



# Early learning and childcare (ELC) Improvement Programme

Programme Evaluation  
November 2024





**Keeping The Promise at  
the heart of what we do**

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## Executive Summary

The Care Inspectorate is an independent scrutiny body which supports improvement. That means we look at the quality of care in Scotland to ensure it meets high standards. As part of this remit, the Care Inspectorate delivers the Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) improvement programme.

The overarching aim of the ELC improvement programme is to support funded settings across Scotland to improve the quality of ELC and meet the National Standard. The programme focuses on providing targeted support for those settings currently, or at risk of, not meeting the National Standard through a programme of sessions and peer support opportunities. This approach supports work undertaken by local authority teams. In addition to this the programme provides a range of universal resources to support all settings with improving quality.

We were asked by Scottish Government commissioners, to conduct an internal evaluation of the programme to inform future funding decisions about the value and future potential of the programme.

### Evaluation methodology

Surveys and interviews were undertaken to gather the views of programme participants and stakeholders on the work of the programme over the last 12-month period.

The findings outlined in this report cannot be taken as fully representative of the sector, however the high participation rate detailed within the report gives a robust snapshot of current views of the ELC improvement programme.

### Experiences of taking part in the ELC Improvement Programme

Feedback on the programme is overwhelmingly positive with services citing accessibility and the opportunity to engage with other participants across the country as highlights.

*'Breakout rooms were a positive for us, speaking to other practitioners was helpful.'*

*'Having time to talk to others from all over Scotland.'*

*'Opportunity to discuss areas and ideas with staff from a variety of settings.'*

Support offered by the team through weekly teaching sessions and alternate 'reflect and review' sessions are scheduled over a 10-week period. Additionally one-to-one support is offered to ensure that all learners find the programme accessible and engaging.

The programme enjoys an average 81% attendance rate across both our teaching and reflect and review sessions. Absences are followed up with nominating local authorities and are actioned on an individual basis.

Participants told us:

'I enjoyed the whole course and feel it has helped me to gain a better understanding of the quality improvement methodology and how to implement it.' Cohort participant

'This (programme) has given us a structure around how to undertake improvements and ensure they are measured and evidenced in a quality way. As a leader, I am clearer in how to facilitate improvements with the team and ensure we go through the process of adapting and tweaking to ensure the best results and embedding best practice, for the benefit of the children and families.' Cohort participant

"Thank you! I was anxious but optimistic at the start of this programme, and although sometimes have felt overwhelmed by the amount of work to do, this has really helped to structure the process for me and supported me to slow down and celebrate the small wins and appreciate the time it takes to really embed quality change.' Cohort participant

'I feel optimistic - improvement doesn't seem like a huge mountain to climb; rather it is a series of achievable goals that we can tackle in a systematic way'. Cohort 8 comment during session

### **Bitesize offer**

Bitesize sessions and resources that support good practice, and legislative requirements are accessible through the [ELC Improvement HUB](#) and valued for their simplicity and accessibility.

Since the team introduced universal 'bitesize' resources in January 2021, we have received 217,240 engagements with these resources. A local authority told us:

'We use the recently developed childminding bitesize to support quality improvement as part of the induction process for our funded and non-funded childminders.'

Our inspector focus group highlighted the positive impact of all bitesize resources on the ELC Improvement HUB which they direct services to regularly as part of scrutiny activity.

Resources need to be regularly reviewed to ensure they are kept up to date and relevant to all service types.

## Peer support offer

The programme facilitates peer support throughout its delivery as well as quarterly standalone sessions to former programme participants and local authority support staff. These sessions support the sharing of learning, provide opportunities to collaborate and support a resilient workforce. Participants told us the benefits they find from these sessions:

‘The information was well presented as usual and fitted in well with our priorities for our SIP.’

‘Enjoyed the breakout rooms & great opportunity to share practice with other settings.’

‘Chatting to other childcare professionals. Learning ways to improve’.

