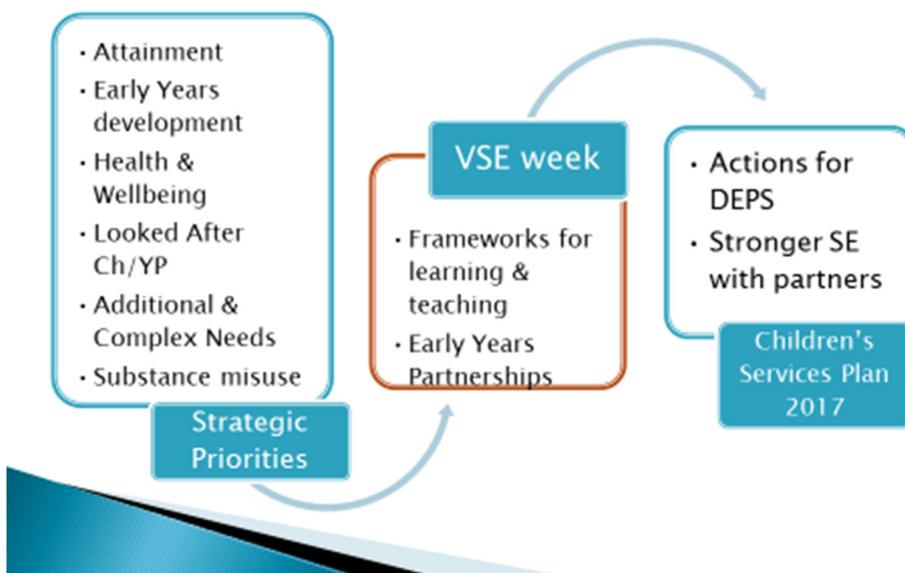


**1. Context**

DEPS are a city service with an FTE of 9.3 located within the council’s Children & Families Service. Since August 2013 there have been significant structural and strategic changes which have influenced the organisation and direction of the EPS. The function of the Principal Educational Psychologist is included within the remit of the Education Manager (Educational Psychology, ASN and Inclusion), who is supported in the strategic and operational running of the EPS by two Depute PEPs. The Education Manager is part of the Extended Management Team within the Children and Families Service, and therefore works closely with managers who have responsibility for both education and social work functions in the council. Increased integrated working is facilitated as a result of the Education Manager for DEPS line-managing central support services including Bilingual Pupil Support, the Multi-Sensory Service and the Designated Officer for looked after children placed out of authority. In addition strategic and operational planning is supported as a result of one of the Depute PEPs line managing the head of the Outreach Service and the other line managing the City’s Play Therapist. Recent co-location of the EPS with the Outreach Service and the LAC Designated Officer, and the use of the EP base as an informal ‘hot-desk’ facility also encourages greater partnership.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning for the EPS is aligned to the strategic priorities for the Children and Families Service (Figure 1) which informed the focus for the VSE fieldwork week. Further details of the Self-Evaluation journey and how we reached the VSE theme questions can be found here: [External Link 'Appendix3.doc'](#) [External Link 'DEPS VSE App4.doc'](#)

**Children & Families Service Priorities**  
informing DEPS self-evaluation and improvement planning



## 2. Aims for VSE fieldwork week

- Identify what we are doing to effectively implement our core learning and teaching frameworks
- Identify actions we need to take to further improve the impact of these frameworks
- Identify the contribution we make to, and impact we have on, effective planning and implementation of staff development for the City in partnership with Early Years colleagues
- Clarify the impact of our contribution to collaborative assessment for children in the Early Years and actions for improvement
- Identify actions to take forward to the Children and Families Service strategic delivery groups
- Have our self-evaluation and capacity for continuous improvement validated by Education Scotland

## 3. Self-Evaluation Activities

As implementation had been identified as a common theme across both Learning & Teaching and Partnership Working, the six questions from the Scottish Government's 3-Step Improvement Framework (<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Government/PublicServiceReform/Improvementframework>) designed to test the conditions for true improvement were used across all activities during the fieldwork week. These six key questions were:

