotland does publish its findings following the completion of the process.
  - 1.3. Education Scotland published its report on the Renfrewshire Council Educational Psychology Services' validated self-evaluation on 8 July 2018. A copy of the published report is attached at appendix 1.
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## **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 The Education and Children Policy Board is recommended to note:
    - a) the positive report by Education Scotland on the educational psychology service in Renfrewshire; and
    - b) the Principal Psychologist will address the areas for further development identified by Education Scotland as part of the Service's improvement plan.
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## **3. Background**

- 3.1 Renfrewshire's Educational Psychology Services provides a range of services to schools and individual students with additional needs in Renfrewshire. The Service is led by the Principal Psychologist who is a member of the Children's Services' Senior Leadership Team.

- 3.2 Education Scotland has developed in partnership a validated self-evaluation process for Education Authorities and Educational Psychology Services. Validated self-evaluation is not an inspection of the service which is participating in the process. As part of Renfrewshire's Educational Psychology Services improvement process it recently worked with Education Scotland on a validated self-evaluation.
- 3.3 Renfrewshire's Educational Psychology Services' validated self-evaluation was a process of evaluative activity which supports and challenges the work of the service. The Educational Psychology Service engaged in a week of collaborative working between Children's Services and Education Scotland on the validated self-evaluation. The focus of the validated self-evaluation considered two key questions:
- c) what is the impact of the Educational Psychology Service's consultative practice on learning and teaching?; and
  - d) how well does the 'nurturing relationships' implementation plan meet the needs of stakeholders?
- 3.4 A range of evaluative activities took place during the validated self-evaluation week where the impact of the service was challenged through a series of focus group activities, questionnaires and staff engagement exercises.
- 3.5 At the end of the week of activities, Education Scotland concluded that the service has a very well embedded quality improvement framework which has a clear focus on improvement. The leadership and organisational structure provides a clear vision for changes and that effective support and challenge is provided by elected members.
- 3.6 Education Scotland is satisfied that the service knows itself well and has a strong capacity to undertake further improvement. A number of areas for further development are noted in section 4 of the Education Scotland report attached at appendix 1.

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### **List of background papers**

(a) None.

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### **Implications of this report**

1. **Financial Implications**  
None.
2. **HR and Organisational Development Implications**  
None.

### **3. Community Plan/Council Plan Implications**

Children and Young  
People

- The validated self-evaluation process supports and challenges the EPS self-evaluation, to affirm and strengthen outcomes for children and young people.

### **4. Legal Implications**

None.

### **5. Property/Assets Implications**

None.

### **6. Information Technology Implications**

None.

### **7. Equality and Human Rights Implications**

The content within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified. An equality and human rights impact assessment is available on request.

### **8. Health and Safety Implications**

None.

### **9. Procurement Implications**

None.

### **10. Risk Implications**

None.

### **11. Privacy Impact**

Personal information held will be done in accordance with all data protection legislation.

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#### **Children's Services**

TMcE/LG

8 July 2016

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# Validated self-evaluation

**Renfrewshire Council Educational  
Psychology Services**

**July 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* (GIRFEC). 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)<sup>1</sup> functions of consultation and advice, assessment, intervention, professional development and research and development.

## **2. What was validated self-evaluation in Renfrewshire Council's Educational Psychology Service?**

Renfrewshire Educational Psychological Service (REPS) focused their VSE on two key questions.

1. What is the impact of the EPS's consultative practice on learning and teaching?
2. How well does the 'Nurturing Relationships' implementation plan meet the needs of stakeholders?

Both themes emerged from their ongoing self-evaluation of their service to schools and educational establishments.

One of the aims of REPS is "to work collaboratively with others in an educational context in order to support the learning and emotional wellbeing of children and young people, in particular, those who have additional support needs". The service utilises a collaborative practice model in order to work towards this aim. This model is described in the REPS 'Service Standards for Professional Practice'. Within this model educational psychology (EP) consultation can take place in a number of different ways and is the first line of service delivery to educational establishments. Four main contexts for EP consultation have developed since 2006 in response to changing needs and demands. These are:

- Extended Support Team Consultation;

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

- Collaborative Meetings;
- Collaborative Dyslexia Assessment; and
- Early Screening Initiative (Primary 2/3 Screening).

All of the above was investigated during the VSE using focus groups of relevant stakeholders to determine the impact of EPS engagement in each of the above areas.

REPS was tasked to take over as lead agency in the 'Nurturing Relationships Development Strategy' in recognition of the expertise and important role of REPs in nurture. As part of Stage 1 the EPS had acted as consultants to Barnardos in evaluating the 'five to thrive' programme implemented in the authority. The VSE was regarded as a good opportunity to evaluate and review the impact of REPS involvement in the strategy. Additionally, data had already been gathered by the service and it was felt that activities during the VSE would allow them to identify further strengths and areas for development which would inform Stage 2 of the implementation plan.

