

# Framework and evaluation schedule for the inspections of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers

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This document sets out the framework for the inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers.

These inspections are conducted under section 136 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. They focus on the effectiveness of local authority services and arrangements to help and protect children, the experiences and progress of children looked after, including adoption, fostering, the use of residential care, and children who return home. The framework also focuses on the arrangements for permanence for children who are looked after and the experiences and progress of care leavers. The leadership, management and governance judgement addresses the effectiveness of leaders and managers and the impact they have on the lives of children and young people and the quality of professional practice locally.

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## Section 1. Inspection of local authority children's services

### Introduction

1. This document sets out the framework for the inspection of local authority children's services.
2. Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI)<sup>1</sup> will carry out the inspections under section 136 (2) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 (EIA). Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) has the power to carry out inspections of certain local authority children's services functions as listed in section 135 of the EIA if he deems it appropriate. These inspections focus on the local authority functions with regard to the help, care and protection of children and young people.
3. This framework was amended with effect from September 2015 to take account of arrangements where local authority functions have been delegated to a third party provider.<sup>2</sup> The amendments clarify what is expected of a third party provider acting as agent for a local authority and the ongoing responsibility of the local authority.
4. Where all or part of a local authority's functions have been delegated to a third party provider, the inspection is still an inspection of the local authority – the third party is acting as agent for the local authority. Where the Secretary of State has given a direction for any or all of a local authority's functions to be delegated, any reference to a local authority is to be read as a reference to the person by whom the function is exercised. Further information about what the law says is outlined in Annex B.
5. The grade descriptors for the judgements: 'The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection', 'The experiences and progress of children looked after and achieving permanence' and 'The experiences and progress of care leavers' have been amended to reflect arrangements where functions have been delegated to a third party provider.
6. This evaluation schedule remains subject to periodic review.

### Frequency of inspection

7. We re-inspect local authorities using this framework if they were previously judged to inadequate under this framework.

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<sup>1</sup> Or suitable qualified and approved associate or seconded inspectors.

<sup>2</sup> References in this framework to functions which have been delegated are references to functions which are delegated by local authorities under section 1 of the Children and Young Persons Act 2008 or pursuant to a direction by the Secretary of State given under section 497A (4) of the Education Act 1996. See Annex B for further information.

8. Where a Director of Children's Services holds the statutory responsibility as set out in the Children Act 2004 for more than one authority, the inspection of each authority will be concurrent wherever possible.

## Notice period

9. All inspections will be announced at short notice.<sup>3</sup> The local authority will be notified that the lead inspector and a small team of inspectors will be arriving on site the following day to begin the inspection. The remainder of the team will arrive on site at the beginning of the week following the local authority case auditing of files. Further details can be found in the *Inspection handbook: inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers*. The local authority will be asked to prepare the list of information included at Annex A.
10. Inspections will only be deferred in exceptional circumstances. Staff absence, including the absence of the Director of Children's Services, is not a reason for deferral.

## Report

11. We will publish a report on our website within 35 working days<sup>4</sup> of the end of the on-site inspection.

## Action plan

12. The local authority is required to prepare and publish a written statement of the action it intends to take in response to the report. It should send a copy of this statement to Ofsted at [ProtectionOfChildren@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:ProtectionOfChildren@ofsted.gov.uk) within 70 working days of receiving the final report.<sup>5</sup>

## Inspection team

13. Usually, seven suitably qualified and experienced HMI will carry out the inspection. Six inspectors will be experienced in both the delivery and inspection of social care; one will be experienced in the inspection of education provision. The inspection team will normally be on site for nine working days. In larger local authorities, an extra social care inspector will usually be added to the team.

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<sup>3</sup> To plan inspections, Ofsted will maintain a list of the number and location of office addresses where arrangements for dealing with contacts, referrals and assessments are undertaken.

<sup>4</sup> A full timeline can be found in the *Inspection handbook: inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers*, Ofsted, 2013; [www.gov.uk/government/publications/inspecting-services-for-children-in-need-of-help-and-protection-children-looked-after-and-care-leavers-and-reviews-of-local-safeguarding-children-boa--2](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inspecting-services-for-children-in-need-of-help-and-protection-children-looked-after-and-care-leavers-and-reviews-of-local-safeguarding-children-boa--2).