## Impact of the ELC Improvement Programme

It is important to note that the impact of quality improvement methodology takes time, with the biggest change in services now meeting the criteria of the National Standard having participated in earlier cohorts of the programme. Comparative data is taken from Cohorts 1-6 of the programme as, due to inspection priorities and/or frequency, this is where the majority of inspections have taken place.

### Quantitative measurement

#### Outcome measures:

Using comparable data of **50** services who fully completed the programme from cohorts 1-6, we evidenced that **39 (78%)** are now meeting the National Standard. Out of the remaining **11** services, **seven** have shown an increase in some of the key question evaluations, and **two** have now cancelled.

Analysis from the 2023/2024 (last year) evaluation identified that from 35 inspected services who attended cohorts 1-4, 25 (71%) had met the national standard. This shows the continued trajectory the impact of the programme has year on year.

From **50** services who did not participate, or fully complete the programme, only **14 (28%)** are now meeting the National Standard. Of the remaining **36 services**, **five** have since cancelled their registration, and **31** are not yet meeting the national standard.

#### Process measures:

Using the Care Inspectorate's key performance indicator data, we measure participants confidence in using quality improvement methodology on completion of the programme.

Prior to commencing cohorts 7 and 8 of the programme **48%** of participants were confident in using quality improvement to improve outcomes for children in their service.

Following completion of cohort 7 and 8 of the programme **90%** of participants were confident in using quality improvement methodology to improve outcomes for children in their service.

In response to the question "Has your understanding of quality improvement methodology increased as a result of attending our programme?" **100%** agreed with one participant commenting:

‘The wording of this question alone would have panicked me at the start but now I feel very clear on QI methodology.’  
Cohort 8 participant

Learning and development sessions are provided to local authorities and private, voluntary and independent (PVI) settings to promote a shared understanding of quality improvement science and methodology across all funded services. These sessions, which emphasise 'observation and communication for quality improvement', have become increasingly popular, with demand on the rise. **Ten** face-to-face sessions have already been delivered, with **two** more scheduled for November 2024 and additional sessions planned for 2025. Involving scrutiny and

assurance team managers, along with local inspectors, during the delivery of these sessions helps ensure consistency, fosters collaboration, and strengthens relationships.

Feedback from these sessions tells us:

‘This course was excellent and has given me lots of knowledge that I can use for my own professional development to improve the service my nursery provides to children and families. Trainers were fantastic!’

‘Incredibly valuable to look at leadership and improvement through a different lens. The team were very personable and created a relaxed environment, which I found optimal for learning.’

### Key success factors

- Quality improvement methodology delivered in a relatable manner, within an ELC context.
- The programme is flexible and creative to respond to the changing needs of the sector.
- Peer support offers the opportunity to collaborate nationally and supports the building of a resilient workforce.
- Valuable connection between the sector and scrutiny and assurance, promoting positive relationships which emphasises the focus of working together to ensure the best outcomes for children and their families.
- Strong collaboration with other agencies, in particular close partnership with local authorities.
- Increased demand for face-to-face bespoke sessions to local authorities to support a shared approach in the improvement of quality.

## Conclusions

**78%** of services who complete the programme **achieve** the national standard.

**72%** of similar services who do not participate or complete the programme, **do not achieve** the national standard.

Demand for support amongst eligible settings continues to exceed the number of places available on each cohort. This is a barrier to some settings being able to take part. (See recommendation 5)

Cohort	Number of nominations	Number of spaces offered	Services added to waiting list
Cohort 7	66	46	20
Cohort 8	68	45	23
Cohort 9	74	44	30

Feedback on the national targeted and universal support delivered through the programme continues to be overwhelmingly positive. Feedback continues to indicate that a wider group of settings would also benefit from participating to ensure high quality care for all. Feedback from the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland (ADES), the Childcare Sector Working Group (CSWG), National Provider Forum and scrutiny assurance colleagues told us that the ELC Improvement programme should be available to all ELC services and not just funded day care of children services.

