

Halton's Vision for Children, Young People and Families:

Framework for the Inspection

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Last inspection

Inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers

Inspection date: 18 November 2014 - 10 December 2014

The overall judgement is that children's services require improvement

The authority is not yet delivering good protection and help for children, young people and families. It is Ofsted's expectation that, as a minimum, all children and young people receive good help, care and protection.²

The judgements on areas of the service that contribute to overall effectiveness are:

1. Children who need help and protection	Requires Improvement
2. Children looked after and achieving permanence	Good
2.1 Adoption performance	Good
2.2 Experiences and progress of care leavers	Good
3. Leadership, management and governance	Requires Improvement



A system, not a programme of inspections

- Annual self-evaluation of social work practice.
- An annual conversation with each local authority (LA).
- Focused visits on a potential area of improvement or strength.
- Standard or short inspection of each LA, depending on what we know (once in a three year period).
- Inadequate LAs continue to receive quarterly monitoring and a re-inspection through the SIF.



An inspection system

- ILACS (Inspecting Local Authority Children's Services) is a system, each feature informs how the other works.
- This means more frequent engagement between Ofsted inspectors and LAs (not always as part of an inspection).
- This is to catch LA's before they fall and help LA's avoid becoming inadequate.
- They believe more frequent contact will help to make inspections more efficient and less burdensome.

Local authority contact with Ofsted

Inadequate local authority	Requires improvement to be good local authority	Good or outstanding local authority
<p>Quarterly monitoring visits SIF or post-monitoring SIF Annual conversation Shared self-evaluation</p>	<p>Standard inspection (once in a three year period) Up to two focused visits in between inspections Possible JTAI (would replace a focused visit) Annual conversation Shared self-evaluation</p>	<p>Short inspection (once in a three year period) Up to two focused visits in between inspections Possible JTAI (would replace a focused visit) Annual conversation Shared self-evaluation</p>



Activity outside of inspection

Self-evaluation and annual engagement



Self-evaluation

- Ofsted have worked with the ADCS, SOLACE and LGA to devise guidance.
- No set format, but should be brief and answer three questions:
 - **What do you know about the quality and impact of social work practice with children and families in your authority?**
 - **How do you know it?**
 - **What are your plans to maintain or improve practice?**
- Should draw on existing documents and activity.
- Should reflect business as usual, not created for inspection.



Annual engagement meeting

- Discuss self-evaluation, data and intelligence.
- Honest and open conversation.
- Consider any future focused visit and how this might support the LA's improvement plans.
- No published 'outcome' – Ofsted will write to the DCS summarising the discussion.
- Ideally linked to self-evaluation – this does not have to be the same time each year.
- May be part of another meeting, but should allow sufficient time to discuss children's social care.

Focused visits - scope

- Five working days notice will be given of the visit
- Usually, two inspectors will be on site for two days
- The inspectors will make the final decision about the focused visit topic to be covered based on one or more of the following:
 - 1) a specific service area identified as an example of good or outstanding practice.
 - 2) specific service area identified as an area of improvement or an area where themes, trends and issues are identified.
 - 3) agreement between the inspectors and local authority that a specific focus will support the local authorities improvement journey.
 - 4) a decision is made to undertake a short programme in a particular area of service, which leads to a thematic overview.



Focused visit topics

Chosen from of the following:

- **The front door (iCART)** - decisions CP enquiries, emergency action, CiN assessments etc.
- **Children in need and those on a child protection plan** e.g. thresholds, step up/step down, quality of decisions etc.
- **Protection of vulnerable adolescents (contextual safeguarding)**
e.g. CSE, MFH, risks associated with gangs, radicalisation etc.
- **Children in Care** e.g. quality of matching, placement & decision making, experience and progress of disabled children in care etc.
- **Permanency planning and achieving permanence** e.g. return to birth family, adoption, special guardianship, long term care etc.
- **Care leavers** e.g. aged 16 & 17 and 18 to 25, accommodation, employment, education and training, transition etc.



Evaluation

In each of the focused visits, inspectors will evaluate the effectiveness of:

- Performance management
- Management oversight
- Supervision
- Quality assurance
- Continuous professional development of the workforce



Judgements and report

- No graded judgements LA receives a narrative letter identifying:
 - Strengths
 - Areas for improvement
- If Ofsted identify serious concerns, they will give unequivocal areas for **Priority Action**.
- That information will inform them of when to inspect and whether to use a standard or short inspection.



Standard inspections

- Five working days notice
- Inspectors will be on site for two weeks
- Inspection team usually consists of four social care inspectors. In addition, a social care regulatory inspector (on site for two days) and a schools inspector (on site for one day).
- Inspectors will be looking at:
 1. the extent of good practice across the service.
 2. the extent and impact of any areas for improvement where areas have been identified , the extent to
 3. which leaders and managers have a “grip” on the issue.



Inspector deployment

Small teams of inspectors working closely together inspect more efficiently:

- they spend less time reporting their findings to one another.
- all inspectors know and understand findings from across the inspection.
- they can challenge one another more effectively, closing lines of enquiry and arriving at robust judgements quickly.