<sup>5</sup> The Education and Inspections Act 2006 (Inspection of Local Authorities) Regulations 2007; [www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2007/462/contents/made](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2007/462/contents/made).

## Sharing information with other inspectorates

14. Where inspection evidence suggests that there are weaknesses in multi-agency practice, the relevant inspectorates will be notified and may decide to inspect in accordance with their statutory powers. This will be clearly identified in the report and shared with the relevant inspectorate at pre-publication stage using section 149 and schedule 13, paragraph 8 of the EIA. If an authority is judged to be inadequate, the relevant inspectorate will be invited to attend the Ofsted-led improvement challenge seminar.

## The scope of the inspection

15. The children and young people<sup>6</sup> within the scope of this inspection are:
- those children and young people at risk of harm (but who have not yet reached the 'significant harm' threshold) and for whom a preventative service would provide the help that they and their family need to reduce the likelihood of that risk of harm escalating and reduce the need for statutory intervention<sup>7</sup>
  - those children and young people referred to the local authority, including those for whom urgent action has to be taken to protect them; those subject to further assessment;<sup>8</sup> and those subject to child protection enquiries
  - those who become the subject of a multi-agency child protection plan setting out the help that will be provided for them and their families to keep them safe and to promote their welfare
  - those children and young people who have been assessed as no longer needing a child protection plan, but who may have continuing needs for help and support
  - those children and young people who are receiving (or whose families are receiving) social work services where there are significant levels of concern about children's safety and welfare, but these have not reached the significant harm threshold or the threshold to become looked after
  - those children and young people who are missing from education or being offered alternative provision

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<sup>6</sup> This includes unborn children.

<sup>7</sup> These children may be known by any person with a duty under section 11 of the Children Act 2004; section 40 of the Childcare Act 2006; section 175 or 157 of the Education Act 2002; section 55 of the Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009; a member of the Local Safeguarding Children Board; a person associated with a commissioned service, including local voluntary services.

<sup>8</sup> This includes children subject to private fostering arrangements.

- those children and young people looked after either by being accommodated<sup>9</sup> under section 20 or those 'in care' during or as a result of proceedings under section 31 of the Children Act 1989 and those accommodated through the police powers of protection and emergency protection orders
- those children aged 16 or 17 who are preparing to leave care and qualify as 'eligible';<sup>10</sup> those aged 16 or 17 who have left care and qualify as 'relevant';<sup>11</sup> those young people aged 18 and above and qualify as 'former relevant';<sup>12</sup> and those young people aged 18 to 25 who qualify as 'former relevant children pursuing further education or training'<sup>13</sup> including those children living in homes of multiple occupation
- those children and young people who have left care to return home, or are living with families under a special guardianship order, child arrangements<sup>14</sup> order or adoption order.

## Inspection activity<sup>15</sup>

### 16. Inspectors will:

- evaluate and explore a sample of children's cases in order to judge the quality of front-line practice and management and the difference this makes to the lives of children, young people, their families and carers – this will include discussions with social work staff, including their managers and other professionals working with the child or young person
- test the decision-making at all stages of a child's journey: early help; referral and assessment; children in need; child protection planning; continuing

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<sup>9</sup> This includes children and young people who are detained; unaccompanied child migrants or asylum seekers.

<sup>10</sup> Defined in paragraph 19B of Schedule 2 to the Children Act 1989; [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/schedule/2](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/schedule/2), and regulation 40 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010; [www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/959/contents/made](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/959/contents/made).

<sup>11</sup> Defined in section 23A(2) of the Children Act 1989; [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/section/23A](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/section/23A).

<sup>12</sup> Defined in section 23C(1) of the Children Act 1989; [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/section/23C](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/section/23C).

<sup>13</sup> Defined in section 23CA(1) of the Children Act 1989 as a former relevant child in relation to whom the duties in 23C(2)(3) and (4) no longer apply, and s/he has informed the local authority that he wants to pursue or is pursuing a programme of education or training.