(See recommendation 2)

This evaluation clearly demonstrates that there is a continuing growing demand for the support provided by the ELC Improvement Team. Without the programme, a high number of settings will continue to struggle to meet the national standard.

[“Around 1 in 8 daycare of children services were adequate or poorer in at least one assessed key question at 31 December 2023.”](#)  
[Care Inspectorate Early Learning and Childcare Statistics 2023.](#)

An extension to the funding of the current programme is essential to continue to support settings to improve outcomes for all children.

## Recommendations for 2025-2026

The following recommendations, which are similar to the 2024/2025 recommendations, will ensure that the programme continues to build on the success it has to date.

**Recommendation 1:** Continue to strengthen and develop our offer of targeted support to all eligible ELC settings to support the improvement of quality and positive outcomes for children and their families.

**Recommendation 2:** Extend the offer of a targeted ELC programme to all ELC, childminder and school aged childcare settings.

**Recommendation 3:** Provide increased opportunities for face-to-face training and development to support consistent, high quality child centred care.

**Recommendation 4:** Continue to build and develop our universal quality improvement support resources to ensure the topics and context are relatable and easily accessible.

**Recommendation 5:** Increase the size of the ELC Improvement team to offer targeted support to services who do not meet the eligibility criteria supporting continuous quality improvement for all.

**Recommendation 6:** Consider the benefits of adopting a devolved NHS Education for Scotland (NES) Scottish Improvement Foundation Skills (SIFS) programme. Paper submitted for consideration.

## Programme evaluation

### Context

Recognising that high-quality ELC significantly contributes to children's outcomes and life chances, especially for those in disadvantaged circumstances. The Scottish Government funds the ELC improvement programme to help settings across Scotland improve their quality and meet the National Standard. There is strong evidence linking high-quality early learning with positive outcomes for children. The programme provides targeted support to settings that are not currently meeting or are at risk of not meeting the National Standard, while also offering universal resources for all ELC settings to improve quality.

The National Standard comprises ten quality criteria that funded ELC settings must meet, including achieving a minimum Care Inspectorate grade of 'good' in key areas such as care and support, environment, management, leadership, and staffing. Meeting these standards is vital, particularly in the context of the "Funding Follows the Child" and the expansion of funded hours, which aim to ensure consistent, high-quality provision across all settings and give families genuine choice for their children's care.

### Overview

Our programme offers targeted and universal support.

The targeted learning communities comprise of ELC settings from across Scotland. These communities encourage and promote the development of learning networks. Learning communities are made up of funded provider settings, who have been nominated by the local authorities who commission their services. Local authorities, as the 'guarantors' of quality, are asked to prioritise services they believe would benefit most from our programme of support. Information sessions are offered to local authority support staff to ensure consistent messages are delivered. This supports better outcomes for children, families and staff within their local area.

Peer support is a significant aspect of our work, the value of which is well documented. We offer peer support not only through the delivery of our programme but during quarterly stand-alone sessions to former programme participants and local authority support staff. These sessions support the sharing of learning, provide opportunities to collaborate and support the building of a resilient workforce. Topics covered to date have included: Inspection confidence, Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) resources, workforce wellbeing, meaningful childhood participation and the UNCRC. We have added value in 2024 by recording these sessions to allow them to be viewed as part of our universal programme.

Through our universal support programme, we provide a range of resources to support all early learning settings across Scotland with the aim of improving quality. Resources are made available through the ELC improvement section on the Care Inspectorate's Hub.

## Evaluation of programme during 2024-2025

Cohort 9 of our programme began in mid-September 2024, offering 10 improvement advisor-led sessions that alternate between core 'teaching' sessions and 'reflect and review' sessions. Additionally, we provide one-to-one support to services and local authorities upon request to discuss their individual projects.