Onsite activity

- Inspectors will spend most of their time looking at case files with social workers.
- They will talk to managers if their findings indicate a strength or concern that they need to triangulate further.
- They will hold regular keep-in-touch (KIT) meetings with the DCS. However.....
-they may ask the DCS to meet inspectors at the office where they are inspecting that day.



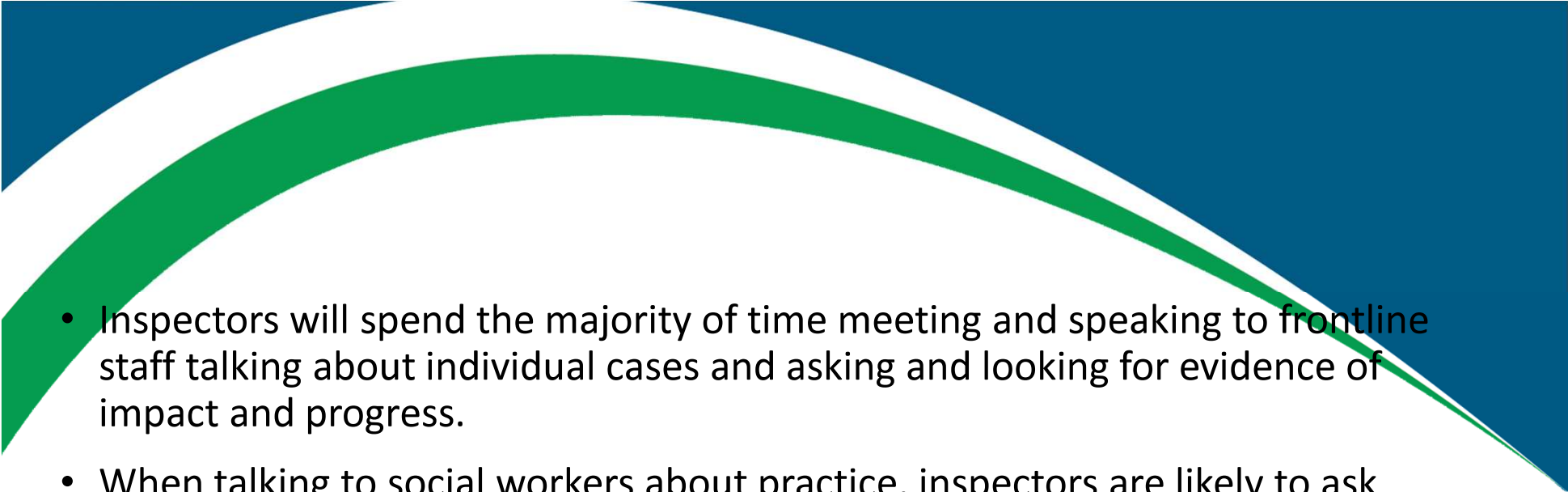
Managing expectations

- To make a proportionate programme work, inspectors must target their activity carefully.
- They will not be able to speak with everyone. They will focus on key lines of enquiry and where the emerging findings take them.
- Onsite activity will not routinely include set-piece meetings with the same list of people that happens on a Single Inspection Framework.
- Inspectors will prioritise activities that tell them about the quality of social work practice with children and families.



Why is this inspection different?

- Inspectors will start from the starting point of each individual child.
- Inspectors will be hearing the voice of children, young people and families and looking for evidence of their voices at every point.
- Inspectors will only request group meetings on rare occasions if and where the evidence leads them to do this.
- Whilst not a specific judgement, an inspector will be on site for two days, looking at evaluating the effectiveness of the recruitment, assessment, training and support for foster and adoptive carers.
- There will also be an inspector on site to evaluate the educational progress of children in care and care leavers.

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- Inspectors will spend the majority of time meeting and speaking to frontline staff talking about individual cases and asking and looking for evidence of impact and progress.
 - When talking to social workers about practice, inspectors are likely to ask questions about a range of issues, for example:
 - the quality of impact of supervision and management oversight.
 - the ways in which they are helped to strengthen families & minimise risk.
 - workloads and workload management.
 - availability, quality & impact of training & development opportunities.
 - the impact on practice through multi-agency training and the dissemination of learning from national or local learning reviews.



Overall judgement		
Key judgement: The impact of leadership on social work practice with children and families	Key judgement: The experiences and progress of children in need of help and protection	Key judgement: The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers
Narrative: How good leaders are at creating an environment where social work can flourish	Narrative Early help Children in need Children on a child protection plan	Narrative How well permanence is achieved (including adoption) Care leavers Making good decisions

- Overall and key judgements made on our four-point scale: outstanding, good requires improvement to be good, inadequate



Next steps

- Established ICYPB (Investing in Children and Young People's Board).
- JTAI (Joint Targeted Area Inspection) subgroup.
- Raising awareness of the new framework.
- Collectively undertake a self evaluation (strengths vs areas of development).
- Developing and co-producing a series of 'Thematic Briefings'.
- Revised Neglect Strategy (2017-19).
- Launch Children, Young People and Families Plan (2018-21).
- Launch of Children in Care and Care Leavers Strategy (2017-20).