

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

Inspection or the day job?

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Delivering the inspections



- 3 year universal programme – every authority will have one
- From April 2015 – Integrated Inspections with our partner inspectorates (CQC, HMIP, HMIC and HMI Prisons), a framework that ADDITIONALLY evaluates the contribution of core statutory partners to the care and protection of children.
- This will not replace the single inspection
- We (together with colleague inspectorates) will select a sample of authorities to visit. The existing Ofsted framework will be the spine of that inspection with additional criteria to assess the contribution of partners

What matters in this framework (1)?



- How well you do things and the difference you make – what evidence?
- How social workers and others work directly with families and manage the risks involved – how good is this work?
- The quality of your interventions in families, when risk remains or intensifies
- The quality of management oversight and decision making
- How well you help, protect and care for children in your statutory service
- How much you know about and the services you provide (with partners) for children living in violent homes, where there is drug or alcohol misuse or the mental ill health of a parent/carer

What matters in this framework (2) ?



- Leadership 'grip' – the line of sight
- Clear priorities, seeking and learning from feedback
- Accountabilities – particularly the LSCB and operational practice

Scope



- Children and young people who are receiving or who need **early help**
- Children and young people who are **referred** to the local authority and are **assessed** (or not)
- Children and young people who become the **subject of a child protection plan** or have been the subject of a plan and need continuing support
- Children who are receiving support through a **child in need** plan
- Children **looked after (with a plan for adoption, to return home, special guardianship or residence order, living with a foster family)** and children **accommodated**
- **Care leavers**

Some of the spotlight is on.....



- Children and young people missing from care and risks of sexual exploitation
- Children and young people missing from education
- The promotion of education and schooling for children who are looked after
- Children living out of the area
- The early help offer and assessment
- The quality of child protection plans and other plans – how long, why, what is changing?
- The role of child protection chairs
- Whether assessments are events or an engagement with families
- The quality of work with families where the plan is for children to return home
- The quality of care planning for children looked after/role of IRO
- The quality of housing and support for care leavers

The judgements we will make



- The **overall effectiveness** of services and arrangements for children who need help and protection, children looked after and care leavers.

A cumulative judgement derived from:

- **The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection**
- **The experiences and progress of children looked after and achieving permanence** including graded judgements:
 - Adoption
 - The experiences and progress of care leavers
- **Leadership, management and governance**

Children who are looked after



- **Two graded judgements within this key judgement – adoption and care leavers**
- They influence but are unlikely alone to trigger inadequacy
- Professional judgement and proportionality are key, moderated by the senior HMI
- Adoption – one option among many – statutory requirement for range of options to meet needs
- Care leavers – not a homogenous group – their journeys matter

The new framework – overview

- **Four point** judgement scale: inadequate – outstanding
- **'Requires improvement'** replaces adequacy
- Inadequate in any key judgement **limits overall effectiveness to inadequate**
- There is a qualifier **for 'leadership' in inadequate places**
- **Graded judgements influence** but are unlikely to 'limit alone'
- Review and graded judgement of **the effectiveness of the LSCB**

The evaluation schedule



- A summary judgement
- Quality of practice and the effectiveness of help are brought together
- How well? and what difference? are key questions
- For each judgement we **clearly define the characteristics of 'good'**
- We are **looking for 'good'** – where evidence **exceeds it is outstanding** and where 'good' is not yet in place, it will **require improvement**
- **Inadequate** is defined as **widespread or serious failings** in either protection or/and safeguarding and promoting the welfare of looked after children

Reflection time



The mechanics



The start of the inspection

- Tuesday – lead calls – sets up the inspection and LSCB review
- Outlines the information request and timeframes (annex A)
- Wednesday – lead and small team on site by 9am – case sampling information available by end of Wednesday
- 'Front door' focus and identifying children and young people living out of the authority area
- Friday – remainder of annex A with the lead – leave site by 2pm

Understanding children and young people's experiences



- We will ask you to audit the cases of 18 children and young people – *the experience of the child, family, carer and the effectiveness of your help counts for everything*
- We will track the experiences and quality of practice in the cases of at least 30 children and young people
- We will sample the experiences and quality of practice in the cases of at least 50 children and young people at key thresholds and within this specific groups/ages of children and young people
- This will mean a minimum of 80 children and young people and in larger authorities we will sample more