(See recommendation 1)

We continue to offer spaces on the ELC Improvement Programme to all 32 local authorities, providing targeted improvement support. Due to limited availability, local authorities are asked to submit their priority list using the following criteria.

- Services on service improvement periods.
- Those who are committed to engaging in quality improvement work and with support, have the ability to improve and sustain improvement in their service.
- Services who are in remote and rural communities.
- Larger settings (those with over 100 places).

Services that were not allocated a place in this cohort have been directed to the 'universal' quality improvement resources available on the Care Inspectorate ELC HUB.

The team are now preparing to collect nominations for Cohort 10, which will begin in January 2025.

### Number of services and individuals who have participated in targeted improvement support

	Cohorts 1-6	Cohort 7	Cohort 8	Cohort 9
<b>Number of services</b>	350	45	45	40
<b>Number of participants</b>	411	58	66	54
<b>Number of children potentially impacted</b>	23,904	3051	2460	2588

### Impact of programme attendance

Although we are unable to link all improvements made to the work of the programme, we can see using comparable data, that services who have attended and completed the programme have made better progress towards meeting the National Standard than those who have not.

We have focused our measurements on services who were invited to attend cohort 1-6 of our programme. This reflects the time taken for quality improvement methodology to embed and for changes to be implemented. The inspection plan is dynamic, while inspections are planned for the year these are often changed to accommodate inspections that are required to be undertaken.

**Outcome measures:**

**Summary of a sample of 50 services from cohorts 1-6 show:**

<b>Services now meeting the National Standard of those services who attended and completed the programme</b>
39 out of 50 services (78%)

**Summary of the sample of those remaining 11 services who attended cohorts 1-6 and completed the programme who do not meet the national standard this shows:**

<b>Services showing increased evaluations in at least one key area</b>	<b>Services showing decreased evaluations in at least one key area</b>	<b>Services stayed the same in at least one key area</b>	<b>Services cancelled</b>
7 out of 11 services	6 out of 11 services	7 out of 11 services	2 out of 11 services

\*\*Some of the services listed above have increased in some of the key question evaluations as well as decreased or stayed the same. Therefore, some services can appear in multiple columns and have been included more than once.

**Summary of a sample of 50 services who did not attend or complete the programme show:**

<b>Services now meeting the National Standard of those who did not attend or fully complete the programme</b>
14 out of 50 (28%)

**Summary of the sample of the remaining 36 services who did not attend or complete the programme who do not meet the National Standard:**

<b>Services showing increased evaluations in at least one key area</b>	<b>Services decreased evaluations in at least one key area</b>	<b>Services stayed the same</b>	<b>Services cancelled</b>
12 out of 36 services	24 out of 36 services	17 out of 36 services	5 out of 50 services

\*\*Some of the services listed above have increased in some of the key question evaluations as well as decreased or stayed the same. Therefore, some services can appear in multiple columns and have been included more than once.

## Process measures

Using the Care Inspectorate's key performance indicator data, we measure participants confidence in using quality improvement methodology on completion of the programme.

Prior to commencing cohorts 7 and 8 of the programme 48% of participants were confident in using quality improvement methodology to improve outcomes for children in their service.

Following completion of cohorts 7 and 8 of the programme 90% of participants were confident in using quality improvement methodology to improve outcomes for children in their service.

## Cohort 7 evaluation

The inspection plan is dynamic. While inspections are planned for the year these are often changed to accommodate inspections on a risk and intelligence basis.

45 services attended and completed cohort 7 of the programme which concluded in December 2023, to date (15 October 2024) 16 inspections have been carried out. It is important to note that the impact of quality improvement methodology takes time to embed with the biggest changes in service evaluations noted for those services who participated in earlier cohorts.

