



Ofsted Single Inspection Framework

Ofsted has published its single framework for inspecting local authority services for vulnerable children, examining early help, child protection, looked after children and care leavers and fostering and adoption services.

The inspection is universal and will be conducted in a three-year cycle from November 2013. Selection of local authorities will not target 'inadequate' authorities. There will be a balance of authorities from the outset, including those previously found to be 'good'. If a local authority is judged to be 'inadequate' for overall effectiveness it will be subject to a full inspection within 12-18 months unless otherwise directed by the Secretary of State for Education.

Judgements will be on the expected four-point scale:

- Outstanding
- Good
- Requires improvement
- Inadequate

Two other frameworks have also been published for inspecting voluntary adoption agencies and independent fostering services. Both take immediate effect.

The ambition is clear – only 'good' is now good enough and this reflects the intention of the draft guidance that was released for consultation in June 2013 that 'good' is now the new minimum.

The protection of children and young people is a key judgement. Services that are less than 'good' will no longer be judged adequate, but to 'require improvement' until they meet the standard that children, young people and their families deserve and have a right to expect. The key test is the extent to which children's experiences are prioritised and the effectiveness of the help, protection and care that they receive.

As expected, inspectors will make three key judgements that cumulatively lead to a judgement on the overall effectiveness of services and arrangements. These are:

- the experiences and progress of children who need help and protection

- the experiences and progress of children looked after and achieving permanence
- leadership, management and governance – the focus of this is on DCS and Lead Member engagement and an effective HSCB, as well as engagement with Health & Wellbeing Board and other local partnerships

If a local authority is judged 'inadequate' in any of these three critical areas, it will automatically be judged 'inadequate' overall.

In addition, there will be graded judgements on:

- the experiences and progress for care leavers
- adoption.

Inspectors will evaluate the quality of plans for children's futures, the management and practice oversight of those plans to make them happen and the extent to which any delays are being swiftly reduced. They will also consider the quality of support and care for young people becoming independent and leaving the system, including the provision of safe and good housing, access to education, training and employment and the extent to which those individuals feel supported by their corporate parents.

Once this inspection framework has been launched, Ofsted will be working closely with partner inspectorates to establish the additional criteria required to evaluate and judge the contribution of health, police, probation and prison services in the help, care and protection of children and young people. This work will inform the development of a joint inspection of child protection and safeguarding arrangements to be led by Ofsted from 2015. These criteria will be subject to consultation during 2014.

Other Key Points to consider from the Guidance

- Intention is for concurrent inspections in areas where the Director of Children's Services holds statutory responsibility for more than one authority – significant implications for Halton and no indication of this prior to the launch of the final framework.
- Notification will be received one day before the lead inspector and small team of inspectors arrive on site to begin inspection.
- Rest of inspection team will be on site at the beginning of the week following local authority case auditing of files.
- Inspection Team – normally 7 inspectors, 6 will be experienced in Social Care, 1 in Education. The Team will be on site for about 11 working days.

- Where there are perceived weaknesses in multi-agency practice the relevant inspectorates will be notified and may decide to inspect in accordance with their statutory powers.
- The scope of the inspection is children and young people who are:
 - at risk of harm.
 - in need of protection and provided with a multi-agency child protection plan.
 - no longer needing a child protection plan but still require some help and support.
 - in need of Children's Social Care support but below the significant harm and looked after thresholds
 - missing from education or offered alternative provision
 - looked after
 - care leavers
- The guidance notes 3 key judgements and 3 graded judgements within paragraph 20 as per the consultation guidance. There is only detail on two graded judgement areas however, there is no detail on a graded judgement on the effectiveness of LSCB as expected, this is referred to only in the Leadership, Management and Governance section.

Appendices

The full Inspection Guidance is attached below, which also details the scope of Annex A



Framework and
evaluation schedule f

The frameworks and grade descriptors for the inspections of voluntary adoption agencies and independent adoption agencies are attached below



Adoption inspections of voluntary adoption of
Fostering inspections of independent foster

Mark Grady 25.9.13