FAQs on self-evaluation and the Quality improvement framework for the early learning and childcare sectors

We identified the frequently occurring themes in questions raised about the self-evaluation process, during our recent workshops and webinars for the Quality improvement framework for the early learning and childcare sectors. Here we address some of the key points.

Self-evaluation	
Question	**Response**
What do we self-evaluate against?	Self-evaluation should be linked to the quality improvement framework for your service type and the Health and Social Care Standards which set out what people should expect when using health, social care or social work services in Scotland.
Is there an expected number of areas for self-evaluation or improvement plans?	There is no expected number of focus areas for self-evaluation. Improvement focusses should be what is relevant to your service, manageable and achievable. It is important to think about the quality of evidence and how this is being used to support improvement, not just the quantity.
What happens if we do our self-evaluation on something that is not being looked at on inspection?	Self-evaluation is not done for the benefit of the Care Inspectorate/Education Scotland. It is a process that your service leads on so you should determine the focus. Well-led services know where they are performing well and where they need to improve. You should use self-evaluation to inform where you need to target your efforts to support improvement.

Is there a standard template that should be used for self-evaluation?	There is no expected template, you should use whatever best suits you and your service. However, there are certain elements we would expect to feature in an effective improvement plan. These include, improvement aims, who will be responsible, how aims will be achieved and timescales. We would also expect a record of reviews, planned next steps and agreed success criteria.
	The Care Inspectorate is currently developing an early learning and childcare self-evaluation toolkit which will include some worked examples and templates that can be adapted for different service types. However, there is no expectation that you use these templates. There are a variety of other resources available or you can continue to use your own.
	As your self-evaluation is unique to your service you should select the people, processes and timescales that are most appropriate. Seeking the views and perspectives of different people is a strength and involving people in the process is important to ensure its success.
Is there a specific format that should be followed for self-evaluation?	It would be beneficial to use the three self-evaluation questions within your processes:
	1. **How are we doing?** This will help you to understand how good your service is and the impact it has on the lives of people using it.
	2. **How do we know?** What evidence do you have that shows you how well the service is performing?
	3. **What are we going to do now?** What are your plans and priorities for improvement?
	https://education.gov.scot/inspection-and-review/inspection-frameworks/quality-improvement-framework-for-the-early-learning-and-childcare-sectors/

Where/how should I store my self-evaluation?	It is good practice to keep your self-evaluation in a way that supports you to refer to it and update it regularly. This contributes to ongoing and continuous improvement. Some services choose to have self-evaluation and improvement planning visible to key stakeholders. This helps to include them in the process and keep them informed of improvements being made.
When should we be carrying out self-evaluation and how often should this be reviewed?	Self-evaluation is a process that your service leads on. It is an ongoing process which supports continuous improvement, rather than being a one-off activity. There is no set frequency of reviews. This will be determined by the improvements that you have identified and the progress you make. You should regularly review your improvement plan to ensure you are keeping on track and improvements are sustained.
Can we add in other areas of improvement to our self-evaluation as they come up throughout the year?	Flexibility in your self-evaluation activities and improvement planning will allow you to develop and prioritise improvement based on current and changing needs. Improvement planning is part of the wider self-evaluation and quality assurance cycle.
Will there be further workshops or webinars in future? Would there be a possibility that these could be sector specific?	Feedback from the sector highlights that there is demand for and a benefit to running future sessions. While there are no confirmed dates for workshops or webinars, we are discussing how we will continue to offer support through engagement and development opportunities. We plan to link with key professionals and agencies to ensure that future sessions are relevant and, where possible, sector specific.
Will the improvement cycle be in the new framework? The visual diagram is good to support staff.	The self-evaluation for improvement cycle diagram will be included in the Care Inspectorate's self-evaluation guidance document.

We are experiencing staffing and time constraints. How do we implement effective self-evaluation?	We appreciate that there may be factors that can impact on the capacity to undertake self-evaluation. Self-evaluation does not need to be resource intensive. Remember, changes don't need to be big to be effective. Ensure the improvements that you choose to take forward are realistic and manageable within the resources available to you. Prioritise those that target key development needs for your service.
We are required by our local authority to use standardised self-evaluation and improvement planning documents. Is there an expectation that we develop a version for Care Inspectorate too?	Self-evaluation is not something you do for the Care Inspectorate or Education Scotland, and there is no standardised template that we expect you to complete. It is about supporting you to identify what is working well in your service and where improvements could be made. Our expectations are that your self-evaluation is meaningful for your service, outcome focussed and leads to sustainable improvements for people.
Do inspectors have a standard checklist they use to review quality assurance and self-evaluation in services?	Inspections are based on the Quality improvement frameworks for each service type which contain quality illustrations for each quality indicator. Inspectors use these and other relevant good practice guidance to evaluate outcomes for children and young people during inspections. We will look at your improvement plan during inspections and will consider if the identified actions are effectively supporting improvement. We may sample some of your self-evaluation documents as part of this process. The Care Inspectorate inspectors must also look at all core assurances during an inspection. These cover key areas including quality assurance, which are important to the safety and wellbeing of people using the service.
What is the difference between self-evaluation and quality assurance?	Quality assurance refers to the processes, procedures and systems that are used to monitor and assess the quality of people's experiences and the care they receive. Self-evaluation contributes to the quality assurance of your service. It is used to identify what is working well and where improvements could be made.

Should we use quantifying terms and evaluative language within improvement plans?	Your self-evaluation should clearly show how you arrived at your answer to the 'How are we doing?' question. Using evaluative language and statements to answer question 2 'How are we doing?' is an effective way of doing this. It will also help you to see what is working well in your service and what needs to improve. This then helps you to answer the last question 'What are we going to do now?' and develop your improvement plan. Using quantitative terms is beneficial as it helps you measure the effectiveness of your improvement actions. Without success criteria, it is unlikely that you will know if your work is making a difference to people's outcomes or the development of your service.