## Outcome measures:

<b>Services now meeting the National Standard of those inspected services on cohort 7</b>
12 out of 16 (75%)

## Summary of the remaining inspected services on cohort 7 who are still not meeting the National Standard:

Services showing increased evaluations in at least one key area	Services decreased evaluations in at least one key area	Services stayed the same	Services cancelled
4 out of 4 services 100%	2 out of 4 services (50%)	3 out of 4 services (75%)	2 out of 4 services (50%)

\*\*Some of the services listed above have increased in some of the key question evaluations as well as decreased or stayed the same in others. Therefore, some services can appear in multiple columns and have been included more than once.

A sample of qualitative feedback from cohort 7 participants included:

‘More motivated to make changes as I now understand the process better.’

‘Increased understanding of quality improvement methodology. Knowledge of establishing a clear focus of improvement and how to implement this. It has allowed me as a manager to ensure I consider all staff individually and how they cope differently with change.’

‘Focused us in on the changes that we need to make, prioritising what changes need to be made first.’

‘We are making changes happen and seeing the benefits from them. We are more confident in understanding that changes don’t always have to be a big thing but that small changes make a difference too.’

An interview with a senior local authority ELC manager sharing her experience of the programme can be viewed on our [You-Tube channel](#).

### Universal support

Universal support is available to all ELC settings regardless of their participation in the programme.

The team regularly communicate with our scrutiny and assurance colleagues and programme participants to identify emerging themes from which universal support is developed.

This year we have reviewed and re-recorded some of the bite size sessions to ensure they meet with all current best practice guidance.

In response to questionnaire feedback from our 2023/2024 evaluation we have recorded quality improvement sessions particularly for the childminding and school aged childcare workforce. We have reformatted the layout on our ELC Improvement HUB to make it more user friendly for the whole ELC sector. (See recommendation 4)

The table below demonstrates the range and uptake of universal support developed and delivered by ELC Improve. These can all be viewed on our [ELC Improvement HUB](#).

Item	Release date	Number of hits
Scrutiny and Assurance during Covid-19 Bitesize	January 2021	1,359
Key Question 5 Bitesize	February 2021	72,895
Quick Wins Bitesize	March 2021	46,938
Introducing Quality Improvement Bitesize	April 2021	59,787

Item	Release date	Number of hits
Quality Inspection Framework Bitesize	July 2021	9,955
Personal Planning Bitesize	January 2022	4,275
Covid 19 Bitesize	February 2022	2,732
Talking heads video 1	May 2022	1,467
ELC quality framework	July 2022	8,135
Talking heads video 2	February 2023	862
SIMOA Bitesize	February 2024	7,989
Childminder bitesize	August 2024	846

We gathered feedback from a range of stakeholders on the resources available through our ELC improvement HUB. The results of which have been overwhelmingly positive. Some of the feedback we received is as follows:

[‘Bitesize sessions being available to all services means we can signpost to childminders and SACC, as well as non-funded providers to support them to improve outcomes for children.’](#)  
Inspector

[‘We signpost bitesize sessions through our ELC monthly newsletter to support staff’s CPD.’](#)  
Local authority.

We also asked respondents to identify any topics or themes for future recordings. The suggestions cover a range of topics. We are working with our colleagues in scrutiny and assurance to identify the areas which we collectively believe will have the biggest impact in supporting services in improving outcomes for children and their families. For example, we linked with colleagues to develop a bitesize recording to support the SIMOA (Safety, Inspect, Monitor, Observe and Act) campaign.

### Peer support

As the programme has developed so too has our approach to peer support. We facilitate peer support not only through the structure of our programme but during quarterly, stand-alone sessions to former programme participants and local authority support staff. These sessions support the sharing of learning, provide opportunities to collaborate and support the building of a resilient workforce. Subjects covered to date have included inspection confidence, SSSC resources, workforce wellbeing, partnership with parents, and meaningful child participation, highlighting the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

Our most recent peer session on the topic of ‘Meaningful child participation’ took place on 21 June 2024. We were joined by two inspectors who helped lead and

deliver the sessions, imparting their knowledge as well as sharing clear context examples of both good and tokenistic practice.

