



Education
Scotland
Foghlam Alba



A · D · E · S

Interim Progress Report: How Good is Our Education Authority and the Quads

August 2026



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1. Introduction

In Scotland we are committed to being a self-improving educational system. We have long understood the importance of self-improvement that involves the strengthening of links between the different contributors to the system, and the provision of mutual support and robust challenge. This progress report briefly outlines the philosophy behind this aspiration and provides an update on developments in Scotland that are helping us to move closer to this goal. It describes and evaluates (on an interim basis) an ongoing process of improving self-evaluation in education authorities. This process is intended to reduce variation in performance through peer-to-peer support and challenge.

The findings from this interim review suggest that this process is valued by participants as a powerful mechanism for system improvement, and future efforts should focus on resourcing, refining and embedding its practice across the system.

Foreword from Santiago Rincon-Gallardo

Local education authorities in Scotland are demonstrating what becomes possible when leaders stop waiting for the system above to create the conditions for change and begin instead to become the leaders they had been waiting for.

The Quads are much more than a new collaborative structure. They are creating the relational infrastructure of a self-improving system: trust deep enough for candour, shared responsibility strong enough for challenge, and disciplined self-evaluation that allows expertise to travel generously across organisational boundaries. The evidence gathered and presented here suggests that this is already beginning to influence culture, policy, and practice. Measurable effects on learner outcomes will understandably take longer to emerge, but I have no doubt they will come – as long as the Quads are able to keep their focused collaboration steady, continuing to refine and sharpen their processes and routines of continuous learning and internal accountability.

I have come to think of educational systems as blocks of hardened cement, shaped over time by layers of policy, culture, routines, and history. I no longer believe that we can change education systems. We can only crack them: create friction and tension within to open cracks where life and learning can emerge. Yet cracks alone are not enough. Something alive must be growing underneath them. That is what makes the Quads so promising. Scotland's local authorities are creating fertile ground beneath the concrete: relationships, collective efficacy, shared learning, professional courage, and a growing capacity to improve with and for one another.

This report is both evidence of how far that work has come and an invitation to protect, resource, deepen, and extend it. If that steady pressure continues, the cracks will widen. And through them, life, learning, and possibility will flourish across Scotland.

2. Background

Collaborative Improvement visits were introduced in 2021 with a programme spanning three years to cover all 32 education authorities. Further information can be found in the progress reports for Collaborative Improvement here: [National Developments – Association of Directors of Education in Scotland](#)

The findings from the Collaborative Improvement work (2021–2024) clearly identified a need for a Framework to support greater consistency in self-evaluation at local education authority level. How Good is Our Education Authority (HGIOEA) was developed by the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland (ADES), supported by Education Scotland (ES) and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) consisting of two Quality Indicators to help focus on key leadership and outcome themes.

Local education authorities were organised into Quads using the Local Government Benchmark Framework (LGBF) family groups to ensure similar characteristics across the four local authorities ([Appendix 1](#)). Guidance was created to support the consistent use of HGIOEA and to provide a scaffold for the first round of Quad meetings.

All local education authorities prepared their self-evaluation materials between August–December 2024 with the first round of Quad meetings taking place in January/February 2025. ES and HMIE participated in these meetings and ES produced a summary of the discussions. Action plans were developed by each of the Quad Leads (nominated leads from within each Quad). Each Quad agreed the focus of the action plans according to priorities for improvement identified in the self-evaluations.

A further round of self-evaluation followed by Quad meetings took place between August 2025 and February 2026, also supported by ES and HMIE, and action plans were updated accordingly.

Oversight of this work is undertaken by the Self-evaluation/Quads Strategy Group that currently comprises representation from ADES, ES and HMIE.

3. Methodology

The research methodology for this interim progress report was designed to replicate, wherever possible, the approaches previously taken in evaluating the Collaborative Improvement programme. This was intended to provide thematic continuity and a degree of comparability. An online survey was developed ([Appendix 2](#)), based in part on questions that were previously asked in relation to the Collaborative Improvement programme. This was open to core participants in the Quads process, mainly senior education authority staff and the linked HMIEs and Senior Regional Advisors (SRAs) who have supported the Quads to date. The survey consisted of both closed and open questions. Forty-six responses were submitted.

Discussions took place within four focus groups; similar prompts were used to aid discussion in each focus group ([Appendix 3](#)). Each discussion lasted around an hour. One focus group captured the views of a group of the HMIE and ES staff who were closely involved with the Quads. The three other focus groups were composed of education authority staff who had participated in the Quads, either as leads, workstream leads or otherwise directly engaged in the work. The focus group discussions were automatically transcribed, supported by note taking. An authorised AI package was used to analyse the transcripts. The emerging analysis was then cross-referenced against the notes to ensure accuracy. A similar process was used to analyse the open questions in the survey. All participants in the survey and focus groups were assured of anonymity in any published findings.

