

**Validated Self-evaluation  
Comhairle nan Eilean Siar  
15 April 2014**



# **Validated self-evaluation in Comhairle nan Eilean Siar: Education Department**

## **Commentary by Education Scotland**

### **Introduction**

To provide support and challenge to Comhairle nan Eilean Siar Education and Children's Services self-evaluation, the recently appointed Director of Education and Children's Services invited HM Inspectors (Education Scotland) to work with them on a validated self-evaluation (VSE) between December 2013 and February 2014. Senior Officers from Comhairle nan Eilean Siar had already begun a comprehensive and large scale self-evaluation of the services provided by Education and Children's Services. Planning for VSE had therefore commenced in November 2012. When Education Scotland joined the department they had identified two key areas, Leadership and Learning, which they felt would benefit from further support and challenge. As a result, HM Inspectors agreed to work alongside officers and staff to help build capacity in self-evaluation and to identify strengths and areas for improvement in the two themes. Further details on the themes examined through the VSE can be found in the Comhairle nan Eilean Siar Education and Children's Services VSE report. <http://www.cne-siar.gov.uk/education/documents/PCD09102-CnES-VSE-Report-March-2014.pdf>

### **What has the VSE achieved?**

HM Inspectors are confident that the overall quality of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar Education and Children's Services self-evaluation is accurate and robust. Senior managers, elected members and education staff demonstrated a clear commitment to improving education services through self-evaluation. Very strong and effective leadership was demonstrated by elected members, the Chief Executive and Senior Officers. The approach taken by team members to the VSE was thorough. They used a variety of appropriate activities and a wide range of data to gather evidence and to synthesise and analyse this into appropriate strengths and areas for improvement. The teams used partners such as community learning and development to achieve an integrated approach to self-evaluation, service planning and delivery. Partners were involved effectively to help gather and interpret data and, during the initial phase, these colleagues helped to develop further an understanding of some of the key issues. The senior management team used data very effectively to target resources to meet outcomes such as economic regeneration and positive post school destinations. They also used a range of effective measures to monitor impact.

These important strengths should now be built on to ensure the effective use of data and other evaluative tools are consistently well used across all levels of leadership to target resources and evaluate impact. It became apparent during the VSE that self-evaluation needed to have a sharper focus on the vision, values and aims of the council to help measure the impact of policies on outcomes for children and young people. Overall, the VSE process enabled officers and other staff to more clearly identify the significant, high level strengths and areas for improvement.

## **Looking ahead**

The VSE helped the authority to analyse further the data which they had collated as part of their self-evaluation. Through the use of 'narratives' the authority developed an effective methodology allowing them to describe the key areas which make a difference to outcomes for children, young people and the wider community. The process of describing 'what' works and 'why', allowed officers to concentrate on the high level messages derived from the self-evaluation and VSE activity. This allowed the senior officer teams to use the learning from the VSE process to develop clear action plans for the next three years, feeding directly into their Business Plan. The identified actions, supported by a suite of performance measures, were shared by all staff and enhanced because of the joint activity undertaken during the VSE activity. Effective, high quality professional dialogue helped VSE teams to arrive at a sufficiently challenging set of improvements.

## **Next steps**

Education Scotland are confident that Comhairle nan Eilean Siar Education and Children's Services have the skills, systems and processes in place to support continuous improvement. They know themselves well and have a clear plan for improvement.

Education Scotland will work collaboratively with Education and Children's Services to support the authority in the delivery of their improvement plan. A Local Partnership Agreement will be drawn up between Education Scotland and Comhairle nan Eilean Siar to identify where support will be provided. The Area Lead Officer will continue to provide support and challenge, particularly during the department's proposed senior management restructure and redesign of Children's Services.

**Dr. Laura-Ann Currie**  
**HM Inspector**

**Education Scotland**  
**15 April 2014**

## **How can you contact us?**

Should you wish to comment on any aspect of validated self-evaluation you should write to Mr Alastair Delaney, Strategic Director, at Education Scotland, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston, EH54 6GA. Alternatively, if your query is related to this report, you may also write to Mr Malcolm Burr, Chief Executive, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Sandwick Road, Stornoway, Isle of Lewis, HS1 2BW.