

Updated OFSTED Handbook (December 2014)

On 12th December 2014 OFSTED produced an updated Inspection Handbook and a guide to the Changes made to the Handbook. These changes have been made following an ongoing evaluation of the Single Assessments of Local Authorities and to give clearer guidelines on how the Inspections are conducted. The addition of Annex M (pages 88 – 106) provides further transparency and clarity regarding the evidence the Inspectors are looking for in making their evaluation. The categories are:

- Key Threshold/Decision making points
- Young People who are homeless and aged 16/17
- Missing from Home or Care
- Missing from Education
- Children who are neglected or physically, sexually or emotionally abused
- Children at risk of being sexually exploited
- Domestic Abuse, parental substance misuse and mental ill health
- Looked After Children who live outside of the LA
- Educational Progress of children looked after
- Rights and Entitlements as a child or young person looked after or as a care leaver
- Waiting for Adoption and adoption scorecard thresholds
- In need of Adoption support services
- Recruitment, Retention and sufficiency in respect of foster carers
- How well leaders and managers know the strengths and weaknesses of the service and of front line practice
- Creating the right environment for social work to flourish
- Workloads
- Commissioning Arrangements
- Diversity within communities

Practitioners will find it helpful to look at this. I have attached a copy of the updated Handbook and Changes to this newsletter but I have also added a separate copy of Annex M for you to peruse.

OFSTED PREPARATION: Please look at Annex M and check this against your service. Please provide me with your comments at your earliest opportunity.

Early Help

OFSTED are clearly looking at the effectiveness of our Early Help Services – this includes Early Help for children and Young People of **all ages**.

A Definition of what constitutes “Early Help”

The Centre for Excellence provides the following definition of ‘Early Help’ and prevention:

- “Intervening as soon as possible to tackle problems as they emerge for children, young people and their families, or with populations at risk, to prevent problems from escalating. Early intervention may occur at any point in a child or young person’s life”

In addition, the Bath and North Somerset Early Help Offer identifies Early Help/Preventative and Pro-active services to be;

- a) Help at the critical early years of a child’s life, when the fundamental building blocks of future development are laid.
- b) Responding in a joined up way as soon as possible to when difficulties emerge throughout a child’s/young person’s life.
- c) Clear commitment to responding quickly at the point that need is identified, based on the assumption that early intervention offers the best chance of preventing the escalation of a concern/need.
- d) Support is a process and may occur at any point in the life of a child or young person.
- e) A preventative approach emphasises the value of building resilience within families, as well as acknowledging that active involvement and participation in decision making by families is key to ensuring the maximum level of engagement and addressing issues of equality.
- f) Representing the best opportunity to reduce demands on statutory services and provides the best value for money for the Council and its partners.

Care Leavers

In the latest 4 Ofsted Reports of the Inspections undertaken in September 2014 services to Care Leavers have been in the spotlight:

Local Authority	Overall Judgement	Care Leaver Judgement
Rotherham	Inadequate	Inadequate
Isle of Wight	Requires Improvement	Requires Improvement
Bristol	Requires Improvement	Inadequate
Rochdale	Requires Improvement	Inadequate

The experiences and progress of care leavers

Young people leaving care and preparing to leave care receive support and help to assist them in making a successful transition to adulthood. Plans for them to leave care are effective and address their individual needs. They are safe and feel safe, particularly where they live. Young people acquire the necessary level of skill and emotional resilience to successfully move towards independence. They are able to successfully access education, employment, training and safe housing. They enjoy stable and enduring relationships with staff and carers who meet their needs.

Specific consideration is being given to:

- The extent to which care leavers are prepared for independence and living in high-quality, safe, permanent and affordable accommodation that meets their needs.
- The overall suitability of accommodation for care leavers, including how many young people live in specific types of accommodation and whether or not it is suitable for their needs.
- The numbers in the local authority data page (for example, living in HMOs or in bed and breakfast) must be explained and evaluated in relation to statutory guidance.
- How effectively the local authority and partners prioritise the current and future accommodation needs of children looked after and care leavers, including their responses to complaints and feedback from care leavers about how safe they feel where they are living.
- The effectiveness of support to young people to achieve successful transitions into higher and further education, training and employment.
- The extent to which children looked after and care leavers are aware of, and receive, their rights and entitlements - reporting should be specific about individual entitlements if the level of awareness and access differs across the range of children and young people's rights.
- How well children and young people are enabled to negotiate how and when they receive their entitlements.

OFSTED Preparation

A number of people have asked me what they need to think about in respect of the B&NES Inspection so I have repeated some Top Tips here for practitioners to consider:

Take on board these 10 top tips for practitioners now:

- Be clear about the nature of your area of service, how it relates to other aspects of children's services and how it is impacting on children and young people.
- Be prepared to provide details of work you are undertaking to improve outcomes for children and young people including how they relate to key performance indicators
- Think of examples of how children and parents have been engaged, tools you have used to support children and parents to participate in assessments and the development and implementation of their plans
- Think of examples of where you have worked effectively with partner agencies in achieving positive outcomes for children
- Try to provide tangible examples, where possible, and be honest about any challenges faced by your area of service and how they are being tackled.
- Be prepared to share how our services are improving and how staff are being supported.
- All cases should be progressed in a timely manner and recording up to date.
- The Inspectors will look to ensure that staff are clear in their recordings relating to analysis of risk and protective factors.
- The Inspectors will look for evidence of direct work with children and its impact.
- Records should evidence child specific issues and should evidence clear managerial oversight and reflective practice.

Don't forget; this is your opportunity to shine and show what a good job you do for children and young people in Bath and North East Somerset.

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