4. Literature Review: Self-improving systems and collaboration

The notion that education systems should use a self-improving approach has gained increasing prominence at national and international level. Consideration is being given as to how best to improve national education systems (Mourshed et al., 2010) while at the same time encompassing the idea of education system and institutional autonomy (Salokangas and Ainscow, 2017).

Self-improvement involves the strengthening of links between participants and the provision of mutual support and robust challenge (Hadfield & Ainscow, 2018). This was echoed by Rincón-Gallardo and Fullan (2016) and Hadfield and Chapman (2009) who mentioned an increased emphasis on education systems working together in networks to support each other's improvement efforts. The collaborative Quad work between Scotland's 32 education authorities naturally builds social capital where there is shared expert knowledge, mutual accountability and trusting relationships. Expertise is no longer isolated, and good ideas can be shared across networks (Hargreaves, 2010; 2014).

Greany (2015) notes that for self-improvement to work there must be a decentralising of control. In a self-improving system, the main driving force for improvement shifts from a top-down approach towards organisations working together in networks not only to support and challenge each other, but to generate and share local solutions to common issues. A system cannot truly improve unless it questions its own assumptions and bias; therefore, there needs to be professional critique, on a 'critical friendship' basis, across the network. Improvement should be peer-led, collaborative and internally sustained rather than externally imposed (Hadfield & Ainscow 2018). Improvement comes from not just 'working together'; it is working together with responsibility for outcomes (Hadfield & Ainscow, 2018 p.2).

A self-improving system is not naturally occurring—it requires careful cultivation in the face of conflicting pressures (Hadfield & Ainscow 2018). For local education authorities to achieve a successful self-improving system, they must transition from a reliance on hierarchical cultures and must develop the capacity for sincere and rigorous peer collaboration (Hargreaves, 2010).

These observations have helped to shape the ethos and the ways of working that underpin the Quads initiative.

5. Findings Part 1: The Survey

As noted previously there were forty-six responses in total to the online survey. The initial questions focused on demographic data, i.e. the organisations represented by respondents; their job roles, and the Quads they were most closely associated with. The details of these initial questions, and summaries of the responses, can be found in Appendix 2. In addition, a breakdown of responses to a series of prompts around general impressions of the process can be found there.

Subsequent questions in the survey were more open. Participants described:

- Strong, open and honest professional relationships
- Meaningful collaboration leading to improved practice
- A “safe space” for dialogue and challenge
- Tangible benefits for education authorities and systems

Many respondents highlighted that collaboration across Quads has become a key professional network and driver of improvement.

Some respondents identified areas for development alongside acknowledged strengths. Common themes included:

- Value of sharing practice and learning from others
- Evidence of emerging impact and “quick wins”
- Recognition that the model is still developing

However, these responses also pointed to:

- Capacity and workload challenges
- Variability in depth of analysis and challenge
- Need for clearer alignment and reduced duplication

There were some “Don’t know” responses to the prompts around the process. These were generally linked to limited direct involvement or only partial engagement in the process. Comments indicated:

- Lack of participation in Quad meetings
- Involvement only in specific strands (e.g. sub-groups)
- Early-stage engagement with the model

There was a single “Strongly Disagree” response which reflected concerns relating to:

- Limited perceived impact at school level
- Practical barriers such as travel and logistics

This aligns with wider themes across the dataset regarding capacity and accessibility challenges, rather than opposition to the model itself. Overall, when considered together, the quantitative and qualitative data present a coherent and strongly positive picture. The high proportion of “Agree” and “Strongly Agree” responses (40 out of 46) is reflected in the qualitative feedback which described meaningful collaboration, professional trust and system-level learning. Where concerns were raised, they related primarily to implementation factors (time, capacity, logistics, and consistency) rather than the value of the approach itself. The findings indicate a model that is well-regarded, impactful and still evolving, with clear opportunities to strengthen and scale its effectiveness.

Question 8 in the survey asked: What were the two most beneficial aspects of the self-evaluation and Quads work for you and/or your organisation?

The responses highlight that the most valuable aspect of the self-evaluation and Quads work has been the strong emphasis on collaboration across education authorities, particularly through networking, sharing practice and engaging in meaningful professional dialogue.

Participants consistently valued opportunities to connect with peers, build relationships and learn from different approaches. For example, it was noted that sharing leadership strategies, quality assurance processes (such as attendance management) and approaches to data dashboards and analysis were valued. This collaborative environment fostered openness, enabling both support and constructive challenge and helping to establish a shared understanding of effective practice across contexts.