Children and young people who live out of their home area



- We want to understand how well children and young people who live out of the authority area are cared for and protected
- We will identify a minimum of two children and young people living in a children's home that is not in the local authority area
- We will work with the local authority and the home to ask for consent and to explain clearly to children the purpose of our contact
- An inspector will visit the children and young people during the course of the inspection to understand the plan for them, the quality of care, the help they are given and the oversight of the local authority

Fostering and adoption



- The new single inspection replaces the separate inspections of local authority fostering services and adoption agencies
- Part of the whole system – part of care planning
- Case tracking and sampling will take us to these services
- Recruitment, preparation, training, support for foster carers and prospective adopters
- Foster carers and prospective adopter case files
- Adoption support
- Interview panel chairs
- Meet foster carers – chair of the association or similar

Annex A



- This is **important** information you hold to **inform your understanding** of children and young people in your area
- We will use it to **understand the profile** of your local authority and to **identify the cohorts of children and young** people to **audit, track and sample** their experiences
- We will need additional **performance information** and **your best evidence** in the most important areas for the inspection
- We realise that you may **give** this in **different formats**

Methodology – what else?



- **Observations of practice**

- **Involving children, young people and families and carers**
 - Practice observation opportunities
 - Children in care council (must) / other accessible groups
 - Group of foster carers – open invite or existing group (must)
 - Continued importance of your own consultation work and impact

- **Talking to key stakeholders** – focus groups should be exceptional

- **Management oversight** – **purposeful, incisive**, regular, challenging, supportive, evaluative and leads to practice and decisions that are effective for the child/young person

The improvement and next steps meeting



Inspectors agree provisional judgement on Tuesday afternoon (Wk 4)

Meet with the DCS and **key others (4)** on Wednesday morning to:

- share the detail of the evidence that the team used to reach judgements
- take the opportunity to clarify any outstanding issues
- have a clear dialogue about the areas for improvement that are likely to follow the inspection.

Followed by formal feedback, with statutory partners, Lead Member, Leader and Chief Executive

Review of the Local Safeguarding Children Board



- s15 (A) Children Act 2004 – new power for HMCI
- Will happen in parallel with the inspection of the local authority and there will be an overall effectiveness judgement
- Same inspection methodology
- Single inspection and review can be undertaken independently of each other
- If an integrated inspection – will be informed by partner inspections

The report (1)

- Key threshold / decision-making points (including any emerging themes relating to specific age groups of children and young people e.g. very young children or primary aged children)
- Missing from home, care or education
- At risk of sexual exploitation
- Living out of the authority area
- Achieving the right permanence option
- Waiting for adoption
- In need of adoption support services
- How well leaders and managers know the strengths and weaknesses of their services and practice
- The quality and impact of your action planning
- The impact of commissioning arrangements

The report (2)

- Revised format
- Summarised key findings written for children and young people as well as the authority
- Areas for priority improvement and areas for development
- Key findings for each judgement area
- **Draft** within 15 working days of inspection
- Draft LSCB report sent to chair and partners
- Inspection and LSCB review reports published as one document following factual accuracy
- Copies to HMIC, HMI Probation, CQC, HMI Prisons, with letter from HMCI where there are concerns about particular professional practice

Getting it right



- We have worked to get this right – much of it was developed in collaboration with local authorities and LSCBs. Feedback from LAs is generally very positive about the inspection methodology.
- Increased quality assurance
- We are now running our improvement support programme with local authorities through Getting to Good seminars and regular dialogue with DCSs and senior leaders

And finally...



Top tips from one LA judged to be good:

- Articulate your visions and values
- Whole systems approach
- Unify theoretical models of evidence based practice social work
- Relentless focus on recruitment and the workforce
- Manageable workloads
- Small teams – know staff and families
- Service design minimised changes in worker etc
- Culture of dialogue/reflection
- Appraisal and system wide approach to improvement
- Appropriate practical support

Year One SIF: Emerging themes



Emerging themes from Single Inspection Framework (SIF) inspections

- The single inspection framework was introduced in November 2013
- 33 inspections have been completed to date
- Local authorities were prioritised if their last inspection was inadequate or conducted more than 3 years ago
- Only 2 LAs in the South West have been inspected



Overall judgments of the 33 inspections

- No local authority has been judged outstanding
- 9 have been judged to be good
- 18 have been found to require improvement
- 6 have been found inadequate

Outcomes of judgment areas

- In all judgment areas, requires improvement to be good is the most common outcome
- Outstanding judgments have been given three times – twice in adoption, once in leadership, management and governance
- 34 inadequate judgments given - majority within the context of a range of inadequate judgments within the same authority

