



# Comhairle nan Eilean Siar Psychological Services

Service Validated Self-Evaluation

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### Introduction and Context of Service

The Comhairle nan Eilean Siar Educational Psychology Service is a small service with two educational psychologists (one Principal and one Main Grade) who cover the length and breadth of the Western Isles.

### ***Mission Statement***

The mission of our service is to offer effective, evidenced based psychological services to children, young people and those who support them, to make a positive difference to their lives. The child is central, and the work is undertaken in the spirit of collaboration, co-operation, and respect.

### ***Vision***

The vision is to provide accessible, equitable services to children and young people and their families/carers and to the agencies that support them. The vision is to be dynamic, innovative and focused on early intervention, prevention, strengths and capacities for change.

Our **Service aims** are as follows:

- *To carry out the core functions of psychological services (Assessment, Intervention, Consultation, Training and Research<sup>1</sup>) in ways that can be considered to be of high caliber, and to impact significantly on outcomes for our stakeholders.*
- *To engage stakeholders fairly and with integrity in a way that allows them to feel both supported and challenged to progress. This support and challenge will have psychology at its core and will remain free from bias or any form of prejudice.*
- *To promote inclusive practice and high quality teaching and learning.*
- *To engage wholeheartedly in a process of self-evaluation leading to continuous improvement in all aspects of our service delivery aligned to organizational aims and priorities.*
- *To support the work of our partners to help our local community by delivering the Education and Children's services priorities through the use of data-driven and responsive evaluative approaches.*

To meet these aims we work collaboratively with all agencies, and have continuously improved our partnership work, in an awareness that this always results in much more consistently 'getting it right' for those children who need it the most. We have made a positive contribution to rolling out the 'Getting It Right For Every Child' (GIRFEC) approach model over the last two years. However, the authority recognizes that strategic structural and leadership changes have negatively impacted on the delivery of this initiative across the Western Isles.

## **Background Factors**

Western Isles Educational Psychology Service (EPS) is located within the Education and Children's Services Department and the Principal Educational Psychologist (PEP) reports jointly to the Head of Children's Services and to the Director of Education. The PEP is a member of the Children's Service Managers' Group, the Additional Support Needs Panel, and the Autism Strategy Action Plan Group. Within these strategic groups, the PEP role is to bring a strong psychological perspective to the work of the authority and wider through promoting sound research and evidenced based approaches; for example, by supporting and challenging schools to raise attainment, and to offer a fully inclusive approach for all.

The EPS is engaged in a wide, and increasing range of tasks and activities across all areas of the Education and Children's Service work. The small service has responded flexibly and responsively to support projects and developments as they occur across the year. This has resulted in an increase in requests from a range of stakeholders, for short term projects, data analysis, and consultation which is not sustainable in the longer term. An important feature of the VSE was to review the current service remit and focus in times of austerity with senior authority leaders, and key stakeholders. This is in line with national practice and focused on ensuring that the service resources are best aligned to deliver high quality outcomes which make a positive difference to the lives of children, young people and families.

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<sup>1</sup> The Review of Provision of Educational Psychology Services in Scotland (2002), commonly referred to as the Currie report, elaborated on the key functions of Educational Psychology Services as: **Consultation and Advice is grounded in applied psychology**. This is used to assist young people and other stakeholders to articulate issues which are of concern to them and to generate appropriate plans of action in response to these. **Assessment**, which should be least intrusive and carried out in relevant contexts using a wide variety of techniques and resources to gather information and generate hypotheses. **Intervention, which** is planned which is least intrusive and based on evidence of effectiveness. **Professional Development and Training** is offered at individual, provision and authority level to assist in meeting the National Priorities. Training may also be offered as part of the planned response to an identified need. **Research and Strategic Development** opportunities are available to provision and to the educational service to inform policy and decision-making.

## **Wider Organizational Priorities and Plans**

Our service embraces the aims and priorities of the **Integrated Children's Services Plan 2015 – 2018**, which are focused upon:

- Early intervention
- Partnership working
- Development of a locality service delivery model
- Participation of staff, children, young people and their families in all aspects of our work, and
- Monitoring and self-evaluation processes

The Educational Psychology Service is also strategically aligned to the local authority Business Plan priorities below:

### **Business Plan Key Priorities for 2016 – 2017**

Key Priority 1: Deliver high quality learning and teaching in all educational settings.

