

Agenda Item	12.
Report No	ELC/28/23

# The Highland Council

**Committee:** Education

**Date:** 23 November 2023

**Report Title:** Early Learning & Childcare Update

**Report By:** Executive Chief Officer, Education & Learning

## 1. Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 This report describes the working of the Collaborative Improvement Framework for Education (CIF, **Appendix 2**) in Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) settings across the Highlands including local authority, private, voluntary, or independent settings (Private, Voluntary, Independent (PVI)) and commissioned childminding settings. It sets the CIF in the context of national developments that provide both support and potential challenge going forwards, and national and local data showing continuing impacts of recent crises on children and settings. The report details the Universal, Focussed, and Intensive (UFI) categories within the framework, which provides a shared guide for everyone in ELC provisions and collaborative quality assurance activities supporting ELC settings across Highland. The framework supports a cycle of continuous improvement to achieve the agreed vision for education and learning as set out in the Education and Learning Service Plan:

- Entitlement, Excellence and Equity
- Empowerment and Leadership
- Relationships
- Opportunity

1.2 The report highlights the ongoing work of Highland ELC settings and Scottish Government commitment in terms of the wider ELC delivery and as such expectations on Local Authorities to ensure ELC delivery going forward.

## 2. Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:

- (i) Agree the purpose and principles to support ELC settings for ongoing improvement through the draft Collaborative Improvement framework (CIF);
- (ii) Note Scottish Government childcare commitments as outlined in the programme for government.
- (iii) Note the intention to re-engage with PVI ELC partners and other Highland Council directorates to develop and implement the required changes.

### 3. Implications

#### 3.1 Resource

With Scottish Government commitment to expansion of ELC, there will be additional resource implications to The Highland Council.

There are potential financial risks associated with **Increasing PVI rate** to include an uplift to meet the Scottish Government commitment of £12 per hour for staff delivering funded ELC as well as **Expanding the 2-year-old offer**. Initial calculations indicate that eligibility could increase from the current level of 25% of the population to around 40% of population. The impact of these costs is estimated to be significant and running into millions. Implementation would be dependent on clarity of funding from the Scottish Government on timescales and assessed cost and implications of delivery.

#### 3.2 Legal

There are no current legal implications contained within the contents of this report.

#### 3.3 Community (Equality, Poverty, Rural and Island)

Guidelines and expectation have been provided to all ELC settings.

We expect Local Authority (LA) ELC to have improvement priorities in line with school but specific to ELC & we expect all commissioned partners (except those already with an action plan relating to their improvement requirements), to create an improvement plan.

All policies and legislation apply equally to all areas of Highland including remote and rural areas; however, it is more challenging and costly to deliver in these areas.

There is a conflict between the message coming to parents from Scottish Government in relation to ELC entitlement and the reality of deliverability of that entitlement across remote and rural communities.

#### 3.4 Climate Change / Carbon Clever

There are no climate change or Carbon Clever issues arising from this report.

#### 3.5 Risk

There are numerous risks:

- Risk of the deliverability of the increased Scottish Government commitments.
- Reputational risk to ELC providers of failure to meet continuous improvement targets.
- Risk to ELC settings if they do not reach National Standard as set out by Scottish Government.

#### 3.6 Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people)

There are no Health and Safety issues arising from this report.

#### 3.7 Gaelic

ELC provision encompasses Gaelic Medium and English Medium provision, all settings will benefit from the framework of support. The CIF and Government commitments do not specific additional/alternative requirements for Gaelic Medium settings.

## 4. National Policy context

- 4.1 The Scottish Government have outlined their programme for Government, including priorities for ELC and Early Years. The [Best Start, Early Learning and School Age Childcare Strategic](#) plan set out the strategic priorities across all childcare offers with three high level outcomes
- Children's development improves and the poverty-related outcomes gap narrows,
  - Family wellbeing improves, and
  - Parents' and carers' opportunities to take up or sustain work, training, and study increase.
- 4.2 The [Best Start, Bright Futures](#) sets out how LAs (Local Authorities) and Scottish Government can work across departments and directorates, together, to deliver the ambitious outcomes set out. Priorities with respect to ELC and Early Years were outlined in a letter to LAs in September 2023, including an expanded national offer to 2-year-olds, providing a funding uplift to those working in PVI delivering funded ELC, and recruiting 1000 childminders as set out below.
- 4.3 **Expanding the earlier adopter programme**  
Early adopter projects do not directly impact on THC. Fife and Shetland LAs have been added to the original group (Glasgow, Dundee, Clackmannanshire, Inverclyde). Shetland is hugely different to Highland but the inclusion of a remote, island LA is to be welcomed. THC officers have regular engagement with their counterparts across Scotland and The Northern Alliance (Shetland LA is part of NA).
- 4.4 **Expanded national offer for targeted two-year-olds.**  
The focus of expanded delivery for 2s is anticipated to support families with children living in poverty. The priority groups as set out in the Tackling Child Poverty Action Plan are:
- Children from lone parent families
  - Children from ethnic minority families
  - Children from families with a disabled adult or child
  - Children from families with a young mother (under 25)
  - Children from families with a child under 1 year old
  - Children from larger families (3+ children)

The eligibility criteria or delivery models are not yet agreed by Scottish Government and will be discussed and agreed through COSLA (Convention of Scottish Local Authorities).

It is unclear at this time how the expansion will be implemented but confirmation has been received that there will be no requirement on LAs to deliver increased 2-year-old provision in this session.

## 4.5 Provide funding uplift to those working in PVI delivering funded ELC.

The Scottish Government commitment to increase minimum pay to £12 per hour for PVI staff from April 2024 delivering funded ELC is to be welcomed and will support recruitment and retention in the sector.

There are inherent challenges however in only giving the commitment to those delivering 'funded hours' as recruitment and retention for school age childcare staff is

already particularly challenging and for those working with the youngest children in baby and toddler rooms.

There are also challenges created in terms of cost to PVI whereby the qualified and senior staff would need to be recompensed in line with this minimum pay uplift to realise an appropriate pay scale. In addition, the £12 per hour commitment applies to PVI staff but not LA staff (HC03 grade support workers, equivalent to 86 Full Time Equivalent (FTE)). These members of staff will be paid less per hour than PVI staff delivering funded ELC.

Although there is commitment to additional funding from Scottish Government, the mechanism is still to be confirmed therefore a wider review of the PVI rates would be required to understand the full financial implications of meeting this commitment.

#### 4.6 **Recruiting 1000 childminders**

This commitment is to be welcomed and will address the challenge of providing funded ELC places in remote and rural communities. It will increase choice and flexibility for families, providing a high-quality alternative to group ELC provision and at a much lower cost (if there was a pay differential between childminder and PVI providers).

However, there are several obstacles and barriers:

- Childminders cannot provide a funded service to their own children or those of a family member.
- Childminders must include their own children in their numbers, even when their own children are at school.