As one participant noted, ***“there’s a real collaborative network in place and, importantly, with a purpose,”*** while another participant highlighted ***“very honest and open dialogue with Quad partner local authorities.”***

The work provided a structured opportunity for reflection and improvement, supported by a common framework that strengthened consistency and credibility in self-evaluation. Participants reported greater confidence in their judgements through benchmarking and comparison, while identifying shared challenges and planning joint improvement actions. Examples noted included collaborative planning for common priorities, shared delivery of support to reduce workload and using consistent frameworks to review performance and inform improvement plans.

One participant reflected that, ***“the self-evaluation process provided a valuable opportunity... enabling a clearer understanding of our strengths as well as areas requiring further development”***, while another participant described how it ***“allowed for open and honest discussion... that encouraged challenge in a supportive way.”***

Overall, the combination of collaboration, shared practice and structured reflection has strengthened system-wide learning, informed decision-making and fostered a growing sense of collective responsibility for improvement. The findings highlight that collaborative and relational aspects—such as networking, sharing practice, and professional dialogue—were the most frequently cited benefits, significantly outweighing more technical elements. These aspects appear to underpin stronger reflection, more robust self-evaluation and increased system-wide learning and improvement.

Question 9 asked: **What actions have you taken, or will take in future, as a result of participating in the self-evaluation/Quads process?**

The responses indicate that participation in the self-evaluation and Quads process has led to a wide range of actions, with a strong emphasis on collaboration, system improvement and capacity building. The most prominent theme is the strengthening of collaboration across education authorities, including the establishment of joint workstreams, regular engagement and shared improvement activity. Participants highlighted the value of working collectively to share expertise, build relationships and develop more efficient approaches, while reducing duplication and supporting more coherent system-wide improvement.

One participant indicated that ***“...the Quad work is central to the way we work now... with collaborative meetings to take forward improvement work at many levels.”***

Many participants reported significant developments in self-evaluation and quality assurance processes, including refining improvement frameworks, embedding more rigorous evaluative practices and aligning approaches more closely with shared standards. This has supported more consistent and evidence-informed planning.

Leadership development also featured strongly, particularly in relation to building capacity at all levels and strengthening middle leadership pathways. Many responses indicated that leadership offers have been adapted or enhanced to better meet emerging needs.

There was a clear focus on improving the use of data, with authorities strengthening analytical approaches, developing new dashboards and ensuring that data is more effectively linked to improvement priorities and decision-making. Participants highlighted the importance of sharing practice and professional learning across authorities, particularly in relation to assessment, moderation and Additional Support Needs (ASN). This has supported greater consistency and collective understanding and sharing of effective approaches.

Participants referred to the development of joint action plans and targeted workstreams (e.g. on inclusion, attendance and data), alongside reviewing and adapting local policies, systems and improvement plans in response to Quad-level collaboration.

Overall, the findings demonstrate a shift towards more collaborative, aligned and data-informed approaches, with increasing evidence that the Quads process is becoming embedded as a core way of working. The findings highlight that collaborative working continues to be the key driver of action, underpinning improvements in self-evaluation, leadership and system-wide practice.

Question 10 asked: **Can you identify evidence of impact arising from your engagement with the Quads work? If so, please provide a brief summary of this evidence.**

The responses indicate that, while many participants feel it is too early to demonstrate fully measurable impact, there is nonetheless strong emerging evidence of positive change at system and practice level. The most commonly reported impacts relate to strengthened self-evaluation and quality improvement processes, improved use of data and enhanced collaboration across education authorities. These developments have led to clearer planning, increased consistency and more confident, evidence-informed decision-making.

The Quad work is already influencing practical changes in systems and professional practice, with several respondents identifying early indicators of improved outcomes, such as better inspection alignment, more robust tracking and targeted support for schools. Overall, the evidence suggests that the work is moving from the initial stages of establishing trust, relationship-building and shared learning, into tangible system improvement, with stronger foundations now in place for longer-term impact.

Participants identified a range of practical examples where collaboration has directly influenced practice, including:

- Sharing and adapting quality improvement frameworks and developing joint tools such as the QI 1.1 rubric (this was one of the early outputs from one of the Quads, which developed a fleshed-out self-evaluation framework for education authority use).
- Collaborative development of data dashboards, tracking systems and structured approaches to data analysis.
- Joint work on moderation, curriculum tracking and reporting approaches across schools.
- Sharing and delivering Career-Long Professional Learning (CLPL) and leadership development programmes across authorities.
- Revising annual achievement meetings and quality assurance processes based on learning from peers.
- Developing shared resources and joint initiatives (e.g. on ASN provision, and attendance and engagement strategies).

