



Rt Hon Nadhim Zahawi MP

Secretary of State

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www.education.gov.uk/contactus/dfe

Amanda Spielman
Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, Ofsted

8 December 2021

Dear Amanda,

Ofsted to register and inspect providers of supported accommodation for looked-after children and care leavers aged 16 and 17

As you are aware, it is a priority for the Department to ensure that all looked after children and care leavers live in homes that meet their needs and keep them safe. Anything less is unacceptable. Reforming currently unregulated independent and semi-independent provision – to be renamed supported accommodation for young people moving forwards – is critical in this endeavour and I am writing to you to seek your continued support as we deliver this important programme of reform together.

Following the Chancellor's announcement at the Spending Review, I have today published the Government's response to our consultation earlier this year which confirms that we will be proceeding with the introduction of mandatory national standards, and an Ofsted-led registration and inspection regime for providers of supported accommodation for looked after children and care leavers aged 16 & 17. These reforms received strong support through our public consultation, including our consultation aimed at care experienced young people and through our focus groups.

We are pursuing this instead of a setting-level registration and inspection regime. I believe that a provider-level approach will deliver rigorous and proportionate regulation while retaining the flexibility of the provider market to respond to the needs of young people and ensuring that settings are focussed on preparing young people for independence and leaving care. I know that Ofsted is also in favour of a providerlevel registration and inspection regime for this type of provision. I know that our officials have worked closely together on the development of these policy reforms so far. This will only increase in importance as we move into the implementation and

delivery phase of this work. As set out in the Government's consultation response, we will work together to deliver the following:

1. The Department will publish the national standards on a 'for information' basis early next year, ahead of laying the regulations for the standards and the registration and inspection framework in Summer 2022. The standards will be subject to final changes, but early publication will enable the provider base to begin implementation and prepare for registration.
2. Ofsted will develop the registration and inspection framework and begin registering providers from April 2023. This framework will be based on providers registering with Ofsted, and Ofsted inspecting providers and visiting a sample of the settings they operate, over a reasonable timeframe that is proportionate to this type of provision. I ask that you work closely with my officials as you design this framework.
3. Ofsted will begin registering providers from April 2023. National standards will become mandatory from Autumn 2023 following a registration window that lasts for a minimum of six months. This will allow sufficient time for providers to register before standards become mandatory.
4. Ofsted will begin piloting inspections during 2023, and expect will implement the framework for inspections of supported accommodation in April 2024

I know that we are embarking on the implementation of a new regulatory regime for a provider base that has previously had little to no involvement with a national regulator. We must therefore use the time we have effectively, balancing the need for swift rollout of the reforms to improve children's lives, with the need to deliver these changes in a way that is manageable for providers and local authorities. To support providers in the implementation of the reforms I have announced that we will provide up to £1.25m to commission the delivery of a provider market awareness and preparedness programme focussed on readying the sector for the reforms. My Department will announce the details of this in due course and invite interested parties to bid for the work.

I recognise that there is a great deal to deliver over the coming months. Working with the Department, Ofsted will need to consider amongst other things:

- How representative samples of settings will be selected for visits.
- How Ofsted will apply the rating system to inspections and how this interacts with settings and providers.
- How often providers and settings need to register and be inspected by Ofsted.
- The fees, set by my Department and charged by Ofsted for registration and how often these need to be renewed.
- How the framework can be flexible enough to enable the broad range of provision in the sector to operate whilst ensuring there is a strong response to poor provision.

As the Chancellor confirmed at the Spending Review, I have secured over £17million of investment to support Ofsted to deliver on these changes over the course of the Spending Review period – from April 2022 to March 2025. This funding should be used by Ofsted to build capacity and capability to deliver the reforms and begin

administering the new system in line with the regulatory responsibilities Ofsted will be given to do this.

I want Ofsted and the Department to work collaboratively on this, sharing intelligence, expertise and challenging each other where required.

I truly believe that through this reform programme, together we can deliver lasting change, levelling up the care system for vulnerable young people in this country.

I am grateful for all of the support you and your officials have provided so far, and I look forward to continuing to work with you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N. Zahawi', with a large loop under the 'Z' and a dot at the end of the line.

Rt Hon Nadhim Zahawi MP
Secretary of State for Education