Key Priority 2: Ensure effective, accountable leadership for all.

Key Priority 3: Improve the use of data to secure excellent outcomes for all learners in the Outer Hebrides.

Key Priority 4: Improve curriculum, learning and wellbeing Transition Planning at all key stages for children and young people.

The recently completed Integrated Children's Services Plan has a clear focus on three key areas that are clearly in sync with the Business Plan priorities:

- Delivery of high quality learning and teaching in all educational settings
- Ensuring effective, accountable leadership for all, and
- Improving the use of data to secure excellent outcomes for all learners in the Outer Hebrides.

Our service is effectively involved in all three of these key priorities. Through our ongoing self-evaluation, we have been able to demonstrate that good work is being achieved in all of these prioritized areas, but also that our service requires strategic support from the authority to identify:

- 1) how we can best support teaching and learning across the authority
- 2) the unique contribution we can make to supporting the implementation of Getting It Right For Every Child at an authority level, as well as in improving individual outcomes in relation to the wellbeing indicators
- 3) what specific data will we be responsible for ensuring improvements in, and
- 4) we as a service need to have an authority agreement in terms of 'how much is too much?', regarding the realistic distribution of our time across the five Currie roles.

The authority has recently undergone a number of structural and leadership changes which have impacted on our ability to fully implement the Prioritized Integrated Children's Services Plan (March, 2016). In light of these changes we look forward to the increased cohesion between our work and that of the authority as a whole, and which is linked to the objectives determined by the single outcome agreement.

### **Validated Self-Evaluation**

One of our service aims is to engage wholeheartedly in a process of self-evaluation leading to continuous improvement in all aspects of our service delivery. Our belief is that self-evaluation should be an integral part of service delivery and not an artificial activity separate from day to day practice. As a service we believe a considerable strength of our self-evaluation process is the clear link to alterations, changes and refinements in our practice, based on our reflection on what the self-evaluation activities suggest to us. We are working to improve how we to use self-evaluation, in

order for it to become more strategic in nature, to more clearly demonstrate the impact of our involvement.

This report builds on existing self-evaluation information and provides the rationale and context for Validated Self-Evaluation (VSE) activity. Validated Self Evaluation is an evaluative process which supports and challenges the work of the Educational Psychology Services (EPS) by working collaboratively. It involves a partnership between the Education Authority, EPS and HM Inspectors, Education Scotland.

In Educational Psychology Services 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.

Over the course of our VSE week, we recognised the need to further refine and develop our activities and practice, to ensure that we had explored sufficiently both key themes, as well as the higher order questions we had selected:

- 1) how well do we use data to secure good outcomes for children in the Western Isles, and
- 2) how well do we adapt our practice to meet the needs of all stakeholders?

### **Key Service Activities**

In order to offset the geographical, financial and political changes we have faced, our service has focused upon a number of key outcomes over the last several years:

1) improved usage of data to secure good outcomes for children and families, 2) consistent adaptation of our practice to meet the needs of our stakeholders, 3) improved partnership work, 4) taking part in the Early Years Collaboration, 5) service involvement in the Fostering and Adoption Panel, 6) development of an individualized nurture room approach at Back School, 7) extension of psychological supervision to three local therapists, 8) participation in the reduction of mainland placements, and 9) increasing focus on transitions for Severe and Complex young people into Adult Services. The EPS is now much more likely to remain involved with these young people, following their transitions into adulthood. Many of these developments were focused upon during the VSE week, and are described below.

### **Improvement through self-evaluation: our reflections in key areas**

Through our self-evaluation processes Psychological Services is able to consider the quality of the service we provide. Using self-evaluation we have made many changes to our service delivery across all of our roles. For the purpose of the VSE we have been encouraged to focus specifically on two areas: Partnership working/Impact on the wider community, and Learning and teaching. As such the examples contained below are related to these areas but our improvement through self-evaluation has a much wider focus.

