

# Validated self-evaluation

**Glasgow City 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 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 Glasgow City Council's Educational Psychology Service?

Glasgow Psychological Service (GPS) investigated the following two self-evaluation questions under the learning and teaching and partnership themes:

1. 'How well does the Psychological Service support Glasgow City Council's vision *Towards a Nurturing City* to raise attainment and close the poverty related attainment gap?' During the VSE this question was further refined to: 'How does Nurture impact on learning and teaching?'
2. How effective is GPS in building the capacity of partners to improve outcomes of children and young people?

The learning and teaching and partnership themes were closely aligned to Glasgow City Council's vision *Towards a Nurturing City* and as such, there was significant overlap in the evidence gathered for each theme. In the learning and teaching theme the self-evaluation activities looked at:

- The impact of Nurture principles on school ethos and environment.
- The effectiveness of the materials and tools developed by GPS to support and evaluate Nurture approaches.
- The strategic direction of Nurture and the role of the educational psychologist (EP) within Nurture.

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

In the partnership theme the self-evaluation activities looked at the impact on partners of three approaches to supporting the effective development of health and wellbeing:

- Solution Oriented Approaches (SOA).
- Restorative Approaches (RA).
- Video Interactive Guidance (VIG) and Video Enhanced Reflective Practice (VERP).

The service used the approaches to shine a light on their ability to build capacity in stakeholders to deliver more effective interventions to help support health and wellbeing.

Both themes were concerned with improving mental health and wellbeing in children, young people, families and other stakeholders, and closing the poverty-related attainment gap. The service was clear about the need to build resilience and to create a learning environment which promotes and maintains good mental health and wellbeing. The service focused on the preventative and environmental factors, rather than the medicalisation of children and young people. The underlying philosophy of prevention and early intervention allowed the service to justify the use of all of the interventions explored during the VSE. Both themes employed a range of partners to help self-evaluate. For example, quality improvement officers, class teachers, headteachers, speech and language therapist, social work managers, other health professionals, and a VIG practitioner from Cambridge EPS. Partners were either part of a core group or involved in self-evaluation activities such as focus groups of relevant professionals. A few partners were involved in both.

A very good range of evaluation activities was used to allow the service to measure its effectiveness in both themes. Activities involved focus groups, individual interviews with key stakeholders such as the policy and research manager, to look at data capture, analysis of evaluation data and observation of practice.

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

Since HM inspectors inspected GPS in 2011, the service has made significant improvements in operational planning and leadership which has improved its effectiveness. The service's improvement plan articulates very well with the educational authority's priorities and in many areas they are key providers. For example, the development of nurturing interventions to support the city's vision of being a nurturing city and multi-agency guidelines on Suicide and Self-harm. The three principal educational psychologists work very well together as a team with well-defined strategic and area responsibilities. The management team demonstrates strong leadership with a clear vision, values and aims which they deliver in partnership. The depute principal psychologists provide highly effective operational management to implement service priorities and to contribute to authority systems and processes. For example, advising on the placement of children with additional support needs and the delivery and quality assurance of Nurture interventions. Senior EPs play a key role in driving service delivery forward. Almost all EP staff were clear about their individual roles in taking forward the service and authority vision. GPS have key responsibilities across a wide range of multi-agency groups at both strategic and operational levels. Its contributions have led to key policy developments. For example, Suicide and Self-Harm guidelines,

the production and roll out of *How Nurturing is our School? (HNIOS?)*, and building capacity in other agencies to use VIG to maintain very vulnerable children and young people in their local community.

Almost all interventions delivered by GPS were very well supported by national and international research. For example, in the service's self-evaluation, there is a thorough evidence-based rationale for using RA, SOA, VIG, Nurturing principles, and Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHs), all to improve health and wellbeing. The evidence was well articulated and it was clear how this had been used to shape interventions in schools and with other partners. They now need to demonstrate better, the impact and outcomes from the application of their interventions in a Glasgow context.