Overall effectiveness



Judgment outcomes for Overall Effectiveness

- No authorities were judged as outstanding
- 9 authorities were judged to be good
- 18 required improvement
- 6 inadequate

The experiences and progress of
children who need help and
protection



The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection

- No authorities were found to be outstanding
- 9 authorities were judged to be good
- 18 required improvement to be good
- 6 inadequate

Emerging themes: When an authority is good

- A clear and well-understood early help strategy in place with effective step up/step down procedures
- Evidence of high quality services to the right families in need of early help support
- Good co-operation with partners and effective Team Around the Child/ Family processes

Emerging themes: When an authority is good

- Appropriate referrals are made to Children's Social Care as partners understand the thresholds well
- Good recognition of risk in cases, particularly at the front door
- High quality assessments and plans based on a good range of information, including relevant historic details and shared with families and other agencies
- Skilled workers have time to make meaningful relationships with children and families so that plans can be progressed and monitored effectively

Emerging themes: Common areas for action

- Improve the quality of assessments (15) and plans (16), particularly in considering levels of risk and use of historic information
- Improve management oversight on cases (15)
- Improve recording (10)
- Ensure that children are seen as part of the assessment (10)
- Ensure caseloads are manageable (8)

The experiences and progress of children
looked after and achieving permanence



The experiences of children looked after and achieving permanence

- No authorities were judged as outstanding
- 12 authorities were judged to be good
- 18 required improvement
- 3 inadequate

Emerging themes: When an authority is good

- Children come into care in a planned way
- Where children return home, good assessments and effective support means that few return to care subsequently
- Early decisions about permanence are made with good use of PLO and legal support
- High quality court reports based on clear evidence and relevant research

Emerging themes: When an authority is good

- A strong sufficiency strategy is in place so that provision of placements is responsive to local need
- Effective recruitment, training and support for foster carers means that children have carers who can respond to their needs
- Where children are placed out of the area, this is to meet their needs with effective communication with the local authority
- Children participate fully in plans for themselves and for the service

Emerging themes: When an authority is good

- IROs have time to get to know the children who they work with and ensure that their needs are met
- Educational needs are monitored well and additional support is available to help them reach their potential
- Health care needs are met with early access to mental health support
- Good processes in place to understand why children go missing and help them stay safe
- Children know their entitlements and are supporting in making complaints if they need to do so

Emerging themes: Common areas for action

- Improve the capacity/quality of the IRO service (18)
- Increase the number of foster carers, particularly for older children, those with complex needs or from a diverse cultural background (10)
- Improve the quality of health assessments and provision (10)
- Strengthen the quality of the educational support available (9)

Graded judgment: Adoption and achieving permanence

- 2 authorities were judged as outstanding
- 15 were good
- 13 required improvement to be good
- 3 were inadequate

Emerging themes: In a good or outstanding authority

- Speedy processing of applications from potential adopters with good training and support
- Timely decision-making, matching and placement, including effective work with courts
- Tenacity in finding the right placement for children, particularly those who are more difficult to place
- High quality and individualised adoption support, including those placed by other local authorities
- Alternative ways of achieving permanence are well-understood and used appropriately
- Clear and effective use of 'foster to adopt' arrangements, concurrent and parallel planning

Emerging themes: Common areas for action

Less specific areas for action but areas include

- Improve quality of information in reports
- Ensuring sufficient appropriate adoptive placements
- Improve quality of adoption support

Graded judgment: experience and progress of care leavers

- 13 authorities were judged as good
- 17 required improvement to be good
- 3 were inadequate

Emerging themes: In a good authority

- The local authority had high aspirations for young people, evident through supporting those at university, further education and high quality apprenticeships within the local authority and its partners. High quality housing options are available
- Young people are actively engaged with their pathways plans. These are clear, up-to-date and relevant to the lives of young people
- Care leavers are prepared well for independence and can 'stay put' with their foster carers if this is the best plan for them
- Social Workers/ PAs have good and sustained relationships with the young people

Emerging themes: Common areas for action

- Improve the quality of pathway plans (17)
- Improve outcomes for care leavers, including improving number going to university and increasing numbers in ETE
- Improve quality of accommodation, including better use of 'staying put' (11)
- Improve preparation for independence(4)

Leadership, management and governance



Leadership, management and governance

- 1 authority was judged as outstanding
- 11 were good
- 15 require improvement to be good
- 6 were inadequate