#### 4.7 **School age childcare**

Government will continue to consider the school age childcare sector in its broadest sense, and we will work collaboratively with families, communities, childcare providers, and the wider public sector to build a system that meets their needs. They will also take a place-based approach, recognising that there is no one-size-fits-all solution to providing school age childcare within communities.

National Children's Charter for School Age Childcare in Scotland (contributed to by children attending Ben Wyvis school age childcare)

[The Charter](#)

School Age Childcare Delivery Framework

[Delivery Framework](#)

Funded childcare is extremely important in efforts to tackle child poverty. Not only does it ensure that we reduce inequalities for school age children being able to access a wide range of activities and support, but it also allows parents and carers to enter or sustain employment or to increase their hours at work.

The School Age Childcare Delivery Framework sets out key action areas for building a new system of school age childcare, which will be funded for those families who need it most and includes more information about how Government will further involve children, parents, providers, and communities in designing and delivering this.

The National Children's Charter has been a key step in the Government co-design approach. It sets out children's views about why we need school age childcare, how school age childcare should be run and by whom, where it should take place, and what activities should be on offer. The creation of the children's charter for school age

childcare will ensure children’s rights are firmly embedded and their wants and needs respected.

Alongside the National Children’s Charter, Government have also published a short film; local Charters, a Charter poster, and Gaelic language versions of the national Charter and poster. Print versions will be sent to regulated school age childcare providers, as well as other interested people who would like to receive it.

#### 4.8 Funding Follows the Child

Revised guidance now anticipated to be published early 2024, the delay because of the ELC programme for government commitments.

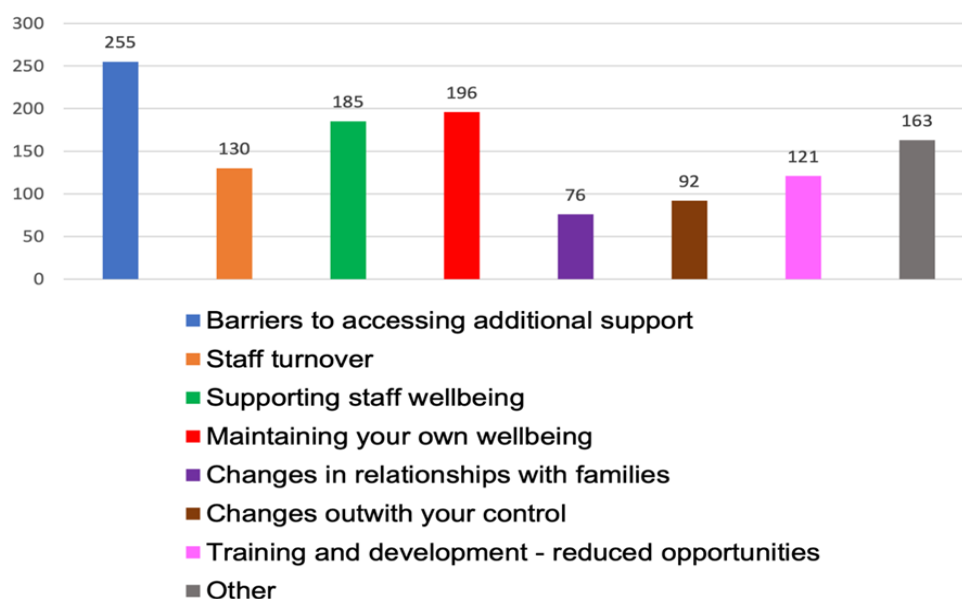
### 5 National Context -state of the sector

5.1 The Care Inspectorate recently conducted a national survey of ELC provisions (with support and consultation from our Early Years Educational Psychologist) to find out how settings were adjusting to the pandemic and cost of living crises, both in terms of how children were doing and factors influencing the sector’s ability to offer high quality provision.

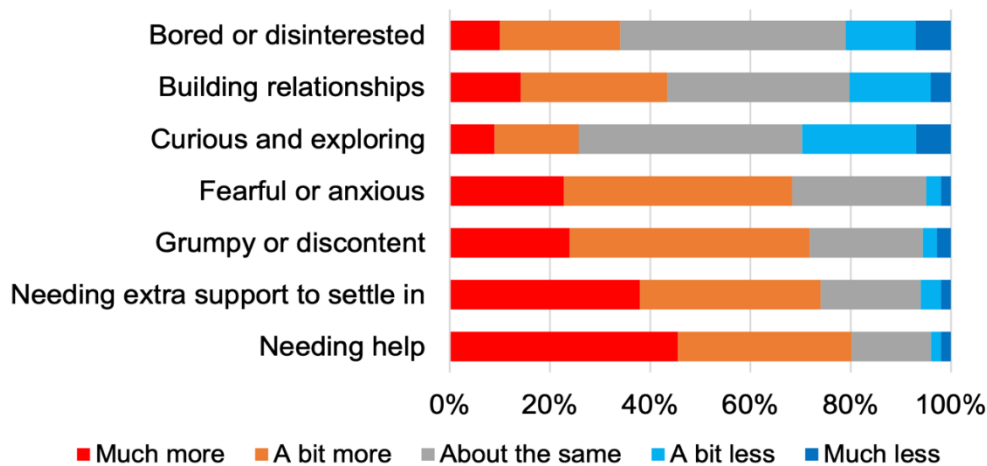
The national picture gained is genuinely like the situation more locally. Main [findings from the report](#) included:

- Many children still with significant gaps in development post-pandemic, particularly in social, emotional and language development
- High demands on staff to deal with a wide range of needs.
- Many settings have adapted successfully, based on shared recognition of pandemic impacts, prioritising positive relationships, a commitment to promoting staff wellbeing, and high-quality leadership and management.
- Many also continue to face difficulties related to the 1140 expansion, longer days for children, staffing and other related issues.

5.2 **Figure 1** shows the setting responses to the question – what have you found most challenging as we recover from the pandemic?



5.3 In terms of impact on children, **Figure 2** shows responses, again at a national level, to the question “how would you compare children in your setting now to children before the pandemic?”



- <https://www.careinspectorate.com/images/documents/7264/ELC Recovery play survey report 2023.pdf>

In response to these impacts and outcomes data:

What is in place:

- Highland have rich data and knowledge to draw on, giving us unique advantages as an authority.
- Schools continue to use the Developmental Overviews to ensure they support children's development and the underpinnings of attainment.
- Emerging Literacy, a nationally recognised Highland approach, provides schools using it with tools and interventions to ensure literacy teaching matches and meets children's developmental needs.
- Play-based progressions for early level Literacy and Numeracy provide teachers and EYPs with detailed observations to support planning and evaluative provision.
- The continuing Words Up project, led by Speech and Language Therapy, provides basic practical understanding of how to support language development.
- Early Years Education Support Officers (EYESOs) have recently introduced and are targeting new training in quality interactions.
- Additional Support for Learning (ASL) training and support for staff across all providers, delivered by CALM trained and experienced officers, with the intention of supporting early years staff to understand and address the root causes of behaviour that challenges. It will focus on attachment, trauma and nurture and enables staff to better focus and understand behaviour which challenges and therefore manage crisis situations effectively with the child at the centre. Having this for Early Years will hopefully in the long term reduce the need for Calm techniques later in the school years and therefore impacting successfully on our restraint reduction policy.