### **Partnership working/Impact on the wider community Theme**

As one of our service aims Psychological Services places high-quality partnership working at the forefront of what we do. We believe that our work in this area is one of our strengths, and have based this awareness on our evaluation of our partnership working in a number of specific projects.

## **Description and rationale for selected activities we used for Partnership Self-Evaluation**

### *Planned Self-evaluation with Head Teachers*

The Service engages in planned annual approaches to gather feedback from stakeholders, in relation to various aspects of service delivery. We then adapt what we do, based upon consensus achieved with Head teachers. One rationale for this approach is to bring together all Head teachers from each Learning Community across the Western Isles, in order for joined up, systemic opportunities for sharing the feedback they have provided, as well as to update them on current EPS developments and projects that they may not be aware of.

### *Dr You Project*

An aspiration of the service is to build resiliency in the community that we support and to help to empower parents, carers, children and young people to take greater ownership in terms of addressing additional support needs and advocating for certain approaches. The Dr You library resource was developed in order to support our work across all local communities, and is a collection of books and other resources on various aspects of additional support needs. This project, although led by the EPS, was done in partnership with other agencies, including: the Library Service, Health Promotion, Voluntary Agencies and Adult Mental Health.

### *Early Years Collaboration (EYC) Project: Child Assessment Prior to Starting School (CAPPS)*

Working within Work Stream 3 of the EYC, the partnership team developed the Child Assessment Prior to Starting School, which is a Pre-school screening to determine which children within the Western Isles are meeting their developmental milestones. The rationale for developing this tool was that we were not universally identifying those children who were failing to meet their developmental milestones prior to school entry, across the Western Isles, and that we required a method to ensure that we did.

## **Key learning from Partnership Self-Evaluation**

### *Planned Self-evaluation with Head teachers*

Feedback suggested that training, consultation and assessment were highly valued. Several head teachers wanted the service to provide a greater range of ways of communicating what our service is involved with, including newspaper articles, post cards, and participation at Head teachers Meetings. In terms of 'how well do we use data to secure good outcomes for children and young people' there was good evidence of standard evaluations of training, and also for partnership work with Head Teachers, PTLS's, and with allied health professionals. However, we were not yet able to evidence the impact of the provision of training. At this activity, it was recommended that our Telephone Consultancy Service be more creatively and widely publicized, and also signposted to include auxiliaries who want to seek advice.

### *Dr You Project*

We were keen to evaluate how well these resources have been used to secure positive outcomes for children and families who are using the collection. We have been provided with anecdotal evidence from discussions with many families, who have expressed that they have benefitted from these readily available local resources. All participants from all agencies offered validation of this project having been developed and completed in strong partnership, through a sharing of responsibility. Each year there will be additional resources purchased and provided, with all partners committed to keeping the public informed and engaged. The EPS have used local media to ensure that the community is aware of a range of initiatives they have led with, and will continue to seek ways to ensure all stakeholders know about the service and developments we are involved with.

### *CAPPS Screening EYC Partnership*

During our Pre-School Screening Assessment (CAPPS) evaluation, it was agreed that the EPS service would be involved in the PTLS Moderation Panel on an annual basis, which would provide a more strategic involvement of our service within the authority. Such panels will enable partners and the EPS to evaluate on an authority-wide basis the usage of this assessment. The CAPPS assessment is now leading to the next stage of improving outcomes for young children caught up in the cycle of deprivation, or who are failing to meet their developmental milestones for other reasons.

In August, Learning Support Teachers will start to use an agreed range of standardized assessments to look at the identified areas of concern for each child, in the areas of literacy and numeracy for these children who have been identified through the use of the CAPPS. The EPS will continue to work with our partners on this next phase of the Attainment Challenge. The feedback suggested that participants felt that EPS training for all nurseries had been highly valued.