During the VSE activities, the service began to outline some helpful next steps to develop its thinking in the area of impact and outcomes. For example, within the RA theme, the service recognised that it could make better use of existing outcome data such as that on bullying, sectarianism, exclusions, racism, formal complaints and trade union wellbeing surveys for teachers, to evidence impact and outcomes from the use of RA. Also, in relation to VIG some ideas developed around using existing measures of wellbeing linked to the Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible and Included (SHANARRI) indicators at an individual level. It would be helpful for GPS to look at more systemic measures of the broader impact of VIG in relation to concrete indicators such as; exclusions, attendance and attainment to sustain placements and avoid placement breakdown.

Impact on the wider community of educational psychology is significant as evidenced through the service's newsletters, peer reviewed published articles (e.g. articles in Scottish Division of Educational Psychology and Division of Educational and Child Psychology publications), large scale multi-agency conferences (Nurturing Glasgow's Children and Young People Conference: Education, Health and Social Work: A common view?), and the impact on Glasgow City Council's workforce. The service needs to evaluate its impact on the wider community more systematically.

During the VSE, the service's contribution to helping others to apply research methodologies to measure change as a result of the application of evidence based interventions was strong. Partners reported that this was a key skill of the service and was highly valued. For example, in the city's nurture groups, the service provided very robust data using quasi-experimental methodology and contextualised assessment tools, to show positive outcomes in a range of health and wellbeing indicators for those children attending nurture groups. The service is using implementation science approaches to help demonstrate the impact of nurture in mainstream settings.

The service is aware of the need to use data more effectively to inform practice and service delivery in the future. As such, it has developed databases which will allow investigation into the range of work undertaken by EPs across the city, the impact of their work, and the individual children and young people benefiting from their interventions. There are also processes in place to monitor and track the uptake by schools of specific interventions such as Seasons for Growth, PATHs, VIG and VERP.

Both databases will help the service to work more closely with their partners in the local improvement groups to target their service delivery better and provide bespoke interventions.

During the VSE it was apparent that GPS is making significant and effective contributions to a very wide range of health and wellbeing approaches. Feedback from stakeholders and partners indicate that the quality of advice, training, and support through coaching and mentoring is high. All of the above is helping vulnerable children and young people to be more included in their schools and community. This is evident in, for example, schools which use SOA well, create less demand for additional resources, including specialised educational placements. The service now needs to apply its psychological skills to both affective and cognitive areas of development to get a better balance of learning and teaching and health and wellbeing.

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

GPS has identified a number of actions which will help it to develop the areas of service delivery investigated in the two themed areas. These can be found on the website <https://www.glasgow.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=17856>. In addition, the following high level areas for development were identified:

- The service recognises the need to build on their existing data sources and to link these to impact and outcomes for children and young people in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing.
- The service is aware of the need to use data more robustly and to be more evaluative in their reports in order to identify more clearly what works and in what contexts. Thereby strengthening their current approaches.
- The service should extend and develop its very good work in developing relationships and improving mental health to areas such as literacy and numeracy. It recognises the need to use the language of Curriculum for Excellence to reinforce its wider role in the development of learning and teaching.

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

Education Scotland and associate assessors validated GPS self-evaluation. We are very confident that the service has the capacity for continuous improvement. There is very strong leadership demonstrated by the Executive Director of Education to heads of service and the leadership team of GPS. The vision for Glasgow City Council sits very comfortably with the application of psychology which GPS is delivering comprehensively across a range of health and wellbeing areas very well. The service recognises the need to extend educational psychologists' skills to include wider aspects of learning and teaching and to do this within the context of Curriculum for Excellence. GPS is making effective contributions to national priorities and is well placed to continue to contribute to reducing the poverty attainment gap. The service's use of a wide range of interventions with partners is helping to maintain more children and young people in their local communities. It is in a strong position to build on its strengths and continue to improve.

**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 <https://www.glasgow.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=17856>

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