- Home to ELC transition with Health Visiting Staff which aims to improve the transition process for preschool children who have enrolled in Early Learning and Childcare (ELC), to make sure they experience a positive start to ELC.
- Health visiting staff share relevant information they have on a child's needs with ELC staff in a timely way. The Health Visiting Service will collaborate with education staff to streamline, standardise, and improve the information sharing procedures between the two agencies that is acceptable to staff, parents, and carers.
- Continuing with the second year of training to deliver the National Induction Programme for all ELC staff, focussing on new and relief staff, but open to all, feedback on the training delivered last session has been hugely positive.

What is needed:

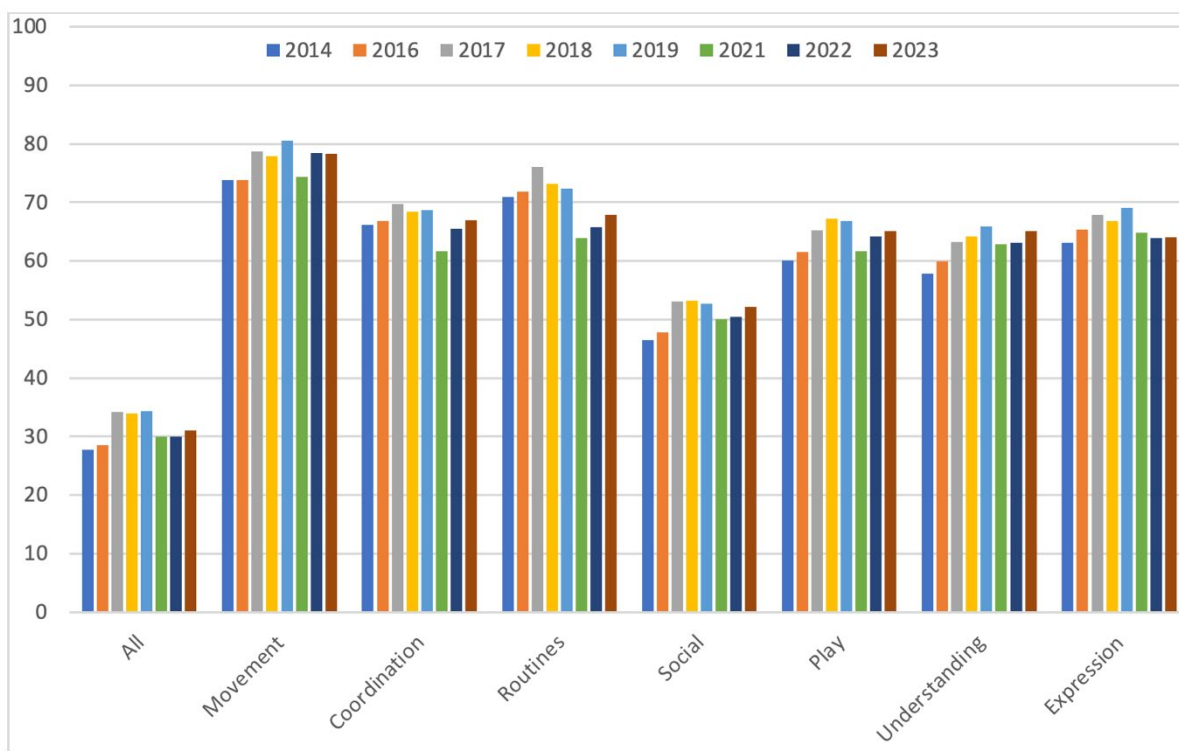
- Detailed multi-professional analysis of the Overview and other data to support the development of a strategic and measurable approach.
- Joint planning with Allied Health Professionals (AHPs) and other developmental specialists on how to support ELC settings and schools with the on-going impacts of pandemic and cost-of-living crisis on children.
- Audit and strategic plan for Professional Learning, linked to self-evaluation systems, meeting the gaps in initial training for Early Years Practitioners (EYPs) on child development and pedagogy.
- Implementation of the CIF with consistent messages integrating the importance of developmentally appropriate ways to raise attainment.

## 6 Children in Highland

6.1 Highland Council take an annual collation of the Developmental Overviews of children transitioning to P1. This provides, within understood margins of error, an overall sense of how children are doing in ELC and potentially allows for advance planning for what schools may need to provide as well as what development work is needed in ELC.

The overall data shows a recovery from pandemic impacts, though not entirely to the levels of the steady progress achieved before 2019. **Figure 3** shows preliminary year-on-year data for percentages of children at expected levels of development in areas known to be important for lifelong learning and wellbeing – movement, coordination, social, play and language skills.

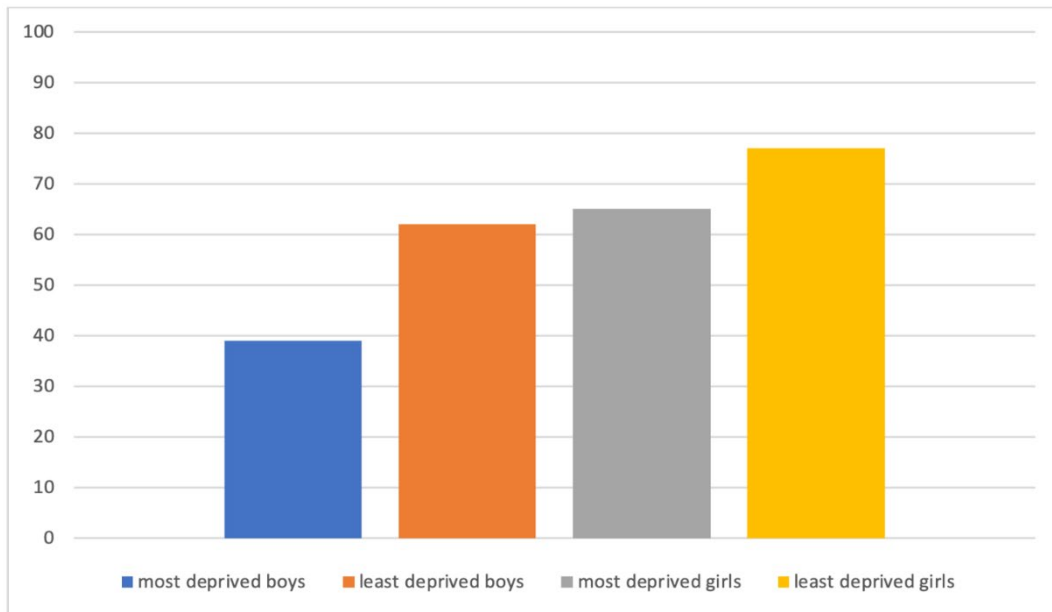
6.2 **Figure 3:** % children at expected levels of development on school entry each year



Within this overall pattern, there are concerns at the level of detail considering particular groups. For example, the gaps in language development between least and most deprived children are increasing, suggesting that headline “recovery” is not evenly shared across the population. To give an intuitive estimate, more deprived children are twice (2.3 times) as likely to go to school with key gaps in language development (2.5 for boys and 1.8 for girls). This is worse than last year (when it was 1.7 times as likely). **Figure 4** shows the contrasts.



