**GUIDANCE NOTES**

How Good Is Our Education Authority: from Collaborative Improvement to effective

self-evaluation

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Contents

[**1.** **Introduction** 3](#_Toc176372378)

[***2.*** ***How Good Is Our Education Authority? Explained*** 3](#_Toc176372379)

[3. How Good is Our Education Authority?: Key Principles 5](#_Toc176372380)

[**4. Overseeing and Leading the use of *How Good Is Our Education Authority*?** 5](#_Toc176372381)

[**5.** **Stages of the Implementation of *How Good Is Our Education Authority*?** 6](#_Toc176372382)

[Appendix 1 – Quads and rationale for groupings 8](#_Toc176372383)

[**Family Groupings for Children, Social Work and Housing indicators** 9](#_Toc176372384)

[**Appendix 2 SRA and ADES Officer Links to Quads** 10](#_Toc176372385)

[**Appendix 3: Self-evaluation summary templates for completion prior to Quad meetings** 11](#_Toc176372386)

# **Introduction**

**What is the overall aim of** ***How Good Is Our Education Authority*?**

This guidance document should be used in conjunction with the ADES / Education Scotland document *How Good Is Our Education Authority?* The aim of Collaborative Improvement was, as a whole system, to share what works well at a local authority level and to support improvement in areas that have been identified as in need of further development. It also aimed to promote partnership working and ensure that we achieve sustainable improvements for all children and young people, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Moving from Collaborative Improvement to robust self-evaluation of an education authority allows a more structured approach to examining practice and looking for both strengths and areas for improvement within a shared framework for improvement. It builds on the strong relations built during the Collaborative Improvement work over a 3-year period.

**What is the benefit of local authorities using *How Good Is Our Education Authority*?**

Priorities for improvement will have already been identified through ongoing self-evaluation and local standards and quality reporting / improvement planning arrangements. The use of ***How Good Is Our Education Authority*?** supports this work and allows for a consistent approach through using the framework in all 32 local authorities with external support from Education Scotland.

Using a shared framework across all local authorities allows for focused and specific support and challenge both within the local authority and from the other local authorities that are in their quad. Quads are groups of four local authorities working together on their self-evaluation. The quads and rationale for the groupings is set out in Appendix 1.

# ***How Good Is Our Education Authority? Explained***

**What is *How Good Is Our Education Authority*?**

***How Good Is Our Education Authority*?** is a Framework based on QMIE2 that has been developed by ADES and Education Scotland to support self-evaluation within local authorities and allow for collaborative working across local authorities to identify strengths and support areas for improvement.

The use of ***How Good Is Our Education Authority*?** aims to promote partnership working, collaboration and greater consistency to ensure that we achieve sustainable improvements for all children, young people and their families across Scotland.

Different authorities face different challenges. If we are to achieve the national vision of excellence and equity, working together as a collective can help address specific challenges; address unnecessary variability in outcomes; promote a self-improving and empowered system; and stimulate collaborative and collegiate working across the system. Working to develop a Networked Learning System from the ground up will lead to greater ownership of improvement and less variability across our whole system.

**Why *How Good Is Our Education Authority* now?**

The Education Reform Joint Agreement published in June 2018 set out clearly that ‘achieving the national vision of excellence and equity cannot be achieved by one part of the system alone: all partners must work together in a collegiate and collaborative way, keeping the interests of children and young people front and centre’. One of the key principles set out in the Joint Agreement is that ‘effective system-wide improvement requires strong leadership, collaborative working and clarity of purpose at all layers of the system – school, local, regional and national.’

The 2020 report of the International Council of Advisers (2020) recommended that Scotland should move still further beyond what has become known as a self-improving system to become a Networked Learning System (NLS).

A Networked Learning System is:

* connected through networks across physical, professional and virtual boundaries;
* driven by design-based research and collaborative inquiry to innovate, test and refine practice and build leadership capacity through practice-based professional learning.

Collaborative Improvement established by ADES and supported by Education Scotland in 2021 contributed significantly to Scotland becoming a Networked Learning System. Over the three years there was learning about how to improve the process as well as a strengthening of trust and positive relationships across local authorities, with Education Scotland and HMI.