We include service participants where appropriate as attendees very much like to hear directly from their peers during these sessions. Feedback from this session included:

'I am thoroughly enjoying each of these ELC Improvement sessions as it ensures my knowledge is up to date and helps me to reflect on what I do well and where further improvements could be made.'

'So far all of the sessions I have attended have given me ideas going forward, as well as enhancing my confidence and knowledge to do test of change, implement, progress and continuously strive to improve.'

'I think the support is great. it can be very hard in a manager post, and you have to hold everything together for your team. I find it a safe space where I can seek guidance and say what is hard.'

The content of these sessions is now recorded and are available on the [ELC Improvement HUB](#).

For services who are attending our programme we continue to offer membership to a closed Facebook page. The closed social media groups will remain open to promote peer support following the conclusion of the cohorts. We will continue to monitor these and share any relevant best practice documents as they become available.

### **Bespoke local authority support sessions**

We provide face-to-face sessions to local authorities to support their efforts in improving service quality, complementing their role as 'guarantors of quality.'

Our current session theme is 'Observation and Communication for Improvement,' centred around the Benjamin Franklin quote: "Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I learn." This is reflected in our model, which combines teaching sessions with self-directed learning before participants reconvene for further learning.

In these sessions, we share ideas and simple strategies to help participants incorporate the children's perspectives during quality assurance activities. They are then encouraged to put their learning into practice by conducting observations in a setting. Afterwards, participants return to discuss how they will effectively communicate their findings to staff teams, ensuring that key messages for improvement are delivered clearly and understood by all.

Each session is tailored to the specific needs of the local authority, addressing areas for improvement identified by both the authority and our inspection teams. Recent

themes have included 'management and leadership', 'resourcing environments' and 'parents as partners'.

This bespoke approach has been very popular, with more local authorities reaching out to explore the support we can provide.

These sessions offer valuable opportunities to connect with the ELC workforce, providing the training and guidance needed to build the skills necessary for delivering consistent, high-quality, child-centred care across the sector. (See recommendation 3).

Local Authority	Date of the session	Number of attendees
Moray	January 2024	10
RIC	February 2024	200
East Renfrewshire	March 2024	55
South Lanarkshire	April 2024	13
Angus	August 2024	25
Scottish Borders	September 2024	50
South Lanarkshire	October 2024	120

The local authorities identify attendees. These usually include ELC quality team, heads and managers of services from both local authority and funded PVI settings.

Following sessions delivered in one local authority, we received this request.

'We would also like to ask if support and guidance could be offered to childminders who are commissioned to deliver funded early learning and childcare. They are a unique group who often feel undervalued and isolated. We have an increasing number of childminders within our authority, and it would be helpful to consider some bespoke training specifically for them from the Care Inspectorate ELC Improvement Team. Many childminders are now involved in the delivery of blended early learning and childcare and this could be a worthwhile focus area.'

Responses to our session evaluation questionnaires included:

'Great networking, really enjoyable couple of days very inspiring and motivational.'

'I'm forever learning. Having thought I knew a lot about observation,

over many years, there are certain things I have missed! It was really eye opening, thank you.'

'These were really engaging sessions and I feel that I can take what we have learned and apply it to my own practice to support others and help achieve improvements. It was a fun and engaging thanks!'

'I feel both days were an opportunity to reflect and learn. This will be a valuable tool to take back to my setting and share. The delivery was motivating and inspiring and something that I would have greatly valued at the start of my journey going into headship.'

'I think the session was run very well. I liked how the session was a mixture between theory and practical examples. I thought it was valuable that tools such as 4 facts framework was given. I will take this forward to improve my leadership style in communication . The advisors were very friendly and helpful.'

Feedback from inspectors who attended our sessions told us :

'Very well-planned session. Great deal of food for thought. A real buzz around the room and time for reflection. Potential for real improvement in the settings. Very interactive session which the services can build on along with the authority. Great session from the Improvement Team.'