6.3 **Figure 4:** % children with expected levels of language development at school entry 2023 by sex and levels of deprivation (vintiles 1-4 and 17-20)



The Overview collation provides complex data, and these preliminary findings require further checking and analysis. This will be available during November 2023 with multi-agency recommendations for actions.

## 7. Improving quality of ELC in Highland

### 7.1 Collaborative Improvement Framework

The Collaborative Improvement Framework (CIF) has been constructed to support staff and settings across all ELC provisions, to raise standards and attainment through a focus on continuous, collaborative improvement. The CIF sets out the wider considerations over statutory responsibilities, approaches to self-evaluation and improvement activity, alongside scrutiny and review from the Care Inspectorate, Education Scotland and Local Government Benchmarking Frameworks which provide national points of reference.

The CIF provides a reference for all, with the intention to support a consistent approach to engagement across the officer team and settings to monitor and support progress and improvement.

### 7.2 Inspections and accountability

ELC settings' quality of practice are regularly evaluated by the Care Inspectorate (CI) and Education Scotland. ELC settings are measured against frameworks, as set out by the Care Inspectorate, Education Scotland, and Scottish Government. From April 2024 there will be one Shared Framework for Inspection for ELC settings. CI will be inspecting on this framework from April 24 whilst Education Scotland will not use it until September 24.

It is the responsibility of the leadership of an ELC setting to ensure current frameworks are reflected in practice and have set improvement priorities to meet set criterion as per CI Quality Framework, HMI How Good is our ELC and Scottish Government National Standard for ELC.

Highland Council is the 'Guarantor of Quality' for delivery of funded ELC in Highland, for 2-5s whether delivered in LA, PVI or by commissioned childminders.

### 7.3 **Registration and inspection.**

There are regular meetings with Care Inspectorate with officers and managers across of providers, to discuss themes and priorities to support settings with collaborative improvement.

### 7.4 **Care Inspectorate Improvement priorities**

Current themes across settings with priority for improvement are:

- Play recovery. Recovery Play Survey Report
- Meal and snack times experiences
- Staff deployment
- Quality assurance and monitoring
- SIMOA (Safety, Inspect, Monitor, Observe, Act) – (See **Appendix 1**). Campaign to support settings to be aware and ensure that children do not leave the setting without an adult.
- Nappy changing and infection, prevention, and control.

### 7.5 **Support for settings**

ELC Officers seek to work in partnership with ELC settings to provide appropriate levels of support linked to individual ELC settings contexts and need. Three categories of support have been established where ELC settings and ELC officers use a reference tool to support discussion around context and level of support required. ELC settings fall under the categories of Universal, Focused, or Intensive (UFI), this has been co-constructed with Head Teachers. Expectations and timelines are shared depending on the level of support identified through collaborative conversations.

ELC Officers give support to ELC settings and leadership teams for agreed improvements as identified with ELC Officers having specific remits to ensure all aspects of ELC are supported, including quality of learning and teaching, national standard, and commissioning of services. Identified improvement priorities are tracked, evaluated, and reviewed regularly.

Currently across all providers there are 34 ELC receiving intensive support, 64 with focussed and 104 on universal support. The Framework of Support setting out categories and support can be found in CIF (**Appendix 2**) as appendix 3 within the document.

Officers support settings directly with practice and environment improvements across all providers. Officers also link with other HC (Highland Council) directorates for LA settings, such as estates and catering to support managers in ensuring that the requirements are met.

### 7.6 **Care Inspectorate Improvement Programme**

There are currently 2 settings within Cohort 6 of the Care Inspectorate improvement programme, one partner and one LA setting. This has been a successful and useful support to settings previously helping them to prioritise and focus on areas for improvement to get some quick wins and then move to embedding practice and procedures to ensure sustained improvement.

## 8. Partnership Working

Monthly meetings are set to reestablish links with PVI partners to consider:

- How the vision for school age childcare, food and holiday childcare will be delivered in Highland
- Consider innovative solutions to delivering funded ELC and childcare in remote and rural communities.
- Gather views regarding an expanded 2-year-old offer in terms of best practice and deliverability, with a focus on what will make a long-term difference to those children and families.
- Share knowledge and experience of inspections, solutions and collaborate to improve.
- Establish and strengthen links with economic development and employability services and HIE.

Designation: Executive Chief Officer, Education & Learning

Date: 25 October 2023

Author: Hayley Brown, Senior Manager Early Years

Background Papers:

Link 1 – [Best Start: Strategic Early Learning and School Age Childcare Plan 2022-26](#)

Link 2 - [Best Start, Bright Futures Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2022-2026](#)

Appendices:

Appendix 1 - SIMOA campaign poster

Appendix 2 - CIF



The infographic features a purple elephant on the left, with a speech bubble above it containing the text 'Remember to Look, Think, Act'. To the right of the elephant are three stylized flowers: a red one, a small red one, and a yellow one. The background is a light teal sky with white clouds and a green ground line. The Care Inspectorate logo is in the top left corner.

**care inspectorate**

**Remember to Look, Think, Act**

**S Safety**  
Be alert to all potential risks in your setting.

**I Inspect**  
Look around and inspect the environment to make sure a child can't leave an area without staff or their parent/carer.

**M Monitor**  
Regularly check that all children are accounted for, particularly when they are outside, on outings or using transport.

**O Observe**  
Observe children and think about their feelings and emotional security – use these observations to support children to feel loved and secure.

**A Act**  
Assess and take action to keep children safe.

## The Highland Council: Education and Learning



**Continuous Improvement: 'Improving how we improve'**

**Section 1:** Context, purpose & aims

**Section 2:** Principles supporting continuous improvement

**Section 3:** Collaborative Improvement - a culture of self-evaluation

**Section 4:** Collaborative Improvement Strategy

**Section 5:** The Role of Colleagues: roles and responsibilities

**Section 6:** The Highland Framework for Raising Attainment - support and expectations

## **Appendices**

**Appendix 1:** Framework of Support - Universal, Focused, Intensive Categories – Schools

**Appendix 2:** Framework of Support - Universal, Focused, Intensive Support – Schools

**Appendix 3:** Universal, Focused, Intensive Support Framework – categories and support - ELC

## Section 1: Context

Education and Learning is the largest of The Highland Council's services. Its purpose is to raise attainment and achievement for all, especially for children and young people from disadvantaged circumstances, including rural deprivation. To do this, there is a focus on improving standards and the quality of learning, teaching and play pedagogy, to ensure that entitlement, equity and excellence are delivered across Highland. This can only be achieved through effective collaboration with a highly professional workforce which understands the importance of self-evaluation to achieve continuous improvement.