### *EPS Training*

EPS training provision is valued as a method of ensuring systemic staff and parental knowledge of consistently required awareness raising, such as best practice approaches for working with individuals on the autistic spectrum, and with attachment difficulties. In terms of 'how well do we use data to secure good outcomes for children and young people', there was good evidence of evaluations of training, and also for partnership work with Head Teachers, PTLS's, and with allied health professionals. The usage of video as data and as a method of sharing good practice would be of real value, for training purposes for staff, parents, and for others, including children and young people. However, our service still needs to improve how we measure the impact of all training.

### *Severe and Complex Adult Services Staff Support*

While working with some specific stakeholders, such as the Adult Services staff, a primary focus has been the provision of training, including: ASD Awareness, Reduction of Challenging Behaviour, and Individualized Behavioural Analysis training. Based upon evaluation during the VSE, it will be valuable to engage them in drawing up service level agreements to make it clear what the EPS should provide, and also what evidence and information will be required from the staff. This will require a needs analysis from Adult Services as a starting point.

There was also evidence that the EPS are involved strategically in helping the authority financially, by working to retain severe and complex young adults locally, and potentially to help the authority to bring home others who have been placed on the mainland.

In addition, it was recommended that Adult Services staff across the Western Isles now move forward to provide peer mentorship across all learning communities, to share good practice and to develop their own capacities. Our aim will be to enable this team to build their own resilience, through approaches such as encouraging a 'train the trainers' approach, or for a more targeted or agreed approach for the provision of this service.

### *VSE Week Additional Feedback*

We currently use our participation in three groups to achieve greater awareness of how others are working: ASPEP, Northern Principal Educational Psychologists (NEEPS) Group, and a Remote and Rural Group of PEP's/EPs which meets annually in September. In addition, through this VSE, we have identified a need to use the Northern Alliance Group to continue to improve our own self-evaluation processes.

The Educational Psychology Service will continue to take the lead in disseminating good research targeted in the areas of literacy, numeracy, and health and well-being; as HGIOS 4 is about to come on-stream, this should be a useful tool in helping us to identify specific authority-wide outcomes.

### **Learning and Teaching Theme**

Although our service has recently been repositioned within the Department to align more closely to Children Services rather than Education, given our educational orientation we envision that a key element of our role going forward is supporting effective teaching and learning that leads directly to improved outcomes for children. In order to best understand how we would achieve this while maintaining a link to the wider children services priorities, we selected a number of overarching questions that we wanted to answer during the activities occurring during the VSE week. A brief summary for these activities and a rationale for including them follow below.

### **Description and rationale for the activities we used for Learning and Teaching Self-Evaluation**

#### *Nurture Room Development*

Several children were identified as requiring a nurture room provision. As no such provision existed within the Western Isles, the EP worked in partnership with a Head teacher and a PTL to develop our first nurture room approach. The VSE Activity focused upon building capacity within schools to learn from each other. Although both schools valued the input from the EPS, they were able to identify a number of areas that they could share good practice, and form longer term processes to mentor and evaluate their respective practice.

#### *ASD Staff Awareness Evaluation*

Through partnership work with the PTL/LS teachers, it was agreed that it would be important to assess all staff' awareness and confidence levels. This activity has led to a use of improvement methodology to create an assessment tool for hearing the voice of ASD children and young people.

#### *Attainment Challenge Project*

The Attainment Challenge Project is a National project introduced by the Scottish Government that aims to raise the attainment of children and young people living in deprived areas in order to close the equity gap. Psychological Services were asked to support with the local authority strategic group alongside a Senior Education Officer, the Early Year's Service Manager and the Learning Support Manager.

It was felt that this activity would allow the EPS to evaluate its contribution to a national initiative linked to learning and teaching. It was also felt that this particular activity would allow participants to reflect on how we the EPS makes use of data as this has been one of the main contributions the EPS has made to this project.

#### *Differentiation Project*

Each year schools are engaged in a process of feedback and evaluation in relation to some of the key systems and processes the EPS has in place. For one secondary school some of their feedback was that they would like support from the EPS to improve differentiated practice. Early attempts to improve differentiation among teachers had resulted in limited impact. A more robust approach was devised in order to ensure improved implementation and the opportunity to measure the impact of the intervention.