Differences in outcomes between local authorities is well understood as no two local authorities are the same. However there was a desire from Directors to see a more structured process for self-evaluation and coming together with colleagues to use self-evaluation that makes a real difference.

In the absence of a current national framework, ADES developed a framework based on *Quality Management In Education 2* that contained 2 key quality indicators with a focus on leadership and improving outcomes for all. This was discussed in workshops at the ADES Conference in November 2023 and it was agreed by all Directors in February 2024 that this framework would be used by all local authorities in session 2024/2025.

# 3. How Good is Our Education Authority?: Key Principles

* Each local authority remains responsible for its own development and outcomes: partners and colleagues will advise, support and challenge through a solution-focused approach to improvement.
* Across Scotland, we have much of which we can be proud in terms of practice worthy of sharing. Sourcing, celebrating and sharing such practice should help make best use of the expertise across the system to support improvement. The WMAGEA framework allows for a more consistent response to self-evaluation and external challenge.
* ***How Good Is Our Education Authority*?** builds on Collaborative Improvement and is a further opportunity to support each other in addressing common issues.
* Genuine partnership working will allow us to co-create and build a model of self-evaluation and challenge to improve outcomes appropriate to each individual local authority
* Success is dependent on creating and sustaining high levels of mutual trust, confidence, cooperation and collaboration to allow effective joint activity in Quads and beyond.
* We should build on Scotland’s well-embedded approaches to quality and improvement based on self-evaluation, and rigorous and robust evidence. Focused and meaningful self-evaluation must be at the heart of our improvement work.
* All thirty-two local authorities will be involved and engaged in this process, with a relevant focus and over an agreed timescale.

# **4. Overseeing and Leading the use of *How Good Is Our Education Authority*?**

The following arrangements are in place to oversee the use of ***How Good Is Our Education Authority*?**

* **Strategic Group**

The Strategic group is a combination of the previous Collaborative Improvement Strategic group and the Self-evaluation group.  The group is responsible for overseeing the use of ***How Good Is Our Education Authority*?**, ensuring Quads meet and work within set timescales and to pick up on any further Collaborative Improvement work resulting from Quad discussions regarding local authority self-evaluation outcomes.

* **Local Authority Quads**

ADES have agreed groups of four local authorities referred to as Quads which are based on LGBF groupings and have broadly similar characteristics and demographics. Education Scotland have assigned a Senior Regional Adviser to each Quad and ADES Officers have also been assigned to Quads to be able to support any arrangements required (see Appendix 4). Each Quad has been asked to identify a Quad lead that will link as required with the ADES Officers and the self-evaluation group.

# **5. Stages of the Implementation of *How Good Is Our Education Authority*?**

**Stage 1: Getting ready**

All local authorities should first carry out their own self-evaluation using ***How Good Is Our Education Authority*?** to articulate their strengths and areas for improvement as part of their normal planning processes. The material in Appendices 1-3 should help with this process. The self-evaluation should involve staff from schools, young people and parents as appropriate.

**Stage 2: Complete the summary templates (Appendix 3)**

Using ***How Good Is Our Education Authority*?** will generate evidence of strengths and areas for improvement but should be bureaucracy light. Once the internal self-evaluation exercise is completed, each local authority should have completed or be able to complete the templates at Appendix 3. The templates should be a single page evaluative summary of each section of the QI. Basic directions are contained on the templates.

**Stage 3: Sharing the outcomes in Quads**

The next stage involves meeting as a quad and using the completed templates as the basis for discussion. In this way there is a consistent basis for mutual support and challenge discussions. Quad lead will organise a session for the four local authorities to share their self-evaluation statements. This process should allow an identification of similar themes for development and where one local authority may show strengths in a particular area and be willing to share with others. Data should be used at this stage for a robust discussion about outcomes to be able to take place. The quad meetings will involve the relevant senior regional adviser, nominated HMI and ADES officer.