Emerging themes: In a good authority

- Leaders and managers know their services, the strengths and weaknesses of their workforce and the needs of their population they are able to facilitate improvements in frontline practice that enable children and families to receive the right help at the right time.
- Good quality data and information, targeted auditing, effective partnership working, and an understanding of population changes help leaders and managers to gain this knowledge.
- Highly effective recruitment and retention strategies which mean that there is a stable and skilled workforce

Emerging themes: In a good authority

- Leaders and managers, including partner agencies, have clarity in the strategic vision which is clear about what services need to be provided to whom, by which agency and by when. They are also clear about their priorities and what needs to improve in order for these to be achieved.
- Managers can support and challenge workers, ensuring that good assessments and plans lead to the provision of the right help at the right time.
- Feedback from those who have received or given help is used to ensure that data and information about services, staff and the population is up to date and continues to inform future planning and improvement.

Emerging themes: Common areas for action

- Improve quality assurance/ audit/performance management processes (15)
- More effective use of feedback from service users for action (9)
- Improve the stability and quality of the workforce through recruitment, training and retention processes (9)

Review of Local Safeguarding Children Boards



Summary of LSCB judgements (1)

The review of the LSCB is conducted alongside the inspection of the local authority

- No LSCB has been judged outstanding
- 11 LSCBs were found to be good
- 15 were judged to require improvement
- 7 were found to be inadequate

Summary of LSCB judgements (2)

- In all cases where the local authority was judged good the LSCB was also found to be good
- In all cases where the local authority was judged to be inadequate the LSCB was also found inadequate
- In one case where the local authority was found to require improvement the LSCB was found inadequate

Emerging themes: LSCBs judged to be good (1)

- Clear and effective governance arrangements, established protocols between the LSCB, H&W board, children's trusts
- Effective communication and arrangements in place between the LSCB chair, DCS and Chief Executive to hold each other to account
- Audit activity - systematic with evidence of impact on the quality of frontline practice
- There is a culture of challenge. Multi-agency data includes analysis/commentary and supports challenge to influence/improve services

Emerging themes: LSCBs judged to be good (2)

- The LSCB will be knowledgeable about the local situation in relation to children and young people at risk of sexual exploitation or who are at risk from being missing
- Strategic plans will be in place with good multi-agency arrangements to share information
- The LSCB will ensure training is in place and awareness raising with children and young people, parents and professionals is in place
- The LSCB will challenge agencies about their responses to these issues when necessary

Emerging themes: LSCBs judged to be good (3)

- Clear processes to initiate SCRs and other reviews. Reviews are timely and action plans are monitored for their implementation. Effective systems are in place to disseminate learning to managers and practitioners which influences practice
- A good range of training, responsive to emerging issues e.g. SCRs, agencies committed to take up. The quality and impact of training is evaluated
- Annual reports are comprehensive, demonstrate knowledge of strengths and challenges, are analytical and able to describe the impact of the work of the Board

Emerging themes: LSCBs judged to be inadequate (1)

- Ineffective governance arrangements
- No, or ineffective, arrangements to evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements and a resulting lack of awareness of weaknesses in the system
- No performance data, or limited data, lacking analysis. No evidence of the LSCB using data to effect change or improvement in services. Data often heavily focused on social care

Emerging themes: LSCBs judged to be inadequate (2)

- SCRs not undertaken when required, or not completed in a timely manner. Learning is not captured well, not disseminated to staff and/or does not influence practice
- Annual reports are incomplete, descriptive and do not sufficiently, if at all, demonstrate an understanding of the strengths and challenges and fail to analyse impact of the Board's work

Emerging themes: common areas for improvement (1)

- Compliance with statutory guidance, membership, constitution, roles and responsibilities of Board members
- Establish or strengthen relationships with other strategic bodies
- Early help – ensure partners understand their roles and are engaged
- Early help - monitor and evaluate the quality of early help

Emerging themes: LSCBs areas for improvement (2)

- Development and use of data
- Strengthen the climate of challenge
- Annual report – should be analytical and reflect progress priorities, strengths, challenges and the impact of the work of the Board
- Influence of children and young people on the work of the Board

In conclusion

LSCBs that are found to be good exhibit many of the same features of good LAs.

There are clear visible leadership arrangements, members understand their roles, challenge is welcomed and the experience of children and young people in the area is well understood.

Good LSCBs can demonstrate impact of their work on improving services and the experience of children and young people.

Any questions?

