

CIPD Level 5 Associate Diploma in People Management Assignment Front Sheet

Eva Jenkins

CIPD Membership Number: 90974974

CIPD Module Name: Evidence Based Practice

CIPD Module Code: 5C002

Word Count: 3,527

1.1 - Evidence based practice is a decision making approach that will combine the best available research evidence, organisational data and professional expertise to inform people on management strategies (CIPD, 2022) It represents a shift away from decisions based on tradition, assumption or personal preference towards practices made with verifiable insight and evaluation. For people professionals, evidence based practice is not simply about using data. It can be a framework for integrating multiple sources of information to ensure that decisions made are ethical and with goals in mind that the organisation are aiming for.

Evaluating will reveal significant strengths alongside their weaknesses and limitations. The main benefit is improved decision making. This can be achieved by testing ideas against evidence, reducing bias and consistent, fairer outcomes. For example, using researched assessment methods in recruitment increases the likelihood of hiring high-performing staff while lowering the risk of legal challenges. Furthermore, evidence based enhances the credibility of the people function, enabling teams to demonstrate the value of their work to senior leaders and justify investment in areas such as learning, wellbeing and rewards (CIPD, 2023) However, human behaviour is complicated and context-dependent meaning evidence from one organisation may not transfer to the other. Additionally, reliance on measurable data risks overlooks qualitative factors such as culture or morale and gathering evidence will require skill, time and resources that may be limited.

If EBP is applied effectively, it can support sound decision making across all people practice. In learning and development for instance, internal performance data combined with research on adult learning can shift focus from basic training courses to targeted interventions that could drastically improve productivity. In employee relations, analysing absence data and exit interview feedback can identify patterns, allowing teams to address root causes such as workload or management rather than just managing symptoms.

People professionals use various analytical techniques to gain these type of insights. Descriptive analysis summarises current workforce trends such as turnover or demographic. Diagnostic analysis investigates relationships between variables - for example, exploring whether teams with lower engagement scores experience higher turnover. Trend analysis tracks changes over time to assess whether interventions are working, while comparative analysis measures performance against industry standards. Predictive analysis uses historical data to predict future needs such as skill gaps or enabling proactive planning.

Ultimately, it has been proven that evidence-based practice ensures people management are not just an administrative function but a strategic area where decisions are justified, outcomes are measurable and practices continue to improve.

1.2 - Fishbone: The fishbone technique is a structured diagnostic tool used to identify and categorise potential root causes of specific issues. It groups factors into people, processes, technology and resources (CIPD, 2023a) It is ideal for complex or recurring problems such as high turnover, low engagement or inconsistent performance.

Strengths: Strengths of the fishbone technique is that it promotes systematic thinking, avoids jumping to conclusions and solves relationships between symptoms and underlying causes. It supports collaborative diagnosis and encourages teams to share insights and build a shared understanding. For example, if this is applied to increasing absences, it may reveal whether the issues stem from workload, management issues or wellbeing support. This is a more effective method than simply just recording absences.

Limitations: It relies on accurate input. Poor categorisation or bias will lead to misleading results. It identifies causes but does not prioritise them or measure impact, therefore it works best alongside data. It is less useful for simple or clearly defined problems.

Employee surveys: Employee surveys are a systematic method used to gather quantitative and qualitative data from large groups which measure attitudes, perceptions, experiences and needs. (CIPD, 2023b) Standardised questions enable comparison across teams, time periods or benchmarks making them excellent for spotting trends, risks and opportunities.

Strengths: There are many strengths to surveys in the workplace. Surveys are efficient, scalable and generate measurable evidence. When well-designed, they highlight undetected issues. Open ended questions uncover new opportunities such as demand for flexible working or better recognition. They provide objective data to challenge assumptions and justify action.

Limitations: Surveys can have bias within responses, low return rates and reduced reliability on unclear questions. Surveys show what is happening and not why. They often require follow up investigations to understand the root cause. They can also create expectations that action will be taken, which may create a lack of trust if nothing has been done about the issue.

Firstly surveys recognise patterns or gaps, then fishbone diagnoses underlying drivers. This ensures decisions are evidence based, targeted and relevant while reducing risk, improving outcomes, learning wellbeing and reward strategies.

