

Validated self-evaluation

**Inverclyde Council Educational
Psychology Services**

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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 a further 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) functions of consultation and advice, assessment, intervention, professional development and research and development.

2. What was validated self-evaluation in Inverclyde Council Educational Psychology Service?

Inverclyde Educational Psychology Service's (IEPS) vision is to:

*"Improve the impact of the educational psychology service on the outcomes for all¹ children and young people in Inverclyde by adopting and developing a universal and inclusive service delivery model.
The activities of the service are clearly focused around the concept of a 'Nurturing Inverclyde', and explicitly linked with this corporate vision"*

As part of the VSE, IEPS chose to look at two specific areas which they had identified from their self-evaluation as significant contributions to the service and authority vision. These were:

- the impact of the service on developing a nurturing environment within Inverclyde's schools and establishments, and
- the effectiveness of solution-oriented approaches in improving outcomes for children and young people when used in multi-agency meetings.

A range of positive behaviour strategies such as restorative approaches, nurturing, and attunement strategies had been supported by IEPS to help develop more nurturing learning environments in Inverclyde's schools and establishments. The service now wanted to look more closely at the impact and outcomes which had been achieved as a

¹ All children attending local authority provision and/or those provisions within which the Local Authority has placed children or young people.

result of their interventions. The timing was good as the Education Authority was about to review its Positive Relationships, Positive Behaviour (PRPB) Strategy. The outcomes from the VSE would therefore contribute towards the review. The solution-oriented approach was linked indirectly to the PRPB strategy and dove-tailed with the staged intervention model underpinned by *Getting it Right For Every Child*. The approach was at an early stage of development and the service was keen to use the VSE to direct future developments and roll out to partners, schools and others.

In planning for the VSE, IEPS developed a self-evaluation approach which would allow them to evaluate their interventions at each of the three levels of service delivery outlined by Currie (2002)². The approach allowed each of the themed groups to investigate the impact and outcomes of nurturing and solution-oriented approaches at individual case, school/establishment and authority levels of service delivery. The evidence gathered at case level helped to inform the questions and issues to be explored at school/establishment level which helped to inform the evaluative activities at the education authority level. The process would enable the themed groups to triangulate the impact evidence at each stage in the process.

The themed groups comprised of partners from across services in Inverclyde Council, for example, quality improvement officers, social work managers, community learning and development partners, primary and secondary headteachers and others. All of the Educational Psychologists (EP) were involved in one of the two themed groups which were chaired by a promoted member of IEPS staff.

Each themed group used the same evaluative model to engage in professional dialogue with focus groups at each of the three levels of service delivery. They were asked to focus discussions around three questions:

- Where are we now?
- How do we know?
- What do we need to do next?

The Service Improvement Plan used similar questions to inform improvement planning and to report on progress and was therefore concordant with IEPS approach to self-evaluation. At the end of each activity, individual themed groups spent time reflecting on the evidence gathered under each self-evaluation question and then shared their findings across both themes. In this way all of the themed group members were able to see emerging strengths and areas for further development across and within each theme and in relation to their overall self-evaluation processes.

3. What did HM Inspectors learn about the quality of self-evaluation in Inverclyde Council Educational Psychology Service?

HM Inspectors were confident about the positive contribution and value added by IEPS to the Education Authority's improvement targets. There were clear synergies across the service's improvement targets and that of the Education Authority and council. It

² Currie (2002), Review of Provision of Educational Psychology Services in Scotland. Scottish Executive.

became increasingly clear that improvements in outcomes such as attendance, exclusions and reductions in out-of-authority placements were improving as a result of the collaborative working across services. IEPS played a significant role in enabling such improvements, working well with partners and enabling more effective partnership working. As the week progressed, partners involved in each of the themed groups became increasingly challenging, asking for more specific impact and outcome data. There was strong evidence during the week of EPs commitment to self-evaluation and an appreciation of the value that robust evaluative data can make to improving outcomes. Both themed groups identified the need to continue to build on the solid foundation of data gathering and analysis by developing an action enquiry approach. In particular, the professional discussion at the end of each activity highlighted, that the service could make a greater contribution to the measurement of impact using their knowledge of psychology to inform the development of appropriate measurement tools. For example, the groups found that parents, children, and young people involved in solution-oriented meetings reported more engagement in the meeting. By applying their knowledge of psychology the service would be able to provide more direct measures of outcomes expected as a result of increased engagement than that obtained from self-reports, questionnaires, focus groups and other more subjective data. HM Inspectors agreed that the self-evaluation approach applied by the service during VSE provided a robust methodology for focused self-evaluation in the future.

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

The service identified a number of strengths and areas for development within each of the two themed areas. These can be found on the IEPS website.

<http://www.inverclyde.gov.uk/education-and-learning/inverclyde-educational-psychology-service>.

The service also agreed on the following next steps to improve their self-evaluation processes further.

- Continue to develop robust data gathering and analysis informed by psychological theory and research methodologies.
- Extend current self-evaluation processes to include collaborative and action enquiry methodologies and to build capacity within and outwith the service in these approaches.
- Continue to ensure that impact evidence is appropriately triangulated to provide greater confidence in, and reliability of the data used to answer the three self-evaluation questions: *Where are we now? How do we know? and What do we need to do next?*

5. What is Inverclyde Council Educational Psychology Service's capacity for improvement?

HM Inspectors have confidence in IEPS capacity for continuous improvement. The service has made very good progress in strategic and operational management and improvement planning since their last HM Inspectorate of Education Inspection. Partnership working is very good and the service now articulates very well across all council departments. Distributive leadership within the service is strong, and all staff

contribute very effectively to improvement planning and service delivery. Authority and Inverclyde Psychological Service managers demonstrated effective leadership providing a clear vision for continued improvement.

Dr Laura-Ann Currie
HM Inspector
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Further information about the EPS VSE reports and self-evaluation can be found on the service's website <http://www.inverclyde.gov.uk/education-and-learning/inverclyde-educational-psychology-service>

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