

'For the first time in our child protection inspections, we'll be talking to children and their families directly and shadowing social workers in their day-to-day work. This will be a very important part of the evidence that inspectors will use. We won't just look at what happens to children when they become subject to formal child protection processes – it's just as important to evaluate the help that children and their families do or don't get early on, when problems first emerge, because that can make a critical difference to whether the problems get worse and the risks to the child escalate.'

John Goldup, Deputy Chief Inspector

This framework will be introduced in **May 2012**.

Note: This guide identifies the key elements of the new framework, using the language of the framework. Numbers refer to the paragraphs in the framework.

It is unlikely that all local authorities will be inspected under this framework, as a multi-inspectorate framework for the inspection of child protection services is expected to be in place during 2013/14. (6)

The selection of local authorities for inspection will take account of: previous inspection outcomes; information from other sources, such as whistleblowing referrals, complaints, and serious case reviews; and any other relevant information. (7)

All inspections will be unannounced. The local authority will be notified on day one of the inspection (normally a Monday) that the lead inspector will be arriving on site that day to begin the inspection. (8)

Normally, five suitably experienced HMI will carry out the inspection. Four will be experienced in social care and the inspection of social care; one will be experienced in the inspection of educational provision. (14)

The inspection will consider key aspects of a child's journey through the child protection system, focusing on the experiences of the child or young person, and the effectiveness of the help and protection that they are offered. (16)

The inspection will focus on the effectiveness of multi-agency arrangements: for identifying children who are suffering, or likely to suffer, harm from abuse or neglect; and for the provision of early help where it is needed. It will also consider the effectiveness of the local authority and its partners in protecting these children if the risk remains or intensifies. (17)

The inspection will focus on the child's journey through intensive and extensive case sampling and case tracking. (19)

At every stage of the child's journey, inspectors will evaluate (para 20):

- the quality, effectiveness and timeliness of assessment and risk management
- the effectiveness and impact of the help given to children, young people and their families
- the consistency of the focus on the child or young person's needs and best interests
- the quality and effectiveness of inter-agency working and help for children, young people and families, including the interface with adult social care
- the extent to which social workers and other professionals working with the child or young person and their family have meaningful, consistent and direct contact with them
- the effectiveness of quality assurance and management oversight of practice and decision making
- the experiences of particularly vulnerable children and young people, such as: privately fostered children; children who live in households where there is domestic abuse, substance misuse and/or at least one parent or carer has mental ill health; and children not receiving full-time education
- how well the local authority takes account of the wishes and feelings of children and young people, and the extent to which this informs every aspect of their care.

The **evaluation schedule** for the child protection inspection can be summarised as (24):

- 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
- leadership and governance.

Inspectors will make judgements against the evaluation schedules using a **four-point scale**: outstanding; good; adequate, inadequate. (25)

Inspections will focus on direct practice by (33):

- scrutinising and discussing a sample of children's cases that reflect all the stages of a child's journey alongside social work staff and, where appropriate, other professionals working with the child or young person
- meeting, as appropriate, with children, young people, parents and carers who are the subject of a sub-set of the cases sampled
- shadowing staff in their day to day work, for example observing work in the duty team, the work of social workers with children and families, and the work of independent reviewing officers
- observing practice in multi-agency meetings such as strategy meetings, child protection conferences, resource panels.

Inspectors will have access to information already held by Ofsted before the inspection, such as:

- findings from other relevant Ofsted inspections and regulatory activity
- relevant nationally collected data

- the findings of any serious case reviews undertaken, and the outcome of Ofsted's evaluation of any such reviews
- evidence from the Ofsted whistleblowing hotline
- a summary of substantiated complaints made to Ofsted about the local authority and its partners that relate to child protection
- other related published documentation, such as the published Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) annual report.

As well as listening directly to children, young people and their families, inspectors will take into account any available evidence held by the local authority. (37)

Inspectors will examine case files, wherever possible, with social workers or other key workers who are available at the time of the inspection. The samples will be selected at random from both current cases and cases that have been closed in the previous three months. (38)

In addition to this sample, the local authority will be asked to identify three cases that demonstrate local good practice. (39)

In a sub-set of the sample, inspectors will seek to meet with children, young people, parents and carers, as appropriate, to seek their views of the effectiveness of the help provided. (40)

Case file scrutiny and discussion will consider (42):

- the extent to which children and young people who may be at risk of, or who are already suffering, harm are identified, assessed and provided with appropriate help and protection
- the effectiveness of the help given to children and young people at risk and their families
- the quality of practice, supervision and the focus on the needs of the child or young person
- the quality of planning, management oversight and clear decision making
- the extent to which agencies and professionals work together

At least 50 cases will be selected by inspectors. (43)

In a sub-set of the sample, inspectors will seek to meet with children, young people, parents and carers, as appropriate, to seek their views of the effectiveness of the help provided.

A **single report** will follow each inspection. (44) The report will set out the inspection findings using text and grades, organised under the headings below.

- Overall effectiveness (grade)
- Areas for improvement
- About this inspection
- The effectiveness of the help and protection provided to children, young people, and their families and carers (grade)
- The quality of practice (grade)
- Leadership and governance (grade)

The **draft report** will normally be sent within 10 working days of the end of the inspection. (45)

The Director of Children's Services will return the draft report with any comments on factual accuracy within five days. (46)

The final report setting out the inspection findings will be sent to the Director of Children's Services within 20 working days. (47)

The **final report** will be published on the Ofsted website within 22 days of the end of the inspection. (48)

Inspectors will provide regular opportunities for dialogue and feedback during the inspection.... (49)

Oral feedback about headline findings will normally be given to the Director of Children's Services and such others as, in discussion with lead inspector, she or he chooses to invite, before the inspectors leave at the end of the inspection.... (50)

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