<sup>14</sup> Residence and Contact Orders made under section 8 of the Children Act 1989 were replaced by Child Arrangements orders through the Children and Families Act 2014; [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/6/contents/enacted](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/6/contents/enacted)

<sup>15</sup> Full details of the inspection methodology can be found in the *Inspection handbook: inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers*, Ofsted, 2013; [www.gov.uk/government/publications/inspecting-services-for-children-in-need-of-help-and-protection-children-looked-after-and-care-leavers-and-reviews-of-local-safeguarding-children-boa--2](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inspecting-services-for-children-in-need-of-help-and-protection-children-looked-after-and-care-leavers-and-reviews-of-local-safeguarding-children-boa--2).

support; the decision to remove a child from home; permanence planning; placement decisions, including work to support return home; leaving care

- meet with children, young people, parents and carers
- shadow staff in their day-to-day work, for example observing practice in the duty team, the work of social workers with children and families and the work of independent reviewing officers
- observe practice in multi-agency meetings such as child protection strategy meetings, child protection conferences, looked after children reviews and resource panels.

17. We will request specific information from the local authority to inform the inspection and inspection judgements as outlined in Annex A. Full details of the inspection methodology are available in the *Inspection handbook: inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers*.

## The judgements inspectors will make

18. Inspectors will make the following judgements:

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

The overall effectiveness judgement is 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 on:
  - adoption performance
  - the experiences and progress of care leavers
- leadership, management and governance.

## Making judgements

19. The following paragraphs set out the characteristics of a good service for all judgements. Inspectors will use these criteria to evaluate the experiences of children, young people and families and the services they receive. Inspectors will make a judgement of 'good' where the characteristics set out are widespread and common practice and are demonstrably leading to improved outcomes. Inspectors will use professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings. When considering the effectiveness and impact of arrangements to help, protect and care for children and young people, inspectors will use the descriptors of 'good' as the benchmark against which to grade performance. A judgement of 'good' will be made, where the

inspection team concludes that the evidence overall sits most appropriately with a finding of 'good'. This is what Ofsted describes as 'best fit'.

20. Inspectors will make their judgements on a four-point scale:
  - outstanding
  - good
  - requires improvement
  - inadequate
21. In addition, they will identify areas of outstanding practice and priorities for improvement. For all children and young people the expectation is that help, care and protection are sensitive and responsive to age, disability, ethnicity, faith or belief, gender, gender identity, language, race and sexual orientation.

## **Grading judgements**

22. One of the four performance grades described above will be assigned to each of the three key judgements and the two graded judgements. The overall effectiveness judgement is derived from performance in each of the three key judgements, taking account of performance in each of the graded judgements. Inspectors will use both evidence and their professional judgement to award the overall effectiveness grade. The experiences of children, young people, their families and carers, the extent to which their lives improve and the quality of professional practice, management and leadership will provide the most significant evidence for the judgements to be made.
23. Widespread or serious failure resulting in harm or continued risk of harm to children and young people, in either the arrangements to protect or look after them, will always result in an overall effectiveness judgement of inadequate. In most cases it is also likely that if either the effectiveness of child protection or the effectiveness of provision for looked after children is inadequate, the leadership judgement is likely to be judged inadequate.
24. In exceptional cases it may be possible for an overall judgement of inadequacy to be given where inspectors judge the quality of leadership, management and governance to be good or requiring improvement. In these instances, leaders and managers will have demonstrated sufficient understanding of the widespread or serious failure and will have also been effective in prioritising, challenging and making sustained improvement. This will be acknowledged and reported by inspectors, though the overall judgement will remain inadequate because of the limiting nature of inadequacy in protecting or looking after children. In these instances, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector will consider the evidence and moderate the leadership judgement accordingly.



25. The graded judgements describe significant and statutory aspects of provision for looked after children, care leavers and leadership. The performance and effectiveness of these services heavily influence the key judgement of which they are a part. For these judgements, however, inadequate performance, while unacceptable and serious, will not automatically limit (as is the case for the key judgements) the local authority to overall inadequacy. They will influence the key judgement to which they relate and in some instances where they are judged inadequate, the significance may be such that the key judgement is held at inadequate, thereby limiting the overall effectiveness judgement to inadequate.
26. Again in these instances, inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the significance of inadequacy in the context of local authority performance across its span of responsibility for children, young people, carers and families. The factors that they will take into account will include the seriousness and extent of concerns and the number of children and young people on whom the poor performance has a direct and negative impact.

