

February 2012

Ofsted Framework for the Inspection of Local Authority Arrangements for the Protection of Children

Background

The new [Ofsted framework for the inspection of local authority arrangements for the protection of children](#) will be implemented from May 2012. There will be an overlap with the existing framework until July 2012. A new Joint framework for multi-agency inspection of child protection services is planned from 2013-14. Appendix 1 sets out these frameworks.

Under the framework from May 2012, all inspections will:

- Focus on the **child's journey** from need to receiving help;
- be **unannounced**;
- be **notified on day one** of the inspection (normally Monday) that the lead inspector will be arriving that day;
- take place within a **two week period**;
- usually be carried out by **five inspectors** (four of whom will have a background in social care and one will have a background in education);
- feature **daily discussions with the Director** of Children's Services; and
- look at the **early identification and help** for children, young people and their families/carers.

Inspection activity will focus on:

- **case sampling and case tracking** of at least 50 cases (selected at random from current cases and those closed in previous 3 months);
- include **meetings with children, young people and parents/carers** who are the subject of sub-set of cases;

- **shadowing staff** in day to day work; (duty team, social workers, Independent Reviewing Officers);
- observing **multi-agency meetings** (strategy meetings, child protection conferences, resource panels); and
- three cases that **demonstrate good practice**.

At every stage of the child's journey, the inspection will evaluate the effectiveness of:

- the quality and timeliness of **assessment and risk assessment**;
- the **impact** of the help given
- the **focus on the interests of the child**;
- **inter-agency working**
- meaningful, consistent and **direct contact** with child and their family
- **quality assurance and management oversight** of practice/decision making;
- the **experiences of particularly vulnerable children** (private fostering, those not in education, those in families with domestic violence, substance misuse, mental illness etc.);
- how well the LA takes account of children's **wishes and feelings** and the extent to which this informs their care; and
- whether services are **accessible** to everyone and that there is **equality of opportunity** and outcomes.

It will focus on those children and young people who:

- have been **identified by other services as at risk of harm**, but who have not yet reached the significant harm threshold;

- have been **referred to the LA** (where urgent action has to be taken to protect them, those subject to further assessment and child protection enquiries;
- become the **subject of a multi-agency child protection plan**;
- are receiving social work services where there are **significant levels of concern about their safety and welfare**; and
- have been assessed as **no longer needing a child protection plan**, but have continuing needs for help and support.

Timetable

The timetable for inspections is set out at Appendix 2.

Evaluation Schedule

This outlines the main aspects of the service and outcomes against which inspectors will make their judgements, and the grade descriptors they will use. These cover:

- overall effectiveness, including areas for development;
- the effectiveness of the help and protection provided to children, young people, and their families and carers;
- the quality of practice; and
- leadership and governance.

Judgements

Judgements will be made using a four-point scale:

- outstanding
- good
- adequate*
- inadequate

*Since consulting on the framework, Ofsted has decided to use the term 'adequate' rather than 'satisfactory', in line with the recent announcement by HMCI Sir Michael Wilshaw to end use of 'satisfactory' as a judgement.

Other issues

Information provided to inspectors is confidential, but evidence gathered during inspection may be subject to disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, though the identity of named individuals will not be disclosed. The framework also outlines Ofsted's quality assurance arrangements, its code of conduct for Inspectors, expectations of providers and the complaints process.

Conclusion

The new framework reflects the recommendations of the Munro review of safeguarding. Although likely to be fairly short-lived, it is a further step in making inspection more relevant to improving services for the protection of children. With the introduction of the promised multi-agency framework, and the single, universal programme for inspecting 'children looked after' services it is to be hoped that a set of arrangements will have been established that will remain stable for a while.

Appendix 1

Inspection Framework	Valid	Comment
Safeguarding and Looked After Children (SLAC)	Up to July 2012	Only valid for the current programme of inspections. CEC was inspected June/July 2011
Framework for the inspection of local authority arrangements for the protection of children	From May 2012	Not all Local Authorities (LA) will be inspected under this framework. It will be targeted at those whose performance has been no better than 'adequate' (CEC could be inspected under this framework)
Joint framework for multi-agency inspection of child protection services	Proposed from 2013-14	Ofsted, the Care Quality Commission (CQC), HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and HM Inspectorate of Probation have agreed in principle to develop this.
Inspections of LA adoption agencies, LA fostering agencies and services and outcomes for looked after children	From April 2012 New frameworks for the inspection of fostering and adoption services under the current regulations will be published end of February 2012 From April 2013 Single 'children looked after' inspection	A move from separate inspections integrated into a single 'children looked after' inspection. To be part of a universal programme over a fixed cycle.

TIMETABLE FOR INSPECTION

Pre-Inspection	<p>Inspectors will have access to information already held by Ofsted before the inspection, eg:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Findings from other relevant Ofsted inspections ▪ National data ▪ Serious Case Review findings ▪ Ofsted's whistleblowing hotline and substantiated complaints made to Ofsted ▪ LSCB annual report
Day 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The lead inspector will arrive at a selected contact, referral and assessment site, notifying the most senior manager available at the site immediately before arrival ▪ LA will be asked to prepare the information as listed in Annex A to the framework. ▪ If possible, the lead inspector will meet with the Director of Children's Services (or their rep) to plan the remainder of the inspection, including practical arrangements
Day 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Two further inspectors will arrive (to focus initially on one particular part of the child's journey - the point at which the child is referred to children's social care because they are believed to be at risk of, or actually suffering, harm. ▪ Lead Inspector to spend time planning remainder of the inspection with the LA. ▪ Information from Annex A to be ready for Inspectors.
Day 3 onwards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Five inspectors on site. ▪ Remainder of the inspection to focus on other aspects of the child's journey through examining case files, where possible, with social workers or other key workers.
Day 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Last day of fieldwork. Team will hold final meeting to secure their judgements and agree gradings. The Director of Children's Services will be invited to this.
Post-inspection (working days) 10 days 15 days 20 days 22 days	<p>A single report will follow each inspection, giving grades for overall effectiveness, the effectiveness of the help and protection provided, the quality of practice, and leadership and governance; it will also set out areas for improvement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Draft report will normally be sent to the DCS for a factual accuracy check ▪ DCS to return report to Ofsted ▪ Final report sent to the DCS, copied to the Lead Member and Chief Executive and the Chair of the LSCB ▪ Report will be published on the Ofsted website <p>Ofsted will ask the LA to complete a short evaluation form.</p>