"We have reviewed and updated our quality improvement framework... there is a clearer understanding of responsibilities at all levels in securing improvement... and better alignment between our own self-evaluation and the outcomes of inspection."

"The adoption of more structured methods for analysing and interpreting data has improved our ability to identify key trends... and use this insight to inform targeted actions."

Overall, the findings highlight that many participants feel it is still too early to evidence measurable direct impact on, for example, attainment or other key measures. Nonetheless there is consistent feedback on strengthened systems, improved professional practice and increased capacity for improvement. The most frequently cited impacts focus on enhanced self-evaluation, more effective use of data and stronger collaboration across education authorities. These changes are contributing to more coherent, evidence-informed approaches to improvement and laying the foundations for longer-term measurable outcomes.

Question 11 asked: **In what ways could the self-evaluation/quads work be improved?**

The most prominent challenges noted in the responses were the management of time, capacity and funding, which participants consistently identified as limiting the effectiveness and sustainability of Quad-based working. Participants highlighted pressures such as competing priorities, limited staffing capacity and the financial implications of travel—particularly for geographically dispersed authorities. There were recurring calls for protected time and dedicated funding to enable deeper engagement, more consistent attendance and more meaningful collaboration.

Another theme in the feedback was the positive perception of collaborative working within and across Quads. Participants emphasised the benefits of professional dialogue, shared learning and peer support. However, there is also a strong appetite to extend collaboration further, including more cross-Quad engagement, wider networking and increased opportunities to share practice at a national level. One participant noted **"More awareness/sharing of the work of other Quads to avoid duplication."**

Participants see collaboration not just as beneficial but as essential to system-wide improvement. Expanding mechanisms for sharing learning and avoiding siloed working is viewed as a key next step.

While the approach is broadly supported, participants identified a need for greater clarity in the tools, processes and structures underpinning self-evaluation. This includes refining frameworks such as HGIOEA, improving data systems and developing shared platforms and resources to support more efficient and comparable practice across education authorities.

In addition, respondents highlighted the need for:

- More consistent formats for reporting and analysis
- Better access to national data systems
- Shared tools to reduce workload and duplication

This reflects a desire to move from variation to coherence, enabling more robust comparison, evaluation and system-level learning.

The findings for **Question 11** present a consistently positive endorsement of the Quad/self-evaluation model, with participants largely advocating for its continuation rather than any significant redesign. The key message is clear: the model is working, but its full potential is being constrained by practical obstacles rather than conceptual or design issues.

To strengthen impact, future efforts should prioritise:

- Resourcing (time and funding)
- Scaling up and connecting collaboration
- Improving consistency in tools and systems

6. Findings Part 2: Focus Groups

Four focus groups were convened: three were composed of education authority staff, while one was composed of HMIE and ES SRAs. All four groups were asked similar questions, albeit with some inevitable divergence according to how the questions and answers developed. The core questions posed are listed in Appendix 3. The analysis presented in this section is an amalgam of the views expressed across all four groups.

Participants were involved across senior leadership and central officer roles, contributing both strategically and operationally. Their engagement included:

- Leading self-evaluation (SE) and action planning
- Participating in quad meetings, conferences and visits
- Developing shared tools and thematic workstreams
- Supporting cross-authority school collaboration

The Quads also enabled sustained professional networks, strengthening collaboration beyond formal structures. The self-evaluation process was widely regarded as robust and evidence-informed.

Key strengths of the Quads work emerging from the focus groups:

- Use of shared frameworks, data and inspection evidence
- Clear focus on measurable improvement priorities
- Strong trust-based peer discussion, enabling open and honest dialogue
- Consistent supportive challenge, viewed as essential to improvement
- Provided external perspective and system-wide insight
- Supported reflection and validation of findings

Limitations:

- Too broad a focus (QIs), with sometimes limited depth as a result
- Capacity pressures across authorities
- In-person meetings more effective than online
- Inconsistent involvement and continuity of external contributors
- External contributors often more supportive than challenging
- Need for stronger data-informed challenge
- Quads provide strong internal challenge independently of any external contributions
- External partners enhance but do not determine effectiveness

Despite the expression of some of the limitations above, positive accounts were expressed of impacts including on:

Culture (increased trust, openness, and system leadership; greater willingness to engage in challenge and shared learning);

Policy (improved consistency in improvement frameworks; influence on leadership development and planning), and

Practice (stronger self-evaluation and use of data; increased collaboration, moderation, and shared improvement activity; evidence of impact at school level; creation of strong cross-authority professional networks; improved confidence and capacity of central officers; greater understanding of shared challenges across the system; development of new collaborative workstreams and forums).