- Aim: was there an agreed aim that was understood by everyone in the system?
- Correct changes: were we using our full knowledge to identify the right changes and prioritising those likely to have biggest impact on our aim?
- Clear change method: did everyone know and understand the methods we were using to improve?
- Measurement: how were we measuring and reporting progress on our improvement aim?
- Capacity & capability: were people and resources deployed and developed in the best way to enable improvement?
- Spread plan: did we set out our plans for innovating, implementing and sharing new learning to spread improvement?

These questions were applied in various ways during the fieldwork activities which included: data analysis; Appreciative Inquiry; a case study; creating an ABLe Plan for the implementation of the ABLe framework; Co-operative Learning; and a Reflective Circle. Please contact the service if you would like further details.

<https://www.dundee.gov.uk/deps>

## 4. Learning & Teaching (National Theme 1)

Our self-evaluation data told us we were making a significant contribution to the city's focus on raising attainment through our contribution to the Attainment Challenge and the Literacy Strategy. A major strand of this work is supporting staff in schools to provide inclusive and nurturing environments where learning is fostered through high quality learning and teaching and attuned interactions. In attempting to achieve this we have:

- Developed and implemented the ABLe framework to inform inclusive practice
- Contributed to the literacy strategy through initial research, ongoing consultation and evaluation

- Supported schools in using ‘How Nurturing Is Our School’ to evaluate and develop nurturing approaches
- Promoted Video Enhanced Reflective Practice (VERP) as a means of building staff confidence and enhancing learning conversations.

Given our investment in these areas of work we now needed to determine:

***How effectively are we implementing our key frameworks to build the capacity of staff and schools to improve outcomes for children?***

Outcomes from the fieldwork week identified the following strengths and areas for further improvement:

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Areas for further improvement</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DEPS leadership in the council’s literacy strategy from the start was key</li> <li>• VERP supports staff skill and outcomes for children in a unique way</li> <li>• DEPS support for implementation of frameworks is significant factor in them being implemented successfully (HNIOS, ABLe, VERP)</li> <li>• Using clear methodology and inbuilt evaluation including Collaborative Action Research achieves positive outcomes</li> <li>• Positive relationships between DEPS and partners are key to effective implementation</li> <li>• DEPS attendance at wider service networks impacts positively on teacher effectiveness and confidence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Re-launch ABLe with alignment to GIRFEC, Nurture and HGIOS 4</li> <li>• Build in sustainability for all teaching &amp; learning frameworks</li> <li>• Align the frameworks to reinforce our service vision</li> <li>• Help schools to drill down into data to inform more targeted interventions. DEPS involvement in the new School Improvement Partnerships will support this.</li> <li>• Improve consistency of DEPS application of the frameworks</li> <li>• Consult on the Early Years ABLe section and launch</li> <li>• Re-visit the utility and value of an ABLe network</li> </ul>

## **5. Partnership Working (National theme 2)**

Our data told us we were increasingly working in partnership with a wide range of colleagues. Early Intervention is a key priority for DCC, and so specifically in the Early Years we have seen an increase in partnership working with the Outreach Team, Early Years Establishments, and the Education Manager and Officer (0-5) than was previously the case. We needed to know which aspects of this work was having the greatest impact so we can effectively prioritise service delivery going forward.