## Overall effectiveness

27. In an **outstanding**<sup>16</sup> local authority:
  - Direct work with children, young people and families is of the highest quality and is delivering measurably improved outcomes. For some children and families, their progress exceeds expectations.
  - Inspirational, confident, ambitious and influential leadership changes the lives of local children, young people and families, including children who are looked after and those who have left or who are leaving care. Leaders are visible and effective. They innovate and promote creative ideas to sustain the highest-quality services, including early help services, for all children and young people.
  - Professional relationships between the local authority and partner organisations and commissioned service providers are mature and well developed. Accountabilities are embedded and result in confident, regular evaluation and improvement in the quality of help, care and protection that is provided.
  - The local authority is proactive and accurate in identifying and responding to the changing needs of its local communities and the performance of its services and staff. Change and improvement are consistently and effectively implemented and reviewed for their impact. Children, young people and

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<sup>16</sup> The characteristics of a good local authority must be met **in addition** to those describing an outstanding authority.

families clearly benefit from improvements that are made and the impact of their feedback is well evidenced.

- Effective and continuous learning improves professional practice. This is sustained over time. Professional challenge and leadership ambition inspire high-quality work with families that helps, protects and promotes the welfare of all children and young people, particularly those who are most vulnerable.
- The views and experiences of children, young people and their families are at the centre of service design and influence development and strategic thinking.

28. In a **good** local authority:

- Children and young people are protected, the risks to them are identified and managed through timely decisions and the help provided reduces the risk of, or actual, harm to them.
- Children and young people looked after, those returning home and those moving to or living in permanent placements outside of their immediate birth family have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.<sup>17</sup> Children and young people are helped to live in permanent homes or families without unnecessary delay. The development of safe, stable and secure relationships with adults is central to planning for their futures and this supports the development of secure attachments that persist over time and wherever they are living.
- Young people leaving care or who have left care receive help and support tailored to their individual needs and comparable with that which their peers would receive from a reasonable parent. They are provided with opportunities, support and help to enable them to move successfully to adulthood.
- Leadership, management and governance arrangements deliver strong, strategic local leadership that measurably improves outcomes for vulnerable children. The local authority works with partners to plan and deliver early help, to protect children and young people, to improve educational attainment and narrow the gap for the most disadvantaged and it acts as a strong and effective corporate parent for children looked after and those leaving or who have left care.
- There is a clear and up-to-date strategy for commissioning and developing services and there are sufficient resources to meet the needs of children and young people in the local authority area. Leaders, both professional and political, drive continuous improvement so that the local authority is

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<sup>17</sup> Children Act 1989, section 17; [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/section/17](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/section/17).

consistently effective as both the lead agency for the protection and care of children and as a corporate parent.

29. In a local authority that **requires improvement**:

- There are no widespread or serious failures that create or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm. The welfare of looked after children is safeguarded and promoted. However, the authority is not yet delivering good protection, help and care for children, young people and families.

30. In a local authority that is **inadequate**:

- There are widespread or serious failures that create or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm and/or the welfare of looked after children is not safeguarded and promoted.
- A judgement of inadequate is likely to be made if **any of the following are judged inadequate**:
  - 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.

## Key judgement: The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection

**Children and young people who are, or who are likely to be, at risk of harm or who are the subject of concern are identified and protected. Help is provided early in the emergence of a problem and is well coordinated and recorded through multi-agency arrangements. Thresholds between early help and statutory child protection work are appropriate, understood and operate effectively. Records of action and decision are clear and up to date. Children and young people are listened to and heard. Social workers build effective relationships with them and their families in order to assess the likelihood of, and capacity for, change. Risk is well understood, managed and regularly reviewed. Children and young people experience timely and effective multi-agency help and protection through risk-based assessment, authoritative practice, planning and review that secures change.**