In the learning and teaching theme there were four activities over two days which comprised of focus groups, data analysis, and reflective discussion sessions. Similarly, in the partnership theme five activities took place over two days and almost all involved stakeholder focus groups. One was a structured interview involving a deputy headteacher and an educational psychologist who had been involved in supporting a nurturing school initiative. It was felt that the involvement of a greater number of stakeholders such as health, social work and youth services would have been helpful to enhance collaborative self-evaluation.

The themed groups were led by a senior educational psychologist, and., the activities were chaired by both senior and main grade staff. Each activity had a guidance sheet on what questions needed to be explored. Each activity was well managed by the chair. Time for reflection at the end of each activity was used well and there was a good range of reflective questions to help provide structure to the reflective sessions.

### **3. What did HM Inspectors learn about the quality of self-evaluation in Renfrewshire Council's Educational Psychology Service?**

The service has a very well embedded quality improvement framework with a clear focus on improvement. It uses HM Inspectors' self-evaluation framework: *Quality Management in Local Authority Educational Psychology Services (2011)* well.

REPS produce informative standards and quality reports which report well on the service's progress in achieving its targets and identifies clearly the areas for further improvement. They have been reporting to stakeholders since 2002. Service standards and quality reports demonstrate an honesty and transparency, communicating clearly with stakeholders the areas of strength and those for improvement. The service's use of survey data to measure stakeholder satisfaction, allows it to see year-on-year improvements. It is therefore in a strong position to report on improvements in performance related to satisfaction measures. The service now needs to gather more impact and outcome data to ensure that its self-evaluation is based on a wider and more robust range of data sources. The service should consider making better use of existing data sources. For example, Insight data, the authority's



standardised attainment data, and the large scale epidemiological data gathered by the authority over a number of years.

During the VSE, the core groups used the focus group activities effectively to help triangulate existing survey data related to school service delivery. For example, the training impact questionnaires and headteacher surveys of school service delivery. All team members demonstrated a readiness to accept challenge and to explore key messages from stakeholders during and after their self-evaluation activities. The level of challenge and willingness to consider alternative models of service delivery and different ways to build capacity in others, improved as the VSE progressed.

The questions used in both themes were appropriate, focused and used across activities to provide structure and consistency. For example, in the partnership theme stakeholders were asked whether the training had changed practice in schools and, if so, in what ways? A further question helped to interrogate the answer further by asking; 'do you think it made a difference having an EP leading the training/intervention?' This led to the acknowledgement by stakeholders of the EPs expertise in child development and attachment as a key strength. Similarly, in the learning and teaching theme, challenging questioning of stakeholders led to the conclusion that there was confusion about the different types of meetings used to identify needs of children and young people and appropriate intervention strategies.

REPS intended to use the VSE week to consider wider issues of service delivery, specifically the balance between strategic and establishment activities. The themed groups effectively used the learning from each activity to move from the specific detail of particular interventions, towards higher order areas for development at a systems level. Similarly, the learning and teaching theme group moved from a consideration of consultative practice to a wider discussion of the possible alternative service delivery models. For example, by allocating time to clusters of schools, and using the school service level agreement to identify common areas of concern allowing the service to provide training across groups of schools, rather than repeating the same interventions. Both themes should build on their learning during the VSE to develop their strategic and systemic impact.

Chairs of the two themed groups used the evidence and reflections from the activities well to identify areas of strength and areas for further development.

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

As a result of REPS self-evaluation they identified a number of key strengths and areas for further development in each of the two themes. The details can be found on their website: <http://www.renfrewshire.gov.uk/article/3546/Educational-Psychology-Service>.

Education Scotland validated REPS self-evaluation and identified the following areas for further development.

- Determine the appropriate pace of change required to ensure sustainable and transformative service development.

- Continue to review service delivery in the context of Children's Services and to impact more on building capacity to achieve systemic change, whilst retaining the best of practice in relation to vulnerable children and young people.
- Apply more rigorous and robust data sources to evidence better the service's impact and contribution, to improving outcomes for children and young people.
- Extend self-evaluation to measure effectiveness across a wider range of Currie functions and levels and with a broader range of stakeholders.
- Continue to build on the positive contribution which the Principal Educational Psychologist (PEP) makes to authority strategy through the further development of distributive leadership within the educational psychology service team.

## **5. What is Renfrewshire Council's Educational Psychology Service's capacity for improvement?**

The new leadership and organisational structure of Renfrewshire Council Children's Services, provides a clear vision for change. Effective support and challenge is also provided by elected members. The EPS is therefore well supported and valued by the authority, providing a very good context to support continuous improvement. The PEP is valued at authority level and provides sound advice to senior managers. For example, in relation to GIRFEC and the *Additional Support for Learning (as amended) Act*. The PEP is well placed to apply these leadership skills to the development areas identified during the VSE and to lead the planned review of EPS service delivery.

The service is aware that further advice is available from Education Scotland and others, including the Area Lead Officer, to build on their strengths and take forward its areas for further development.

**Dr Laura-Ann Currie**  
**Lead Facilitator**  
**8 July 2016**

Further information about the EPS VSE reports and self-evaluation can be found on the service's website <http://www.renfrewshire.gov.uk/article/3546/Educational-Psychology-Service>

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