

Validated self-evaluation

Continuing Engagement

The City of Edinburgh Council
Educational Psychology Services

24 February 2017

1. Introduction

Education Scotland visited the City of Edinburgh Council Psychology Service (CECPS) in November 2015 to work with them on a validated self-evaluation (VSE). 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. Education Scotland validated the service's self-evaluation finding that they had demonstrated their capacity for improvement and now needed to build on the very good start which they had made. Education Scotland agreed that they would work in partnership with CECPS to help develop their self-evaluation for improvement further.

Education Scotland returned to CECPS in November 2016. During the visit we looked at how the service had taken forward the actions agreed with the service and published in our report of 22 January 2016. These were:

- build on the evidence gathered during the VSE week to interrogate data more forensically and to triangulate evidence sources better;
- build on the learning gathered across the EPS about self-evaluation to help them apply more rigour and outcome-based evaluation to important areas of service delivery; and
- strengthen the potential value of partners in self-evaluation to help identify strengths and areas for improvement.

2. What did we find¹?

In all areas the service has made significant progress and as a result is able to demonstrate a very strong capacity for continuous improvement. They have continued to strengthen their improvement plan so that it is now a much more rigorous and robust document which is informing service delivery. Improvement areas have been linked to the council plan and cross referenced with *HGIOS?4* and the National Improvement Framework priorities. Fewer improvement areas have been targeted providing greater clarity and focus for Educational Psychologists (EPs) and stakeholders. Almost all staff reported that the Improvement Plan helped them to focus their work in schools and with other agencies better. It also linked very well to their professional review and development targets. The plan brings greater coherence across all areas of the services' work and demonstrates the value they are adding to outcomes much better. All staff have leadership responsibilities linked to Improvement Plan areas and working groups meet regularly to review progress.

It is now much clearer the impact which the service has on improving outcomes for children and young people. The Improvement Plan sets out clearly the outcomes expected and the measures which they will use to evaluate their success. They are aware that they need to refine their targets further so that they can measure and show progress over time. However, data sources are expanding and they are able to triangulate data to provide rigour to their evaluations. Much of this data was previously available but is now used in a much more structured and informed way.

¹ Further details of CECPS improvement plan can be found on www.edinburgh.gov.uk/psychologicalservices

Data available from other sources such as schools and the local authority is being used very well to inform practice and measure improvement. Additionally, data produced by the EPS is helping to inform strategy and policy within the Education Authority. For example, data on the inclusion of Autism Spectrum Disordered children into secondary schools, and emerging patterns of data from staged intervention referrals linked to *Getting it Right for Every Child* is helping to target referrals more effectively. The use of Collaborative Action Enquiry to help inform practice is being used more in schools and in the service. The Principal Educational Psychologist is very strong in the use of data and research methods and this is evident in many of the whole authority interventions such as raising attainment in numeracy and literacy. The data collected from these interventions is helping to inform the authority's and service's next steps for improvement.

The service is linking much better with partners from education to help inform their service delivery in a more robust way. For example, work with the Additional Support for Learning team has greater clarity of joint purpose, linked to CECPS improvement targets. Work with partners outside of education to help inform self-evaluation is more difficult because of the organisational changes taking place in the Council. The service is committed to continuing to involve partners in meaningful self-evaluation.

Overall, CECPS has made exceptional progress over a short period of time. The thinking underpinning the improvement plan and the use of data linked to improvement targets is now very strong. The Principal Educational Psychologist and Depute Principal Psychologists have shown very good leadership and have achieved a shared understanding with EPs and other partners. Education Scotland is confident that CECPS now has a stronger capacity for continuous improvement.

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