### Purpose & Aims

The purpose of this framework is to provide a coherent guide for all those engaging in collaborative improvement related to the work of schools and ELC settings. It sets out expectations, guidance and supports everyone to work together within a cycle of continuous improvement to achieve our vision for education and learning.

#### Entitlement, Excellence & Equity

We will raise attainment and achievement for all, especially for children and young people from disadvantaged circumstances, including rural deprivation. We will focus relentlessly on improving standards and the quality of learning and teaching, to ensure that entitlement, equity and excellence are delivered across the system.

#### Empowerment & Leadership

We will develop leadership skills at all levels of the system, for now and the future, building a culture of empowerment and professional capital.

#### Relationships

We will maximise health and wellbeing for all

children and young people, to give them the best possible start in life. We will ensure every child and young person feels part of the community they live in.

#### Opportunity

We will maximise opportunities for our children and young people, and for the wider Highland community and its visitors, through the provision of high-quality services.



## Section 2: Principles supporting continuous improvement

School and ELC setting improvement is a collective responsibility which takes place within an ethos of ambition and achievement through a supportive and nurturing culture, where everyone acknowledges accountability to stakeholders.

The climate should be one of questioning and reflection in striving for the best possible outcome for every learner.



The capacity for effective self-evaluation within a school and ELC setting will be strengthened through the coordinated effort of Education Services' staff working with practitioners from within, and beyond, the Council in a range of school and ELC improvement collaborations and partnerships.

The principles underpinning effective collaborative improvement practices are as follows:

- learner focused
- the responsibility of all
- based on reflective practices
- inclusive of all stakeholders
- strong and effective leadership, at all levels
- recognition, learning from and applying good practice
- based on educational research of 'what works'
- effective use of data
- understanding accountability to stakeholders
- Career Long Professional Learning leading to improvement for learners
- balance support and challenge
- responsive to changing needs

## Section 3: Collaborative Improvement – A Culture of Self-evaluation

This policy framework aims to build the capacity of all staff, pupils, parents and other partners to work together to undertake robust and accurate self-evaluation. The clear



focus should be on evidencing impact and improved outcomes for children and young people.

In *How Good is our School? 4* and *How Good is our Early Learning and Childcare?* the level 5 illustration outlines that:

- All staff understand that self-evaluation is an integral aspect of our approach to continuous improvement through addressing the 3 key questions:
  - *How well are we doing?*
  - *How do we know?*
  - *What are we going to do now?*

To secure sustained improvement, schools and ELC settings should inform their decision making and actions through a continuous process of looking inwards, outwards and forwards. This process supports sound decision-making, planning and effective action to secure positive change.

***Looking inwards* – starts with those working with children and young people.**

It should focus on the impact on outcomes for learners. Effective self-evaluation processes triangulate information, data, peoples' views and observation of practice to measure impact and inform planning for improvement.

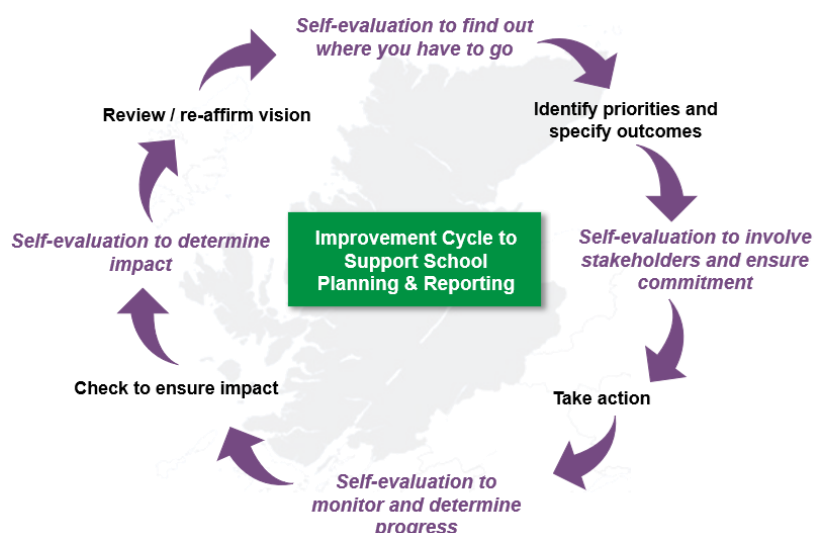
***Looking outwards* – Learning from others.**

Looking to others for new ideas that challenge their practice and support continuous improvement allow schools and ELC settings to learn from what works and does not work. This includes practice in other schools, learning communities and learning from educational research. Schools and ELC settings, along with central officers, should actively seek out and facilitate effective partnerships that support work to improve outcomes for all children and young people.

***Looking forwards* – Creating a vision and planning for implementation.**

Through leadership at all levels, improving schools and ELC settings should anticipate challenges and explore creative solutions. This will help to create an aspirational vision for schools and ELC settings which should shape action and provide a focus for improvement.

**Improvement Cycle to support School and ELC setting Planning, Review and Reporting**



The improvement cycle involves self-evaluation at each phase to

- agree or re-affirm the vision,
- identify priorities and specify outcomes
- measure performance to monitor impact.

Schools and ELC settings manage the above cycle using the evidence gathered in day-to-day work and at focused points during the academic session. Schools and ELC settings should apply manageable processes to collect, store and analyse evidence on an ongoing basis.

Evidence gathered should be used to inform self-evaluation and identify strategies for improvement. These are contained within the School Self Evaluation Summary (SSES), School Improvement Plan (SIP), which will also include plans for addressing equity.

### **The School Standards and Quality – School Self Evaluation Summary (SSES)**

The SSES forms the basis of the public-facing Standards and Quality report and evaluations. The summary is a working document informed by the self-evaluation process, and is evaluated using the national quality indicators illustrated in *How Good is Our School?*<sup>4</sup> and *How Good is our early learning and childcare?* As well as the Care Inspectorate Quality Framework for ELC and the Scottish Government National Standard for Early Learning and Childcare. This should be updated throughout the school session and is the school and/or ELC settings' high level self-evaluation summary which is central to Education Scotland Inspections and any local authority validated self-evaluation activity. Schools and ELC settings will use the 'key areas of development' identified in the SSES to inform school and setting improvement planning.