1.3 - Critical thinking is the process of actively questioning, analysing and evaluating information and arguments to form logical, well reasoned conclusions rather than accepting

ideas at face value (The Open University, 2023) It relies on a set of core principles that support objectivity, reduce error and ensures debates remain rational and constructive.

Key principles include clarity and precision: ensuring terms are defined and arguments are clearly stated to avoid misunderstanding. Objectivity means differentiating facts from opinions and setting aside personal feelings or preferences when assessing information. Evidence evaluation requires checking the reliability, currency and completeness of sources, and asking whether conclusions are genuinely supported by the data provided (University of Leeds, 2022) Another principle is recognising assumptions and bias. Identifying unstated beliefs such as confirmation bias - the tendency to favour information that matches what we already believe. It is also important to consider alternative perspectives. Looking at issues from different angles and testing ideas against counter - arguments to ensure they are robust (Brookfield, 2021)

When applied to your own ideas, critical thinking acts as a self check. You should ask: *Why do I think this? Is my reasoning based on evidence or just habit?* For example, if you believe flexible working reduces productivity, would you challenge this perspective by seeking data, testing assumptions and considering research showing that flexibility often improves output and wellbeing. This self questioning strengthens ideas, removes weaknesses, and makes your position fairer.

When applied with others' ideas, the same principles apply. Instead of instantly agreeing or disagreeing, analyse the reasoning: *What is their main point? What evidence are they using? Are there any contradictions?* This way the focus is on the argument itself. This changes the debate from a collection of opinions into a shared process of ideas. It encourages everyone to justify their views which leads to better solutions, and builds an environment where decisions are based on logic and insight rather than influence or tradition. (Mind Tools, 2024)

1.4 - Evidence based practice is a key principle in people management, enabling professionals to make decisions using reliable evidence rather than assumptions or intuition. According to Briner et al (2009) EBP involves combining the best available evidence from scientific research, organisational data, professional expertise, and stakeholder views to improve organisational outcomes. Therefore, effective decision making is essential for ensuring that people practices contribute positively to both employee wellbeing and business performance.

One important decision making process is the rational decision making model. This process follows a logical sequence of steps: identifying a problem, gathering information, generating alternatives, evaluating options, selecting the most appropriate solution, implementing the decision and reviewing outcomes (Robbins and Judge, 2022) In people practice, the approach can be used to address issues such as high employee turnover. For example a HR team may analyse exit interviews and absence records to identify the causes of turnover before implementing retention strategies. The rational model supports objective decision making and reduces the risk of bias because decisions are based on evidence and analysis rather than personal opinion.

A second process is evidence based decision making. This approach requires decision makers to evaluate information from multiple sources before taking action. Briner et al (2009) argues that evidence based decision making improves organisational effectiveness by ensuring decisions are supported by credible evidence. For example, when considering the introduction of flexible working arrangements, people professionals may review research on productivity, analyse performance data and consult employees and managers. By considering multiple forms of evidence, organisations are more likely to introduce solutions that achieve sustainable and effective outcomes.

Data analysis plays a large role in both decision making processes. People professionals regularly analyse workforce data to identify trends and support decision making. Examples include absence levels, turnover rates, and employee engagement and recruitment performance indicators. For example, analysing employee engagement survey results may reveal areas of low morale, which allows HR teams to intervene and develop targets. Similarly, recruitment analytics such as time to hire and cost per hire can help organisations evaluate the effectiveness of their hiring strategies.

Overall, both rational and evidence based decision making processes help people professionals make informed, objective and effective decisions that support organisational performance and wellbeing.

1.5 - Ethical decision making is an important aspect of people practice which requires professionals to balance organisational objectives with wellbeing and legal fairness. The CIPD identifies ethical practice as core professional behaviour, emphasising the importance of applying principles and values consistently in decision making to build trust and support positive workplace outcomes (CIPD,2022)

One ethical perspective that can help moral decision making is utilitarianism. This approach suggests that the most ethical decision is the one that creates the greatest good for the most amount of workers. In the workplace, utilitarianism may be used when making decisions about restructuring or redundancies. For example, reducing levels of staff may negatively affect a small number of employees but could protect the long term sustainability of the organisation. The strength of this approach is that it encourages decision makers to consider the wider impact of their actions. However, a limitation is that it may justify decisions that disadvantage minority groups if doing so benefits the majority. (VQ Solutions, 2025)