**Stage 4: Collective activity resulting from priority area/s identified**

Local authority leads may decide on areas that they wish to collaborate on to bring about improvement. Equally, there may be an agreement that a Collaborative Improvement visit to one or more of the local authorities would be helpful to examine further what could be done to improve outcomes in an identified area. Where a Collaborative Improvement visit is requested, the ADES Officer and the SRA should work with the local authority or local authorities who wish to have a CI visit to explore options.

**7. Professional Learning**

Everyone involved in ***How Good Is Our Education Authority*?** Should benefit from professional development/training prior to, and during this work. This will help ensure a consistency of understanding and behaviour by all those involved in the process. The strategic group and ADES executive will offer professional learning and reflection as required.

As part of professional learning, it is expected that team members read and make good use of this guidance and associated appendices not only to assist this process but to enhance their use of ***How Good Is Our Education Authority*?** in their own local authority.

# Appendix 1 – Quads and rationale for groupings

The model for improvement quads reflects the existing family groups established as part of the Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF). Annex 1 provides more details. The benefits of this approach include:

* Builds on existing well-established and recognised performance improvement framework;
* Allows for future development and alignment with the Improvement Service in relation to performance, reporting and improvement;
* Allows for sharing of practice across LAs and Regional Improvement Collaboratives (RICs); and
* Mirrors approach being taken by SOLACE and the LGBF Board to strengthen sector-led approaches to improvement.

**LGBF grouped by the type of population LAs serve, e.g. level of deprivation and affluence.**

| **Family Group 1** | **Family Group 2** | **Family Group 3** | **Family Group 4** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Quad 1**East RenfrewshireAberdeen CityShetland IslandsEdinburgh, City of**Quad 2**East DunbartonshireAberdeenshirePerth & KinrossOrkney Islands | **Quad 3**MorayEast LothianArgyll & ButeAngus**Quad 4**StirlingHighlandMidlothianScottish Borders | **Quad 5**FalkirkSouth AyrshireRenfrewshireClackmannanshire**Quad 6**Dumfries & GallowayFifeWest LothianSouth Lanarkshire | **Quad 7**Eilean SiarEast AyrshireInverclydeWest Dunbartonshire**Quad 8**Dundee CityNorth AyrshireNorth LanarkshireGlasgow City |

**Annex 1 – How Local Government Benchmarking Framework Compares Councils**

To understand why variations in cost and performance are occurring, councils work together to ‘drill-down’ into the benchmarking data across service areas. This process has been organised around ‘family groups’ of councils so that we are comparing councils that are similar in terms of the type of population that they serve (e.g. relative deprivation and affluence) and the type of area in which they serve them (e.g. urban, semi-rural, rural). The point of comparing like with like is that this is more likely to lead to useful learning and improvement.

**Family Groupings for Children, Social Work and Housing indicators**

These councils are grouped by the type of population they serve, e.g. level of deprivation and affluence.

| **Family Group 1** | **Family Group 2** | **Family Group 3** | **Family Group 4** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| East RenfrewshireEast DunbartonshireAberdeenshireEdinburgh, City ofPerth & KinrossAberdeen CityShetland IslandsOrkney Islands | MorayStirlingEast LothianAngusScottish BordersHighlandArgyll & ButeMidlothian | FalkirkDumfries & GallowayFifeSouth AyrshireWest LothianSouth LanarkshireRenfrewshireClackmannanshire | Eilean SiarDundee CityEast AyrshireNorth AyrshireNorth LanarkshireInverclydeWest DunbartonshireGlasgow City |

# **Appendix 2 SRA and ADES Officer Links to Quads**

The following SRAs are linked to Quads:

|  |
| --- |
| **Gilian Kierans** |
| East RenfrewshireAberdeen CityShetland IslandsCity of Edinburgh | Eilean SiarEast AyrshireInverclydeWest Dunbartonshire |

|  |
| --- |
| **Alan Britton** |
| MorayEast LothianArgyll & ButeAngus | Dumfries & GallowayFifeWest LothianSouth Lanarkshire |

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| --- |
| **Kylie Watson** |
| StirlingHighlandMidlothianScottish Borders | Dundee CityNorth AyrshireNorth LanarkshireGlasgow City |