In the light of the limitations above, participants felt that future engagement should be more consistent and targeted and should provide stronger challenge (especially through data). They thought that Quads can be sustainable without external input, but that they do benefit from the continued involvement of external partners.

The overall feedback in the focus groups was highly positive, with suggestions for some targeted improvements, including:

- Greater focus – fewer priorities, deeper discussion
- Stronger alignment – reduce duplication across initiatives
- Clearer purpose – SE, collaborative improvement, and inspection
- Address capacity challenges – staffing, cost, geography
- Prioritise in-person working where possible

In looking ahead to the next phase of Quads related development, with the proposed revival of the collaborative improvement model, focus group participants were strongly supportive, subject to the following:

- Collaborative improvement aligned to key priorities
- Focused on areas for improvement, not just strengths
- Integrated into a coherent improvement cycle

7. Conclusions

The work undertaken for this interim progress report has identified a range of very positive ways of working that have been referred to consistently by participants across both the survey and the focus groups. There is strong collaboration and mutual professional trust and respect within the Quads which is leading to a more robust and improving self-evaluation process. In turn, this is having a meaningful impact on practice and system working that ought, in time, to lead to a reduction in variation across education authorities and improved outcomes for children and young people under a range of priority indicators.

The completion of Quad action plans has allowed an identification of the key themes drawn from across the eight Quads, revealing the eight priority areas for improvement across the whole system ([Appendix 4](#)).

The Quad model is valued by participants as a powerful mechanism for system improvement, and future efforts should focus on resourcing, refining and embedding its practice across the system. Challenges identified around capacity, clarity and system alignment are seen as implementation issues (many of which might be addressed through the recommendations below) rather than flaws in the model itself.

8. Next steps and Recommendations

- Continue external involvement of Education Scotland Colleagues in the Quad meetings and any other relevant input to the action plan. Where possible, ES colleagues to have a consistent link to the education authorities within the Quad that they support.
- Explore how HMIE can continue to contribute to education authority self-evaluation, complementing the new LEA Inspection Framework.
- Include the Scottish Government in future development of this work through representation on the Self-evaluation/Quads Steering Group.
- Strengthen the challenge at Quad meetings with more robust use of shared data and other evidence used to back up self-evaluation.
- Revise HGIOEA in light of the new Inspection Framework and views gathered from previous use in round 1 and 2.
- Clarity is required on the different purposes and 'sites' of improvement activity e.g. education authority inspection, Quads work, RICs, etc. to help ensure a shared understanding of all improvement work used to improve outcomes at an education authority level.
- Revised guidance to support round 3 of the Quads for 2026–2027 should be developed to ensure greater consistency, outlining opportunity for supportive robust challenge based on data and evidence.
- Examine the possibility of any resource available to support island and rural areas to commit to meeting in-person within their Quads.
- A re-introduction of Collaborative Improvement visits on a three-year cycle from August 2027 using the LA self-evaluation from HGIOEA to identify a focus for the visit in discussion within the Quads. New guidance to be developed to support a refreshed Collaborative Improvement model.

Statement on use of AI/LLM

An approved AI/LLM package was used to support the transcription of focus groups, and the analysis of some of the qualitative data in this report. All outputs of this were checked for accuracy prior to completion of this review.

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Rincón-Gallardo, S., and Fullan, M. (2016) *Essential features of effective networks in education.* *Journal of Professional Capital and Community*, 1(1), pp. 5–22.

Salokangas, M. and Ainscow, M. (2017) *Inside the autonomous school: making sense of a global educational trend.* London: Routledge.