Schools and ELC settings should work in a strategic, planned and supportive way to allow staff from within their school and/or setting to plan, deliver, monitor and evaluate together and this should be mapped out through a collegiate calendar linked to the Working Time Agreement. Included in this activity, staff and partners should engage in evaluating current practice and any new initiatives linked to the Improvement Plan. To support this process, schools and ELC settings should identify important strengths and areas for improvement from a range of evidence, including qualitative and quantitative data. [Template link](#)

### **Report on Standards and Quality to Parents (S&Q)**

It is a statutory requirement that all schools produce an annual report for parents on school Standards and Quality. The report for parents should be clear and concise and may take the form of a letter or leaflet. It should provide a parent-friendly summary about the successes, achievements and next steps for the school and/or ELC setting which are contained in the more detailed SSES. [Template link](#)

## **School and ELC Setting Improvement Planning**

The School Improvement Plan (SIP), including schools' and ELC settings' plans for addressing equity, is a working document, which may be altered in the course of the year. Updates and adaptations will be as a result of the ongoing process of monitoring and evaluating the progress of the plan with school and ELC staff, and in collaboration with others from beyond the school and setting. Alterations to the plan may be discussed with the Collaborative Lead Officer and Early Years Education Support Officer where relevant. [SIP template link](#)

It is a **statutory requirement that parents, pupils and young children are consulted** on the SIP. In addition to this statutory requirement, we would expect all stakeholders to co-construct the priorities. All members of staff and partners within the wider community should be involved in the process. Engagement should not be a one-off event but should be part of an ongoing process of monitoring and review throughout the school year to ensure all stakeholders have ownership of the final plans and ongoing impact. This activity would be built into your self-evaluation and engagement calendar.

The priority contained within each SIP is to improve outcomes including raising attainment and achievement for all children and young people. Schools and ELC settings must take into account the National Improvement Plan, Highland Council's Corporate Plan and Education Service Plan. Priorities need to be relevant for the given sector, for example, ensuring that content is appropriate for ELC and the pedagogical approaches in national practice guidance.

The SIP is more than a list of tasks and the ambition of the plan lies in schools and settings clearly stating the desired outcomes for learners, i.e., the benefits that actions should bring to pupils and the school and ELC community. The plan should have clear timelines, both for actions, and approaches to gathering evidence to monitor impact with clear responsibilities linked to each area. Desired outcomes for children and young people should be observable and measurable and should support ongoing monitoring and review. Schools should also include summary details of additional tasks.

Each school and ELC setting's SIP, SSES, SQR and Collegiate Working Time Agreement for the forthcoming session must be submitted to the local authority by 16<sup>th</sup> June 2023.

## **Section 4: Collaborative Improvement Strategy**

The role of Education Services, within collaborative improvement, is to support and challenge schools and ELC settings to look inwards, outwards and forwards to ensure high-quality educational provision for all children and young people.

This will be undertaken in the main by the Collaborative Improvement Team and Early

Years Education Support Officers, whose key role is educational improvement through:



### Support, Challenge and Review Approaches

- **Stakeholder Voice**  
Supporting children and young people, staff, families and partners to be fully involved in self-evaluation and planning for improvement via direct engagement through:
  - focus groups
  - surveys
  - Pupil Voice
  - consultation
  - Parent Council
- **Professional Learning & Leadership**  
Supporting and identifying learning and development activities for staff which make a difference to the outcomes of children and young people. This may include:
  - PRD

- Enquiry projects
- Outward working / networking groups
- Leadership opportunities for all
- Signposting to CLPL linked to specific areas

- **Curriculum review**

- agreeing and developing a curriculum rationale
- partnership engagement and review
- effective timetabling
- applying Highland progression frameworks and pathways for subject areas
- effective approaches to planning

- **Evidence of learning**

Working with staff and pupils to observe and review learning and progression via consideration of:

- moderation evidence and activities (including ACEL judgement)
- pupil jotter work
- range of formative and summative assessment evidence
- pupil profiles / My Learning Journey

- **Attainment & Achievement**

- attainment and tracking meetings (inc. targeted intervention groups)
- collective data analysis (including diagnostic SNSA)
- ACEL judgements and evidence review (including prediction analysis)
- impact of PEF on closing the poverty-related attainment gap

- **Learning Walks - Observing and supporting children's learning**

Together with staff and pupils, undertaking Learning Walks to collect evidence about teaching and learning, evidence of progress, and areas for school and ELC setting development. These should focus on:

- positive relationships
- motivated and engaged learners
- purpose of lesson is clear
- responsibility for learning
- digital technology
- leading learning
- range of teaching approaches, e.g., differentiation
- questioning and explanation clear
- higher order thinking skills

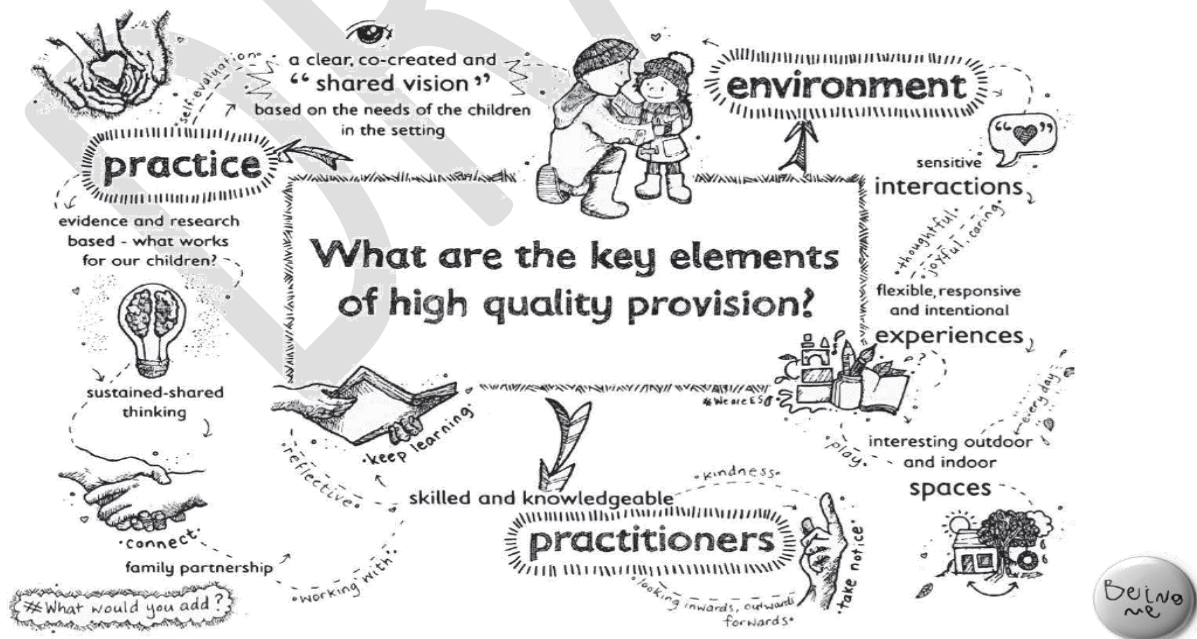
- personalisation and choice
- challenge and enjoyment
- relevance
- effective intervention, based on sound assessment
- formative assessment and well-timed interventions
- feedback support progress in learning

## Collaborative Framework to Support Self-improving Schools and ELC Settings

The Curriculum and Collaborative Improvement Team and Early Years Education Support Officers within our Education & Learning Service seek to work in partnership with schools and ELC settings to provide universal, focused or intensive support categories, dependent upon the factors outlined in Appendix 2. Support activity will be framed around the elements mentioned above.