It was felt that this activity would allow the EPS to demonstrate how their on-going self-evaluation work had impacted on service delivery and the identification of priorities for settings. The framework proposed by the EPS was also heavily focused on the use of data to not only inform the

types of improvement activities identified, but also the extent to which these then impacted on the quality of teaching and learning.

#### *Casework moderation*

Self-evaluation is an on-going process for the EPS, and one of the planned ways we achieve this is by reviewing individual casework to explore the quality and to identify and opportunities to continuously improve what we deliver. It was felt that this activity would be a particularly effective way to demonstrate how our contribution to teaching and learning is evaluated on an on-going way. In relation to the overarching questions we had identified, the casework moderation activity should allow us to evaluate how well we met the needs of our key stakeholders, and which would include the child/young person themselves, their parents, and also the other partners involved (i.e. the school, CAMHS, SALT).

### **Key Learning from Teaching and Learning Self-Evaluation**

Based on the Teaching and Learning activities described above, key learning emerged through the process of self-evaluation. A summary of the main points emerging from this follows below.

#### *Service delivery across the Currie functions*

Psychological Services has a well-developed range of services that help to improve teaching and learning at the level of the individual (i.e. evidence from the casework moderation activity regarding the use of the sliding in technique for Selective Mutism), the setting (i.e. evidence given at the Head Teacher activity regarding the Mediation Project) as well as at an authority level (i.e. evidence given at the attainment challenge activity regarding effective literacy assessment and intervention).

However it was not always clear which services produced the greatest amount of impact. This was felt to be important in a context of on-going service redesign, so that the service could prioritize those services across the Currie functions that produced the greatest impact.

Feedback from this activity, as well as other VSE activities provided our service with additional evidence that our service continues to face significant capacity issues, which now require us to refocus upon defining our stakeholder and our own highest priorities for our involvement.

#### *Using data to help target resources*

There were good examples of data being used effectively to target resources and intervention (i.e. evidence given at the data-driven hypothesis testing activity and the attainment challenge activity regarding the reinvestment of financial resources and the deployment of learning support staff based on need). What was less clear was the way in which individual data exercises were commissioned as part of a larger programme of work.

#### *Use of training to enhance Teaching and Learning.*

Participants gave examples of training that had been provided that had led to better teaching and learning interventions (i.e. evidence given at the Head Teachers activity around the effectiveness of Precision Teaching).

Although VSE participants were very positive about the training the EPS provided there was some reflection on the sustainability of this model as it currently stood. Consideration was given to a train the trainer role for the service in order to build capacity in the different settings the EPS works within.

### *Making better use of national statistical returns*

Feedback from colleagues in learning support and school improvement indicated that data analysis by Psychological Services on the national statistical returns from the Scottish Government related to Additional Support for Learning and the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration provided a strong basis upon which to improve practice. In particular it was felt that the analysis clearly identified opportunity for better partnership with some agencies. Colleagues did feel however that the analysis of these dataset could be more widely distributed and also provide the basis for discussion and service improvement if incorporated into a regular departmental forum.

### *Supporting whole-class teaching and learning*

Colleagues within a secondary setting indicated that Psychological Services had provided opportunities to support teaching and learning by making recommendations that were relevant to the whole-class, not just for a particular child with additional support needs. It was suggested that there was the opportunity for this to become a more overt and embedded aspect of EPS service delivery.

### *Improving teaching and learning across the curriculum*

A number of activities emphasised that colleagues felt that the contribution of Psychological Services in improving teaching and learning went beyond traditionally academic subjects such as reading and writing to encompass areas such as problem-solving, relationship building and developing confidence. Colleagues felt that the impact of Psychological Services in improving teaching and learning could be enhanced by being part of a multi-agency support and challenge partnership with the school, using the school improvement plan as a basis for engagement.

### *Opportunities to extend the VSE approach to improve teaching and learning*

During reflection with senior colleagues a suggestion was made that Psychological Services could be part of a VSE team to support schools in the process of self-evaluation which was felt to be a positive way of systemically improving teaching and learning.