A contrasting ethical perspective is deontology, which focuses on duties, rights and moral principles rather than outcomes. From a deontological perspective, actions are ethical when they respect individual rights and adhere to established principles of fairness and justice. In people practice, this approach may influence decisions relating to recruitment, disciplinary procedures or equality and diversity. For example, ensuring all candidates are assessed against the same criteria demonstrates fairness and consistency regardless of organisational pressures. This perspective aligns closely with the CIPD's emphasis on integrity, transparency and professional responsibility. (CIPD)

The CIPD profession map highlights that people professionals should consider different ethical



perspectives when making decisions and seek the best possible outcomes for all parties. Ethical practice is not just about complying with policies or legislation but about doing what is right and acting in line with professional values. The CIPD also recognises that people professionals often act as the ethical conscience of organisations, challenging ideas that may result in harmful outcomes.

To conclude, both utilitarianism and deontology provide valuable frameworks for decision making. Utilitarianism encourages consideration of organisational and stakeholder outcomes, while deontology promotes fairness and consistency. By considering both perspectives, people professionals can make balanced, principled decisions that support success and ethical standards.

3.1 - Organisations use both financial and non-financial measures to assess their performance and determine whether they are achieving their objectives. Financial measures focus on economic outcomes where non financial measures focus on operational effectiveness, employee performance and customer satisfaction. Using a combination of both will enable the organisation to gain a balanced view of overall performance within the organisation.

The most common financial performance measure is profitability, which assesses an organisation's ability to generate profit. This can be measured by using indicators such as net profit margin, gross profit margin or return on investment. For example, a retail company may use net profit margin to evaluate how much profit is generated from sales revenue after expenses have been deducted. The main advantage of profitability measures is that they will provide clear data that can be compared over time and against competitors. However, they are often retrospective, which means they focus on past performance rather than future success. Additionally, financial measures alone may overlook factors such as employee engagement that contributes to long term organisational sustainability. (CIPD)

A non-financial performance measure is employee engagement, which assesses employees motivation and commitment to the organisation. Engagement is usually measured through employee surveys, feedback mechanisms, turnover rates and absence data. For example, an organisation may conduct an annual employee engagement survey to identify areas where employees feel supported and where areas need improvement. High levels of engagement are often associated with increased productivity, lower turnover and improved customer service. The advantage of this measure is that it provides insight into workforce wellbeing and organisational culture, which can be key drivers of performance. However, survey results can be subjective and may be influenced by factors which are temporary making the interpretation of the survey more complex.

The balanced scorecard, developed by Kaplan and Norton highlights the importance of combining financial and non-financial measures to provide a more in depth assessment of organisational performance. By considering profitability and employee engagement, organisations can evaluate not only what they have achieved financially but also the factors that contribute to future success. (Kaplan and Norton, 1996)

In conclusion, profitability is an effective financial measure that demonstrates economic performance, while employee engagement is a valuable non-financial measure that provides insight into workforce effectiveness. Both measures have strengths and limitations, but together they offer a more balanced understanding of organisational performance and support informed decision making.

3.2 - Measuring the impact and value of people practices helps organisations to understand whether HR initiatives are achieving their intended objectives and improving organisational performance. It also supports evidence based decision making by providing data that can be used to improve the effectiveness of recruitment, learning and development, wellbeing programmes and employee engagement initiatives.

By measuring outcomes, people professionals can demonstrate the value that people professionals bring to the organisation and identify areas for improvement. One method used to measure the impact of people practices is people analytics. People analytics involves collecting and then analysing workforce data to identify trends and patterns within the organisations. For example, an organisation may analyse employee turnover rates before and after introducing a new wellbeing programme. If turnover decreases and employee satisfaction increases, it could indicate that initiative has a positive impact. People analytics can also be used to measure recruitment effectiveness, absence levels and employee engagement. The advantage of this method is that it provides data driven evidence to support decision making. However the quality of the decision making depends on the accuracy and reliability of the collected data.