Appendix 1 provides the activity linked to each category of school support. The category and context of support will be agreed with Area Education & Learning Managers and Head Teachers in the autumn term, in line with the school's self-evaluation summary, improvement plan and any other corresponding data as required as outlined in Appendix 2. Similar categories of support are detailed in Appendix 3 for ELC settings.

While supporting, challenging and reviewing approaches in ELC, it will be useful to refer to Realising the Ambition, in particular Page 87.



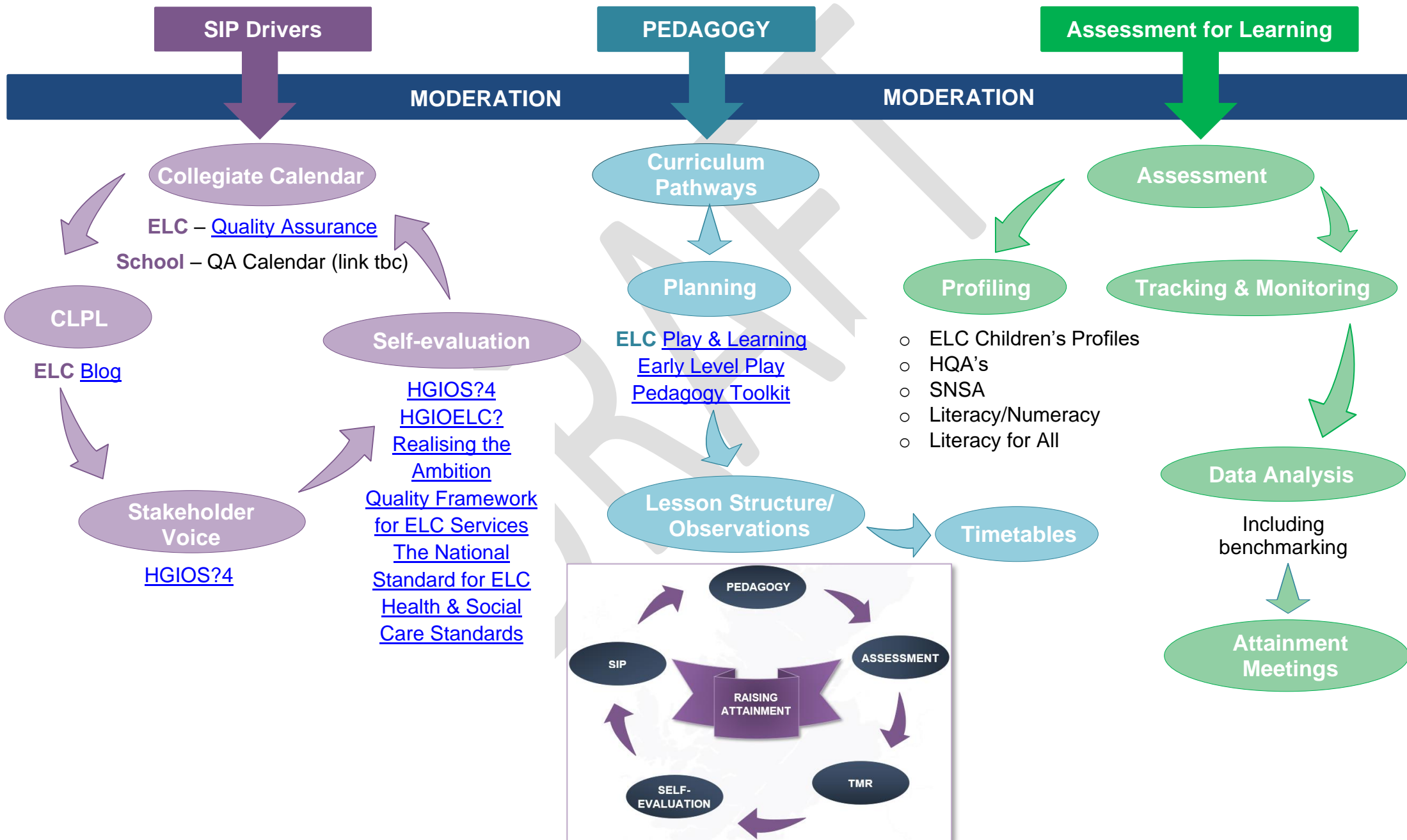
## Section 5: The Roles of Colleagues

Continuous improvement is the concern of everyone. The following outlines the specific roles of colleagues across the service.



## Section 6: The Highland Framework for Raising Attainment

### What structures are in place in ELC and Primary to raise attainment?





## Highland Council Assessment Overview (Primary/ ELC)

### NATIONAL

#### BENCHMARKS

How we know a child has reached a level

#### NIF

Closing the gap for Scottish Children

#### SNSA

National Assessment of Literacy and Numeracy P1, P4, P7 (Feb/Mar)

#### Achievement of a level

Data on all P1, P4 & P7 pupils in Scotland (May)

#### School Information ACEL Dashboard

Statistical data held on schools

### Moderation at National / Authority / ASG and School Level

#### Highland ACEL Dashboard

### Primary School and ELC

#### LITERACY

- [Emerging Literacy](#)
- Comprehension assessments
- Spelling assessments
- Writing assessments
- Reading assessments
- Listening and Talking assessments
- [Words Up online training](#)
- [ELC Highland Blog](#)

#### NUMERACY

- Assessments
- [Numeracy](#)
- HNP
- Numeracy Diagnostics
- Early Level
- Play based Progression

#### PROFILING

- [HQA's](#)
- [Profiling and reporting](#)
- Learning Conversations
- Target setting
- ELC Profiles

#### ASSESSMENT & MODERATION

- [HQA's](#)
- ELC Children's Profiles

#### MODERATION CYCLE

- AifL
- Self/peer assessment
- Quality feedback
- Next steps

#### INTERVENTIONS

- [Literacy for All](#)
- [PEF Planning](#)

#### TRACKING, MONITORING & REPORTING

- [Data Analysis](#)
- [BGE Benchmarking Tool](#)
- National Standard Audit
- [ELC Highland Blog](#)