Appendix 1: The Quads Family Groups

1a

East Renfrewshire

Aberdeen City

Shetland Islands

City of Edinburgh

2a

Moray

East Lothian

Argyll and Bute

Angus

3a

Falkirk

South Ayrshire

Renfrewshire

Clackmannanshire

4a

Eilean Siar

East Ayrshire

Inverclyde

West Dunbartonshire

1b

East Dunbartonshire

Aberdeenshire

Perth & Kinross

Orkney Islands

2b

Stirling

Highland

Midlothian

Scottish Borders

3b

Dumfries and Galloway

Fife

West Lothian

South Lanarkshire

4b

Dundee City

North Ayrshire

North Lanarkshire

Glasgow City

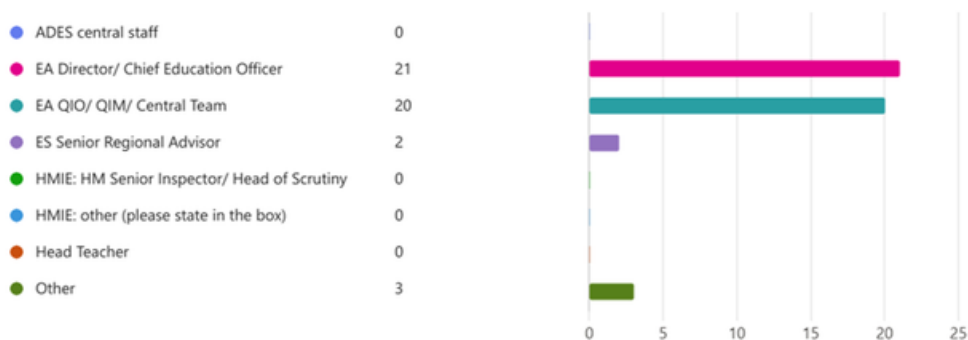
Appendix 2: The Survey Questions

Q1 Was a prompt requesting consent from Participants

Q2 Covered the organisational affiliations of respondents; most (n=41) indicated alignment with an education authority. The other responses were from ADES (2), Education Scotland (2), and one other. HMIE did not participate in the survey.

Q3 Established the 'job roles' of respondents. See Table 1 below for the distribution of roles. It is worth noting that around half of these respondents are at Head of Service / Director of Education level, and around half are drawn from the senior teams in education authority education directorates. This indicates there is a distribution and delegation of engagement around the Quads work across senior echelons in education authorities.

Table 1: Question 3: What is your job role?



Q4 asked respondents how the Quad meetings had taken place to date. The majority (66%; n=29) indicated that these had been a mix of face to face and online events, while 12% (n=12) indicated they had been fully face-to-face. 7% (n=3) of respondents indicated they had followed another model.

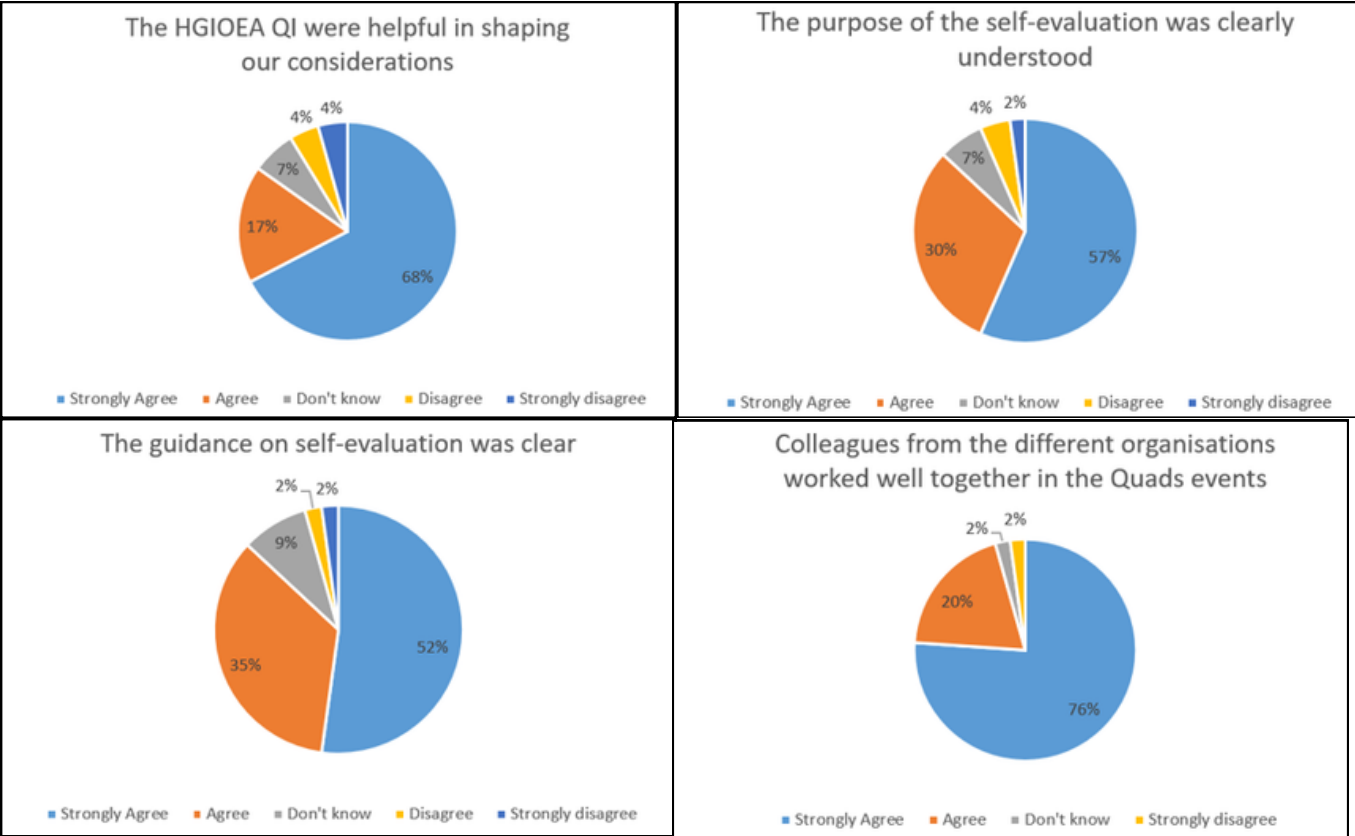
Q5 established which Quads the respondents were most closely associated with (See Table 2 below)