A second method is return on investment. ROI analysis measures the financial value generated by a people practice compared with it's cost. An example is if a business invests £20,000 in a training programme and subsequently identify productivity improvements worth £50,000. The ROI would demonstrate whether the benefits outweigh the costs and whether the investment is value for money. This method is useful when evaluating learning and development initiatives and employee wellbeing programmes. However, some benefits of people practices such as improved morale, stronger organisational culture can be difficult to calculate financially therefore ROI may not capture the full value of an intervention. The CIPD emphasises that people professionals should use evidence and data to evaluate the effectiveness of people practices and contribute to organisational goals. Combining quantitative measures such as people analytics and ROI with qualitative feedback from employees can provide a more comprehensive assessment of impact and value. (ROI Basics, 2019)

In conclusion, measuring the impact and value of people practices is essential for demonstrating organisational contribution and supporting continuous improvement. People analytics provides evidence of workforce trends and outcomes, while ROI helps assess the financial benefits of HR initiatives. Together, these methods enable organisations to make decisions and maximise the effectiveness of their people practices.

Part 2 - Quantitative and Qualitative analysis review

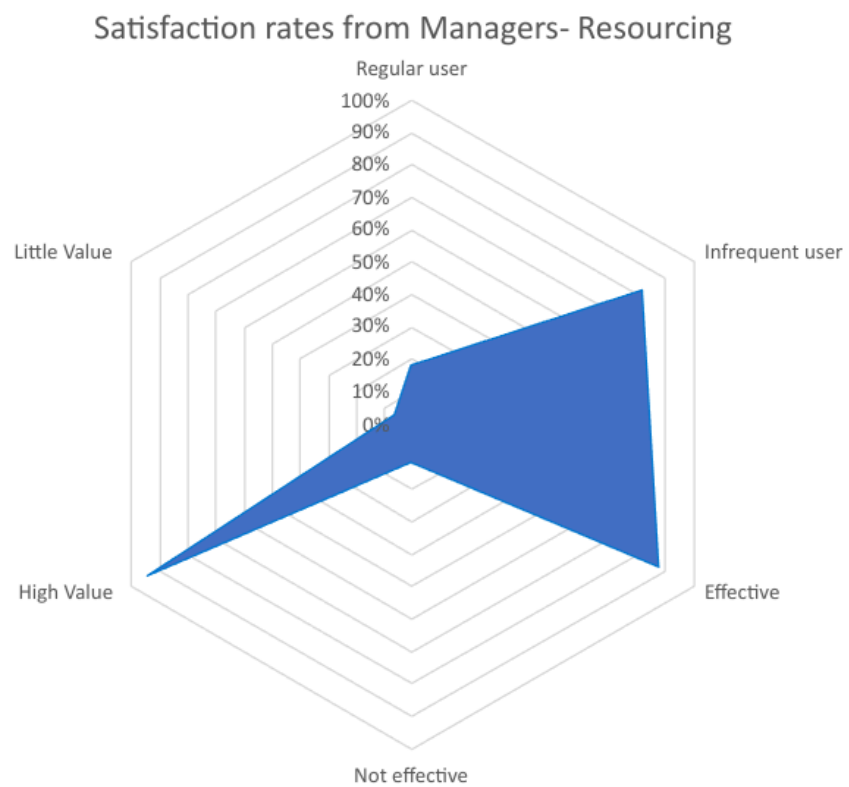
The below chart has been converted into percentages:

Satisfaction Ratings from managers of the People Practice Function. Sample size = 428 managers							
People Practice Area		Regular user	Infrequent user	Effective	Not Effective	High Value	Little Value
HR Policy Guidance		72%	26%	44%	56%	29%	71%
Resourcing		18%	82%	88%	12%	94%	6%
Performance		66%	34%	47%	54%	42%	58%
Employee Development		63%	38%	94%	6%	99%	1%
ER related issues		26%	74%	75%	25%	70%	30%
Pay and Reward		73%	27%	97%	3%	99.8%	0.2%
Workforce Planning		6%	94%	7%	96%	1%	99%
General Administration		97%	3%	84%	16%	78%	22%
EDI		11%	89%	50%	50%	52%	48%
Wellbeing advice		63%	37%	86%	14%	96%	4%

Graph 1:



Graph 2:



Graph 3:

Satisfaction rates from Managers- Performance

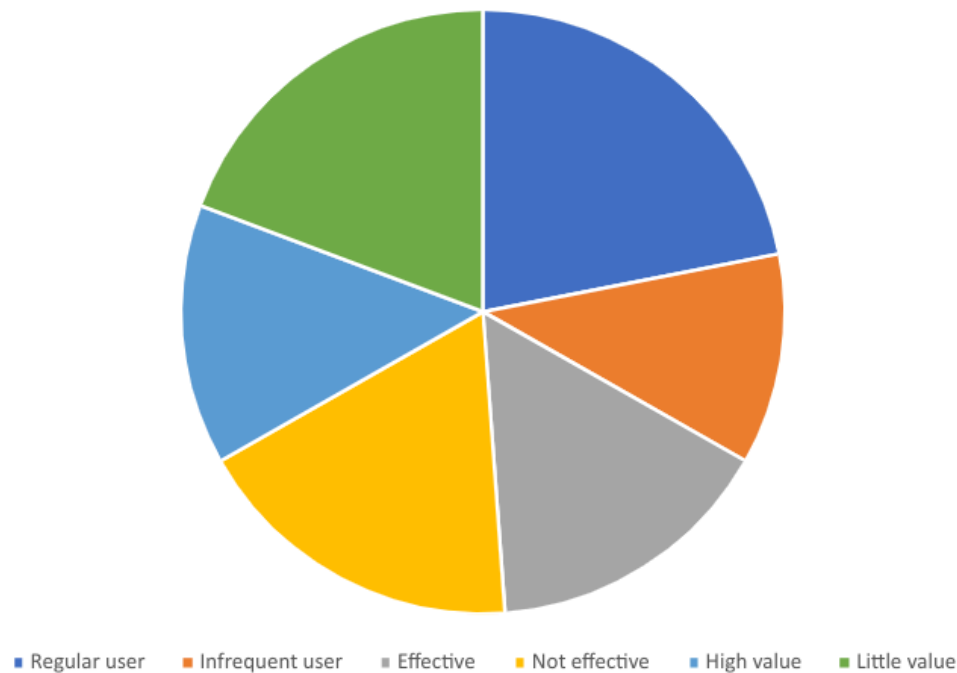


Table 2 analysis - The management focus group findings from 15 section leaders provide valuable insight into perceptions of the People Practice team and the effectiveness of the support provided to managers. Analysis of the data reveals many significant patterns and trends relating to the credibility of the people practice function, managers capability, and access to organisational information. These findings offer an evidence base for evaluating current practice and identifying opportunities for improvement.

A main trend seen from the data is the high level of trust and confidence that managers place in the people practice team. The strongest positive response relates to the statement that the people practice team supports advice on employee matters, with 13 of 15 respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing. Similarly, there is a strong agreement that the team supports employee development and manages recruitment and onboarding effectively. These findings suggest that the people practice function is viewed as a reliable and valued source of support within the organisation. The consistency of positive responses indicates that managers recognise the contribution of the people practice professionals make to operational effectiveness and employee management.

Although, despite the positive perceptions, the findings reveal evidence of a dependency on people practice support. While most respondents agreed that people practice guidance has improved their ability to manage people related issues, responses regarding confidence in managing people issues without assistance, whereas 8 respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed. This suggests that although managers value the support provided, it has not transformed into increased self sufficiency. From a CIPD perspective, this may indicate a need for further management development and coaching to strengthen people-management capability. Effective people management relies on line managers taking ownership of

employee relations and performance management, with people practice professionals acting as advisors rather than decision makers.

Another key trend is the distinction between managers' perceptions of operational and strategic people practice activities. The highest levels of agreement were associated with activities that are highly visible such as recruitment, onboarding and administrative support. In contrast, responses became more varied when managers were asked about legal expertise. This suggests that managers mainly associate the people practice team with operational service rather than strategic contribution to the organisation.

The data also highlights some potential inconsistencies in managers' understanding of the people practice team. While most managers responses demonstrate a clear understanding of the overall purpose of the function, responses regarding legal expertise and administrative support suggest varying expectations of the people practice team. 11 respondents agreed that the people practice team are legal experts while others disagreed. This finding in the data may indicate a misunderstanding of the people professionals. Some misconceptions can create unrealistic standards and increase organisational risk if managers assume all legal matters can be resolved internally by the people practice team. The variation in responses may reflect the need for more clarity in what the responsibilities and limitations are for the people practice team.

A positive find is that the perception of the people practice team is that they understand the business. Most respondents disagreed with the statement that the people professionals don't understand the business, indicating that managers generally believe the function offers sufficient operational knowledge. This is an important find as business understanding is recognised on the CIPD profession map as a critical capability for effective and supportive people professionals. Strong business credibility will enhance people practice teams to influence decision making and align strategies with organisational objectives.