**Yearly Calendar (additional items to be populated by school)**

<b>School</b> <i>(please add any other additional school items)</i>	<b>Term 1</b>	<b>Term 2</b>	<b>Term 3</b>	<b>Term 4</b>
<b>Assessment/ Moderation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Phonological assessments</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• P4 and P7 SNSA</li><li>• Moderation</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• ASG Moderation</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• P1 SNSA</li></ul>
<b>Attainment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Stage attainment Meeting</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Stage attainment Meeting</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Stage attainment Meeting</li><li>• Attainment Analysis</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Stage attainment Meeting</li><li>• Reporting Progress</li></ul>
<b>Data</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• ACEL predictions /SEEMIS tracking</li></ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• SEEMIS tracking</li><li>• CT ACEL data review</li><li>• HT QA ACEL data and submit</li></ul>
<b>Authority</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• ACEL dashboard updated (preliminary data)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Publication of National Data</li><li>• LA - Prediction dashboard updated</li><li>• LA School attainment template created</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• HT and CLO Attainment Meeting</li><li>• LA QAMSO Moderation Support</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• HT/CLO ACEL revised Target group check in</li><li>• CLO QA school ACEL data following submission</li><li>• LA submit ACEL judgements to Scot Gov</li></ul>

## Appendices

### Appendix 1:

### Framework of Support

#### Universal, Focused, Intensive Support – Schools

Universal	Focused	Intensive
Standards & Quality, School Improvement Plan review	As with universal and in addition:	As with universal, may also include elements of focused but will include:
Bi-annual attainment reviews	Support/challenge will take place termly around evidence of improvements linked to the SIP and identification of next steps. This will include evaluation activities of, and support around: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Professional Learning</li> <li>● Evidence of Learning</li> <li>● Attainment and achievement</li> <li>● Learning walks/ lesson observations</li> <li>● Data &amp; Reporting</li> <li>● Stakeholder voice</li> <li>● Leadership</li> <li>● Professional Learning</li> </ul>	An action plan drawn up by CL/ HT to frame short term (2-4 week) actions which will underpin SIP and any additional requirements.  At least, a monthly review of progress meeting, identification of next steps and continued action planning with appropriate timescales.  *A timely, collaborative focused review involving CL, HT/SMT and Area Manager (& other CLs/officers depending on size and focus)
Termly area level offer	Presentations/CLPL support around identified core areas of practice Use of Core QI documentation Ongoing attainment monitoring QA processes review	CLPL support as required to support improvement activity
Ensuring effective use of supporting documents	Headteacher induction for newly appointed Headteachers	Ongoing support with follow-through inspection activity
Support with quality assurance / VSE* / or other aspects of the CI framework of		

Support, Challenge and Review as requested		
--	--	--

\*VSE (inc SMT Peers and CL) framework / paperwork to be considered

\*Review Timeline and review paperwork to be established

Universal	Focused	Intensive
<p>Also will have access to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing QAMSO offer</li> <li>• Probationer Support</li> <li>• Ongoing professional learning opportunities delivered by Local Authority, Northern Alliance and National offers as appropriate:</li> <li>• Digital technology, 1+2, STEM, DYW, literacy, numeracy; Effective use of Data; Leadership; HWB</li> </ul>		
Support with recruitment of new Headteachers and Depute Headteachers		

## Appendix 2 - Framework of Support

### Universal, Focused, Intensive Categories – Schools

<b>Universal</b> For schools to be in the Universal category, all aspects below will be reflective of their context	<b>Focused</b> For schools to be in the focused category there will be evidence of one or more of the following	<b>Intensive</b> For schools to be in the intensive category there will be evidence of one or more of the following
Improvement planning is addressing areas for development leading to a positive impact on learners	There is insufficient evidence to support the school's self-evaluation.	The school is judged by HMIE as not meeting the National Standard, requiring Local Authority support or a revisit.
Standards and progress are at the expected benchmarked level *	Declining attainment or consistently below benchmarked levels in one or more areas	Verified/Significant concerns about the effectiveness of the school are raised from a range of sources including parents, staff, pupils, partners and /or leaders (impacting on core QIs?)
The school's Standards & Quality report indicates gradings of good or better across core aspects and there is sufficient evidence to support this.	Absence and persistent absence rates are increasing	Financial monitoring identifies significant budgetary concerns
Attendance is in line with national averages & / or attendance monitoring procedures are in place where required. Exclusions are at least in line with or lower than national averages.	Exclusion rates increasing over time	Declining overall attainment and significantly below comparator schools.
Safeguarding procedures in place	Head Teacher is new to headship, new to Highland Council or is in an acting capacity	Concerns identified re capacity for continuous improvement
	Safeguarding procedures are not fully in place.	

\* benchmarking against virtual comparator in National attainment tools – Insight/ BGE Benchmarking tool

**Appendix 3:**

**Framework of Support**

**Universal, Focused, Intensive Categories & Support – ELC**

Universal Category ELC	Focused Category ELC	Intensive Category ELC
<p>School Improvement Plan review – includes ELC specifics</p> <p>National Standard Audit,</p> <p>CI and Education Scotland Reports</p>	<p>As with universal and in addition:</p> <p>New person to management role</p> <p>Concerns identified following EYESO/ CCM visit</p> <p>CI/Education Scotland grade of 3 (adequate/satisfactory)</p>	<p>As with universal, may also include elements of focused but will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• all QIs are below Standard, setting not making significant progress/no consistent improvement or not engaging with support offered by HC and CI</li> <li>• Significant event in relation to child safety, significant formal complaint</li> <li>• Duty of Candour raised.</li> </ul>
Universal Support	Focused Support	Intensive Support
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-evaluation/monitoring calendar</li> <li>• Induction process by EYESO and CCM including use of National induction resource.</li> <li>• CCM mentoring support for SVQ candidates</li> </ul>	<p>Support/challenge will take place termly</p> <p>Identification of next steps and action planning with appropriate timescales.</p> <p>This will include evaluation activities of, and support around:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional Learning &amp; CLPL</li> <li>• Evidence of Learning through play</li> <li>• Developmental profiles and personal plans</li> <li>• Leadership and QA</li> </ul>	<p>At least, a monthly review of progress meeting, identification of next steps and action planning with appropriate timescales.</p>
<p>EYESO termly email</p> <p>Annual support contact</p> <p>Signposting to regular ELC blog posts and CPL</p> <p>ELC blog managing an ELC information</p> <p>EYESO &amp; CCM contactable when required</p>	<p>EYESO support with writing and approval of the action plan as per HC template.</p> <p>EYESO/CCM termly support contact</p> <p>EYESO &amp; CL support as required</p> <p>Focused ELC bespoke or targeted training/CPL as require</p>	<p>EYESO support with writing and approval of the action plan as per HC template.</p> <p>Minimum of monthly support by EYESO/CCM</p> <p>EYESO &amp; CL support as required</p> <p>Focused ELC bespoke or targeted training/CPL</p>

Ensuring effective use of supporting documents	Headteacher induction for newly appointed Headteachers	Ongoing support with follow-through inspection activity
Support with quality assurance / VSE? / or other aspects of the CI framework of Support, Challenge and Review as requested		Potential access to CI improvement programme.

DRAFT

DRAFT