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The Scottish Parliament

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Following Professor Muir's recommendation in relation to the creation of a shared framework for the inspection of early learning and childcare (ELC), I announced to Parliament on 9 March that I would come forward with specific proposals on the future of inspection of ELC to consult with the ELC sector before the summer.

I now write to inform the Committee that this consultation was launched today, Monday 11 July, and will close at midnight on Friday 28 October. It will remain open for an extended period of 16 weeks to take account of the summer holiday period and can be accessed by the public on the Scottish Government consultation hub.

The consultation aims to gather views on a vision for the future of inspection and what this will deliver for children and families, practitioners, teachers and staff working in the sector from the full range of ELC and school age childcare services. It seeks views on the strengths of the existing inspection arrangements, where improvements can be made and on a proposal to bring forward a shared quality framework to be used in inspection of these services, developed collaboratively by the Care Inspectorate, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (or the new education inspectorate, when it is operational), sector representatives, practitioners, teachers, staff and children. The responses will be used to inform next steps on the improvement and streamlining of inspection of ELC and school age childcare services in Scotland.

As set out in my March statement to Parliament, this consultation will take place alongside the important work of establishing the independent education inspectorate and will not delay that process.

SHIRLEY-ANNE SOMERVILLE

Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills

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