## **VSE Summary**

The Validated Self-Evaluation provided evidence of strong evaluation at the level of interventions undertaken by our service. In addition, clear evidence of very good relationships with our partners, families and children was provided across the range of activities as part of the VSE process (e.g. Dr You project evaluation, Head Teacher evaluation feedback, Child and Pre-School Assessment activity, etc.). Stakeholders shared that our knowledge base was very good, and provided a unique psychological contribution to all areas of practice. Our service was able to demonstrate that they had started to work to build capacity in other services, and within schools. Our self-evaluation following the activities also indicated that it was difficult for us to provide sufficient evidence of service-wide evaluation, at a strategic level.

The collaborative nature of the VSE process allowed us to test out our views with partners from most local agencies, and with Education Scotland. Our service is characterized by a climate of support and challenge, and although we are proud of the systems and processes we have put in place, we recognize that we require an authority level agreement to ascertain what specific objectives we will prioritize and action. Therefore, we will be asking the authority to undertake a commissioning process to provide us with a strategic agreement for key areas for our service to engage in, and to effect change with. This will help us to provide service-wide evaluations in addition to the individual project work that had been evident during the VSE week. A broader outcome would be to support others to engage in a similar, integrative system-wide self-evaluation process.

During our VSE week, it became clear that a number of other participants had benefitted from examining their own practice in relation to our service, and that they would be willing to use learning that had occurred. For instance, when service capacity issues were raised with them, they were able to quickly identify specific areas that they could actually do themselves, and also shared working practice with other schools that could replace our direct service involvement. For example, the Back Nurture Room activity led to the two schools involved planning further independent shared activities. In terms of data analysis and production, it became clear that we need to ask others to produce and to analyze their own data more effectively and consistently. This was perhaps most relevant in the Attainment Challenge project evaluation where the team around the child would take responsibility for analyzing the universal assessment data to better target interventions. We determined during this process that we will need to communicate and to share what it is we do with others more clearly, and also more creatively. A good example of this occurred within the Head Teacher feedback meeting where participants noted they were unaware of a number of EPS activities that had been raised across the VSE week.

### **VSE Next Steps**

Psychological Services has recently become more aligned to the Children's Services element of Education and Children's Services to reflect the re-prioritization of our work to focus on the most vulnerable individuals and groups we support. This role presents significant opportunities for the service to lead change for the most disadvantaged in our society through more specialized support, but also provides us with a challenge in retaining a more universal role in supporting teaching and learning improvement. While a small service such as ours faces some specific challenges in terms of resiliency, a major advantage we have is responsivity to change. Given the strengths of both the individuals, and the relative diversity of what they both bring collectively to Psychological Services, we are well placed to make the most of the opportunities the Departmental redesign provides, while still retaining the most effective aspects of our previous work.

In terms of areas for specific improvement, and given our services' capacity challenges, we will negotiate with Education and Children's Service managers to agree on prioritizing and limiting our specific roles and responsibilities. Having achieved this outcome, we believe we will be able to more readily evidence how we provide a strategic service in a planned and integrated way. This in turn will also help us to hone in on targeted data collection, to evidence which areas of our work have provided the greatest impact on children, young people and their families, as well as other stakeholders.

During our VSE week, we recognized that there remains a need to link our vision to the aims and values of the EA in a more strategic and holistic way that clarifies to all participants this shared understanding. The service has worked effectively to report on an annual basis to a wide range of stakeholders the progress our service has made. However, we have not yet reached the stage of annual formal reporting on the standards and quality of our work. Our service will ensure that this is accomplished on an annual basis.

The authority commissioning for our work, in concert with our services own aims, vision, and values will then directly inform our Action Plan for 2017-2020. We will then develop and widely distribute a Practice Guideline document, which outlines our practice principles and our priorities. By achieving this we would then anticipate being able to address the key messages from the VSE process which were: ensuring systemic self-evaluation against agreed service priorities, and identifying what we need to start doing, stop doing and do more of.

### **Contact Details**

If you have any questions about this document please contact Shannon Finlayson (Principal Educational Psychologist) on 01851822736 or email [s.finlayson@cne-siar.gov.uk](mailto:s.finlayson@cne-siar.gov.uk).