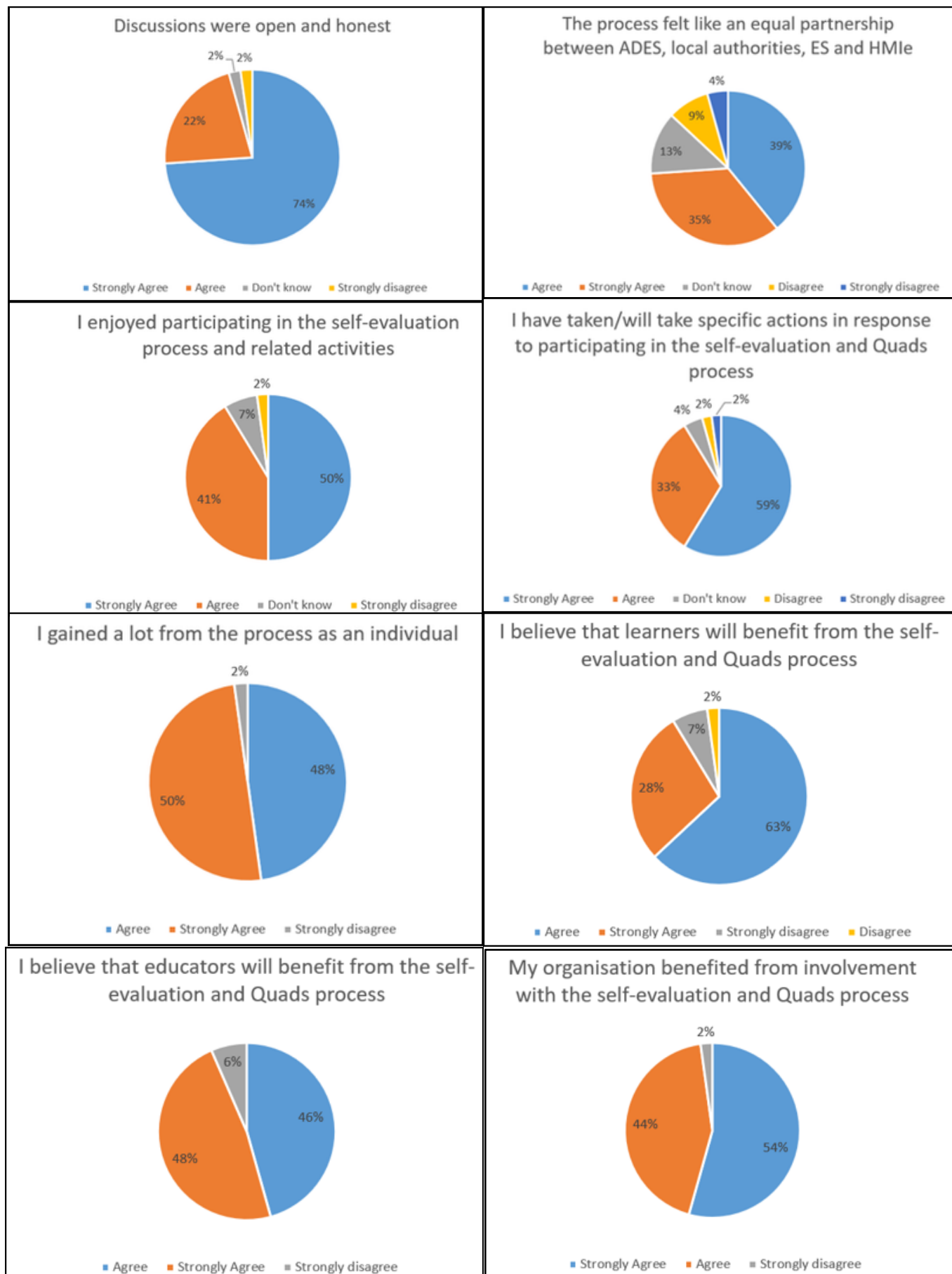
Table 2



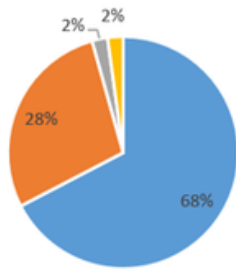
Q6 In the survey provided a snapshot via a Likert scale and a series of prompts of participants’ views across a range of features of the work. A total of **46** responses were received across all statements. Respondents rated each statement using one of the following options: **Strongly Agree, Agree, Don't Know, Disagree, or Strongly Disagree**. Where a response category received **0% of responses**, it has been omitted from the corresponding pie chart for clarity.