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| --- |
| **Heather Robertson** |
| FalkirkSouth AyrshireRenfrewshireClackmannanshire | East DunbartonshireAberdeenshirePerth & KinrossOrkney Islands |

**ADES Officer Links**

**Initially Michael Wood will act as the conduit for the eight Leads.**

**Following Stage 2 the most appropriate form of support will be identified.**

# **Appendix 3: Self-evaluation summary templates for completion prior to Quad meetings**

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| 1. **Leadership, Direction & Continuous Improvement**
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| *To what extent have we provided strategic leadership of the education authority, fulfilment of statutory duties, worked internally and with partners to create a shared vision, a sense of purpose and direction focused on continuous improvement.* *To what extent have we planned for improvement and change and how well do we build capacity for leadership and improvement which result in better outcomes, experiences for and improve the quality of services.*  |
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| 1. **Leadership, Direction & Continuous Improvement**
 |

**Evaluative comment on the each of the themes (one page maximum for each)****Evidence sources should be identified/linked to.****What are our strengths:****1.1 Vision, values and aims** |

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| **1.Leadership, Direction & Continuous Improvement** |
| **Evaluative comment on the each of the themes (one page maximum for each)****Evidence sources should be identified/linked to.****What are our strengths:*** 1. **Strategic deployment of resources**
 |

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| 1. **Leadership, Direction & Continuous Improvement**
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| **Evaluative comment on the each of the themes (one page maximum for each)****Evidence sources should be identified/linked to.****What are our strengths:*** 1. **Fulfilment of Statutory Duties**
 |

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| 1. **Leadership, Direction & Continuous Improvement**
 |
| **Evaluative comment on the each of the themes (one page maximum for each)****Evidence sources should be identified/linked to.****What are our strengths:*** 1. **Leading and delivering sustained improvement and change**
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| 1. **Leadership, Direction & Continuous Improvement**
 |
| **Evaluative comment on the each of the themes (one page maximum for each)****Evidence sources should be identified/linked to.****What are our strengths:*** 1. **Effective leadership at all levels**
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| 1. **Leadership, Direction & Continuous Improvement**
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| **How can we improve?****What are our next steps?**  |

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| 1. **Improving Outcomes for All**
 |
| *To what extent are we achieving the best possible outcomes for all children, young people and adult learners?* *To what extent is our use of data and professional learning improving outcomes for our learners and staff?* |
| **Evaluative comment on the each of the themes (one page maximum for each)****Evidence sources should be identified/linked to.****What are our strengths:*** 1. **Improvement in outcomes for children, young people and adult learners**
 |

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| --- |
| 1. **Improving Outcomes for All**
 |
| *To what extent are we achieving the best possible outcomes for all children, young people and adult learners?* *To what extent is our use of data and professional learning improving outcomes for our learners and staff?* |
| **Evaluative comment on the each of the themes (one page maximum for each)****Evidence sources should be identified/linked to.****What are our strengths:*** 1. **Quality of Education - Impact on children, young people, families and communities**
 |

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| --- |
| 1. **Improving Outcomes for All**
 |
| *To what extent are we achieving the best possible outcomes for all children, young people and adult learners?* *To what extent is our use of data and professional learning improving outcomes for our learners and staff?* |
| **Evaluative comment on the each of the themes (one page maximum for each)****Evidence sources should be identified/linked to.****What are our strengths:*** 1. **Quality of Education – Impact of professional learning on staff**
 |

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| 1. **Improving Outcomes for All**
 |
| *To what extent are we achieving the best possible outcomes for all children, young people and adult learners?* *To what extent is our use of data and professional learning improving outcomes for our learners and staff?* |
| **Evaluative comment on the each of the themes (one page maximum for each)****Evidence sources should be identified/linked to.****What are our strengths:*** 1. **Use of performance data to improve outcomes for children, young people and adult learners**
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| 1. **Improving Outcomes for All**
 |
| *To what extent are we achieving the best possible outcomes for all children, young people and adult learners?* *To what extent is our use of data and professional learning improving outcomes for our learners and staff?* |
| **How can we improve?****What are our next steps?**  |