***What impact is DEPS partnership working having on improving the quality of joint assessment for targeted children in the early years?***

***What contribution and impact does DEPS make to effective planning and implementation of staff development for the City?***

Outcomes from the fieldwork week identified the following strengths and areas for further improvement:

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Areas for further improvement</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DEPS are fulfilling their statutory role in relation to casework. DEPS involvement positively impacts on planning at a</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be more proactive in sharing evidence from research and encouraging a focus on measurement and local data analysis with</li> </ul>

<p>casework level in the Early Years e.g. Complex ASN Panel, Placing Requests, Deferred Entry, Supporting Learners Management Groups (SLMGs)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educational Psychologists bring analysis, moderation, perspective, challenge, reflection, contextual knowledge and information about child development to early years targeted assessment which informs intervention</li> <li>• Senior managers are confident in the quality of assessment data provided by DEPS for specific cases e.g. Out of Authority Placing requests or tribunals</li> <li>• More children in Dundee are now being educated in their local school</li> <li>• When DEPS staff development applies models of adult learning, collaborative action research approaches and the core components of successful implementation then we can demonstrate positive impact on staff capacity</li> </ul>	<p>early years partners to inform forward planning &amp; effective EP deployment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarify respective roles of Outreach Team and DEPS further and communicate this to partners</li> <li>• Strengthen use of DEPS casework rubric when undertaking individual casework and communicate the criteria more effectively to partners, especially parents. Be clear not only about criteria for opening a case but also for closing it.</li> <li>• Finalise and share commissioning guidelines for staff development input to reinforce effective staff development. Ensure links to DCC priorities.</li> <li>• Ensure robust self-evaluation is built in to all CLPL delivered by the service</li> <li>• Further explore opportunities for accreditation of DEPS staff development with GTCS, e.g. professional recognition gained by teaching staff as a result of the Literacy Strategy</li> </ul>
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## 6. Overarching strengths

In addition to the specific themes, the VSE fieldwork validated some overarching strengths and identified others:

- DEPS' psychological evidence-base and research skills for evaluation are valued by partners
- Our high quality professional dialogue, questioning and coaching builds capacity and supports problem-solving and reflection
- Implementation methodology, when applied consistently, builds staff capacity & improves outcomes
- The service has strong partnerships with Education colleagues and Speech and Language Therapists
- Embedded partnerships at a strategic level support leadership of change and outcomes for children e.g. Attainment Challenge, Literacy, SLMGs are all improving outcomes
- Self-evaluation data sources are valid and there is evidence of data being used in a planned way to improve the service and to demonstrate impact
- The Service are reflective and responsive and this informs and supports ongoing improvement

## 7. Areas for identified for further improvement

- Establish a unifying vision for the service across the core frameworks and communicate it confidently

- Make robust psychology more explicit in the rationale for change at all levels, as is the case in the literacy strategy, taking steps to ensure that the service’s research role/skills are more visible at strategic level.
- Make more systematic & connected use of data sources – small & large, including rigorous baseline assessment. This will ensure that we target the ‘correct changes’ in service delivery – with depth not breadth, and a focus on ensuring equity and clarity of impact.
- Strengthen partnership with parents/children and young people for self-evaluation and improvement
- Identify the service’s role in the new School Improvement Partnerships
- Further develop confidence and skills in leadership of change across the service
- With the Strategy & Performance Team, establish actions for shared strategic self-evaluation within Children’s Services Plan

## **8. Reflections and learning**

DEPS found VSE to be a very worthwhile process. Using the Scottish Government six ‘improvement questions’ deepened our self-evaluation during the fieldwork week; clarified our vision; and identified steps to realise it. In testing out this methodology we are confident that it has wider application in forward improvement planning. The VSE fieldwork week demonstrated a range of methods of self-evaluation that partners are keen to adopt. The involvement and contribution of partners in the process was invaluable and has further strengthened collaborative working, and identified increased opportunities for collaborative action research. Partners are supportive of the changes which DEPS needs to make to secure forward improvement planning.

The timing of the VSE was opportune for DEPS in aligning strategic improvement planning with the current drafting of delivery plans for the forthcoming Children’s Services Plan in 2017.

The VSE process has further developed EPs’ confidence in leadership and provides a strong basis for individual and collective contribution to the actions in the service improvement plan.

## **9. Action Plan**

The outcomes and actions from the VSE have informed and revised our Service Improvement Plan [External Link](#) and will be taken forward in accordance with the council’s Children’s Services Plan.