Table 3: Responses to Prompts



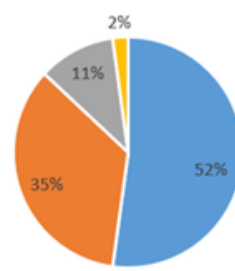


The process is worthwhile and worth developing further



■ Strongly Agree ■ Agree ■ Disagree ■ Strongly disagree

The self-evaluation and peer collaboration elements were robust



■ Agree ■ Strongly Agree ■ Don't know ■ Strongly disagree

Appendix 3: Focus Group Questions

Q1 - In what capacity were you involved in one or more Quads?

Q2 - How robust was the self-evaluation process and LA peer discussion?

Q3 - To what extent did HMIEs and / or SRAs intervene to provide challenge and guidance?

Q4 - To what extent has there been a positive impact on culture, policy or practice?

Q5 - Have there been other significant impacts?

Q6 - Is it important for continued engagement of HMIE/ES?

Appendix 4: Across all of the Quad workplans, a number of strong recurring themes are emerging.

1. Collaboration and Network Learning

Overarching theme

Building sustainable networks across local authorities to share expertise, resources, and improvement practice.

Examples of activity

- ASN officer networks sharing resources and approaches across authorities.
- Joint Head Teacher conferences and networking events.
- Cross-authority steering groups and short-life working groups.
- Peer learning through visits, spotlight sessions, and professional dialogue.

2. Self-Evaluation and Quality Improvement

Overarching theme

Strengthening self-evaluation processes to improve school and local authority performance and ensure greater consistency with HMIE evaluations.

Examples of activity

- Development of the QI 1.1 Self-Evaluation Rubric.
- Sharing quality assurance frameworks
- Improvement frameworks shared and reviewed
- Evaluative writing and improvement planning support.
- Reviewing improvement frameworks across authorities.
- Sharing support and challenge models.
- Establishing validation visit processes.
- Reviewing inspection support arrangements.

3. Leadership Development

Overarching theme

Developing leadership capacity at all levels, particularly middle leadership and system leadership.

Examples of activity

- CLPL for central officers, school leaders and middle leaders.
- Cross-authority middle leader programmes being delivered
- Leadership-focused CLPL opportunities shared across LAs
- Leadership Strategy Groups reviewing and enhancing existing leadership frameworks.

4. Effective Use of Data

Overarching theme

Improving data literacy and the strategic use of data to drive school improvement and improve learner outcomes.

Examples of activity

- Tracking and monitoring working groups.
- Data network established.
- Sharing approaches to the use of attainment and achievement data.
- Developing common quality assurance approaches using relevant data.
- Supporting schools to "own" and use data more effectively for improvement planning.

5. Learning, Teaching and Assessment

Overarching theme

Improving the quality and consistency of classroom practice and strengthening evaluation of learning and teaching.

Examples of activity

- Sharing effective pedagogical approaches.
- Collaborative development of CLPL programmes.
- Assessment and moderation sessions across authorities.

6. Inclusion and Additional Support Needs (ASN)

Overarching theme

Increasing capacity across schools to meet the needs of all learners and improve outcomes for children and young people with ASN.

Examples of activity

- Supporting language and communication development.
- Developing PSA role descriptors and induction frameworks.
- Creating shared CLPL modules for support staff.
- Exploring use of AI and assistive technologies to support inclusion.
- Building outreach and specialist support networks.

7. Professional Learning and Capacity Building

Overarching theme

Creating high-quality professional learning opportunities that build workforce capability across systems.

Examples of activity

- Joint CLPL programmes.
- Shared training calendars.
- Cross-authority webinars and virtual clinics.
- Associate Assessor professional learning opportunities.
- Shared specialist expertise across authorities.

8. Attendance and Engagement

Overarching theme

Improving attendance and reducing persistent absence through shared approaches and stronger quality assurance.

Examples of activity

- Development of attendance checklists and guidance.
- Sharing attendance promotion strategies.
- Improving consistency in SEEMIS coding.
- Reviewing interventions for targeted groups.
- Exploring the role of third sector and social work partners in improving attendance.