The most significant area of concern was findings related the access to policies and procedures. The majority of respondents indicated that they don't know where to find people related policies and procedures. This represents the most consistently negative response pattern across the data-set. This finding suggests a weakness in knowledge management and information accessibility rather than with the people practice team itself. Managers appear to know where to get advice from but lack confidence in accessing the information independently. This could lead to increased reliance on the people practice team for routine enquiries, inconsistent decision making and delays in resolving employee issues. Furthermore, difficulties in locating the policies it may expose the organisation to compliance risks if managers are unable to access the guidance when needed.

Another trend is the relatively low level of uncertainty shown across the responses. Most of the questions had clear levels of agreement or or disagreement with few neutral responses. This suggests that managers have regular interaction with the people practice team and have experience with them to make informed decisions about the service they have received. The limited number of neutral responses enhanced the reliability of the findings and indicates that the data provides a clear reflection on management perceptions of the people practice team.

Overall, the evidence that has been provided suggests that the people practice team is viewed positively and has established itself as a credible and trusted team of the organisation. Managers recognise the value of the support provided and appreciate the teams contribution to recruitment, employee relations and development. However, the findings also reveal opportunities for improvement, particularly in relation to enhancing managerial confidence and where to find their policies and procedures. Addressing these issues would help support the managers further and reduce dependency on the people practice team. These developments would align with CIPD best practice by creating an approach in which managers are fully confident to manage people to the best of their abilities while people practice professionals offer guidance and strategic support.

References:

Brookfield, S.D. (2021) *Critical Thinking: Tools for Taking Charge of Your Learning and Your Life*. 2nd edn. Hoboken, NJ: Jossey-Bass.

Briner, R.B., Denyer, D. and Rousseau, D.M. (2009) 'Evidence-based management: Concept cleanup time?', *Academy of Management Perspectives*, 23(4), pp. 19–32.

CIPD (2022) *Evidence-based practice: Factsheet*. London: Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.

CIPD (2023) *Analytics and data management: Factsheet*. London: Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.

CIPD (2023a) *Diagnostic tools for people practice*. London: Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.

CIPD (2023b) *Employee engagement and surveys: Factsheet*. London: Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.

Crane, A. and Matten, D. (2024) *Business Ethics: Managing Corporate Citizenship and Sustainability in the Age of Globalisation*. 6th edn. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ferrell, O.C., Fraedrich, J. and Ferrell, L. (2024) *Business Ethics: Ethical Decision Making and Cases*. 14th edn. Boston, MA: Cengage Learning.

ICAEW (n.d.) *Balanced scorecard*. Available at: <https://www.icaew.com/technical/business/balanced-scorecard> (Accessed: 10 June 2026).

Jack J. Phillips (2019) *ROI Basics*. Alexandria, VA: ROI Institute.

Kaplan, R.S. and Norton, D.P. (1996) *The Balanced Scorecard: Translating Strategy into Action*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

Nichols College (2023) *Critical thinking and why it's so important*. Available at: <https://graduate.nichols.edu/blog/why-is-critical-thinking-important> (Accessed: 10 June 2026).

Robbins, S.P. and Judge, T.A. (2022) *Organisational Behaviour*. 19th edn. Harlow: Pearson.

The Open University (2023) *What is critical thinking?* Available at: <https://www.open.ac.uk/blog/learning/what-critical-thinking> (Accessed: 10 June 2026).

HRM Handbook (2021) *Developing critical thinking*. Available at: <https://hrmhandbook.com/core/critical-thinking/> (Accessed: 20 June 2026).

VQ Solutions (n.d.) *Ethical perspectives in people practice: Informing and influencing decision making*. Available at: <https://vqsolutions.co.uk/blog/ethical-perspectives-in-people-practice-informing-and-influencing-decision-making> (Accessed: 16 June 2026).

Balanced Scorecard Institute (n.d.) *Balanced scorecard basics overview*. Available at: <https://balancedscorecard.org/bsc-basics-overview/> (Accessed: 20 June 2026).

Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) (2025) *Evidence-based practice for effective decision making*. Available at: <https://www.cipd.org/en/knowledge/factsheets/evidence-based-practice-factsheet/> (Accessed: 10 June 2026).