Feedback from inspectors who attended our focus group in discussion about the bespoke offer told us:

- Services felt valued that 'we came to them' - particularly in rural areas.
- There were benefits of peer connections and 'looking outward' across Scotland in terms of good practice.
- Inspector attendance at bespoke sessions is very helpful in terms of being aware of content, and in following this up on discussion during inspection.
- They valued the invitation to attend as it provided the opportunity to build relationships and break down barriers with services outwith the formal inspection process.

This feedback highlights the added value and impact our individually tailored sessions are bringing to the ELC sector, in support of the local authority's responsibility as 'guarantors of quality'.

### **Collaboration with other agencies**

The programme team has a very close working relationship with scrutiny and assurance colleagues, sharing information to inform inspection as well as to explore themes for our universal resources.

We enjoy good working relationships with Education Scotland, the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC), the Children and Young Peoples Improvement Collaborative (CYPIC) and The Scottish Childminder's Association (SCMA).

### **Sustainability and support of fluctuating grades**

During a deep dive of the data available, we identified a small number of services who increased their evaluations (grades) following participating in the programme, however subsequent inspections have seen their evaluations decrease. In most cases this dip in grades may be attributed to a change in management and leadership and staff recruitment and turnover.

To support services in making sustained changes, attendance is encouraged across all sessions regardless of a change in grades. Attendance is shared with the service, local authorities and inspection teams. Peer support sessions, to which all previous programme participants are invited, have been further developed to re-visit aspects of the programme, explore quality improvement tools not covered in the programme and to sign post further learning through CYPIC, SSSC and the NHS TURAS sites.

Should the programme secure funding and capacity allow, we would like to invite individual cohorts back to a 'revision' session to revisit learning from the programme, contributing to increased sustainability in terms of outcomes for children.

### **Recommendations from ELC programme self-evaluation 2023/2024**

In November 2023 we submitted an options and self-evaluation paper to the Scottish Government to consider for 2024/2025 funding. In this document the following recommendations were made:

#### **Recommendation 1:**

**Continue to offer targeted support to all eligible ELC settings to support the improvement of quality and positive outcomes for children and their families.**

We continue to offer three cohorts throughout the year consisting of approximately 45 settings per cohort. All local authorities are invited to nominate funded services. Demand for the programme continues to exceed the capacity of the programme. Services are identified in order of priority through consultation with local authorities and our scrutiny colleagues.

#### **Recommendation 2:**

**Extend the offer of a targeted ELC programme to all eligible ELC, childminder and school aged childcare settings.**

This was not identified as a priority by Scottish Government however, we have produced a suite of universal resources to support quality improvement across childminding and school aged childcare settings. Feedback tells us that this continues to be an area that scrutiny and local authority colleagues highlight as a need to support outcomes for all children.

**Recommendation 3:**

**Grow the capacity of the ELC Improvement team to offer targeted support to services who do not meet the eligibility criteria supporting continuous quality improvement for all.**

We continue to work within the parameters of our funding.

**Recommendation 4:**

**Provide increased opportunities for face-to-face training and development to support consistent, high quality child centred care.**

Feedback continues to tell us that this is an important area of our work. This year we have been able to increase this offer resulting in training being delivered across twelve local authorities. These sessions range in size from fifteen to two hundred participants. This has been possible due to a carry-over in funding from an underspend from previous years.

**Recommendation 5:**

**Continue to build and develop our universal support resources to ensure the topics and context are relatable and easily accessible.**

Bitesize resources continue to be updated and refreshed. The ELC Improvement HUB has recently been revamped to make it easier for different service types to find and access relevant resources.

2023/2024 self-evaluation report can be found [here](#).

## Headquarters

Care Inspectorate  
Compass House  
11 Riverside Drive  
Dundee  
DD1 4NY  
Tel: 01382 207100  
Fax: 01382 207289

Website: [www.careinspectorate.com](http://www.careinspectorate.com)

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