31. A local authority is likely to be judged good if:

- Children and young people are listened to, practice is focused on their needs and experiences and influenced by their wishes and feelings or, where they cannot represent their view themselves, those advocated on their behalf. They are consistently seen and seen alone by social workers where statutory guidance requires that this should happen and it is professionally judged to be in the best interests of the child. (*Evaluation schedule number (ESN) 01*)<sup>18</sup>
- Children, young people and families benefit from stable and meaningful relationships with social workers. They are engaged in all actions and decisions and understand the intentions of the help they receive. Where families refuse to engage there are continued attempts to help them to do so. However, where there are concerns about the safety and protection of children and parents do not engage, there is a full risk assessment and urgent involvement of a senior manager in all decisions about next steps. (*ESN 02*)
- Children, young people and families are offered help when needs and/or concerns are first identified and, as a consequence of the early help offered, children's circumstances improve and, in some cases, the need for targeted

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<sup>18</sup> The *evaluation schedule numbers* (ESN) are a referencing system to support inspectors when they record their findings in evidence records. **ESN 01** refers to the first characteristic for a good service in the local authority key judgement *the experiences and progress of children who need help and protection*. The bullet points in the framework are numbered sequentially thereafter. The numbering excludes the bullet points that describe a service that is outstanding, requires improvement or is inadequate.

services is lessened or avoided. The interface between early help and statutory child protection work is clearly and effectively differentiated. *(ESN 03)*

- Information-sharing between agencies and professionals is timely, specific and effective and takes full account of the requirements set out in legislation and guidance about the need to obtain parental consent for enquiries to be made, except where in seeking that consent a child is likely to suffer significant harm or further harm. *(ESN 04)*
- Children and young people in need of help and protection are identified by professionals, including those in adult services, and appropriate referrals are made to children's social care. Social work expertise and advice is available to support other professionals in determining the best steps to take next. There is a timely and effective response to referrals,<sup>19</sup> including out of normal office hours. *(ESN 05)*
- Thresholds<sup>20</sup> for intervention accord with the requirements of legislation, are appropriate, understood by partners, consistently applied, well embedded, reviewed and updated regularly. Drift and delay are avoided. *(ESN 06)*
- Children and young people receive help that is proportionate to risk; children and families are not routinely subjected to formal child protection investigations if these are not necessary. *(ESN 07)*
- Child protection enquiries are thorough and timely, informed by a decision made in a strategy meeting, except in emergencies where there must be evidence of immediate risk of harm to a child, and always led by a suitably qualified and experienced registered social worker. Findings in relation to significant harm are clear and result in urgent action to protect children and young people. *(ESN 08)*
- Decision-making is undertaken by suitably qualified and experienced social workers and managers, with decisions, all actions and engagement with the family and other professionals clearly recorded. *(ESN 09)*
- For children who need help and protection, assessments (including common or early help assessments) are timely, proportionate to risk, and informed by research and by the historical context and significant events for each case. They result in direct work with families, develop in response to that direct work, and they address all domains of the local framework for assessment. Senior managers have responsibility for authorising the recommended next steps. *(ESN 10)*

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<sup>19</sup> This includes referrals to the Local Authority Designated Officer.

<sup>20</sup> Children Act 1989; [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents) and *Working together to safeguard children*, Department for Education, 2013; [www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children). This includes children covered by the Southwark Judgement.

- Assessments<sup>21</sup> (including children in need assessments) result in a direct offer of help to address any identified needs. Assessments and plans are dynamic and change in the light of emerging issues and risks. Authoritative action is taken where change is not secured and the risk to children intensifies or remains. *(ESN 11)*
- Children in need have a plan setting out the help that is offered. Children and young people who need protection are subject to a child protection plan that clearly identifies the work that will be offered to help the family and the necessary changes to be achieved within appropriate timescales for the child or young person. Social workers engage with the family who understand the help they will receive, what has to change and the options for the future. *(ESN 12)*
- Plans and decisions are reviewed and alternative authoritative action is taken where the circumstances for children do not change and the risk of harm or actual harm remains or intensifies. *(ESN 13)*
- Children and young people are protected through effective multi-agency arrangements. Case conferences, strategy meetings, core groups and multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARAC)<sup>22</sup> are attended by key participants and are effective forums for timely information-sharing, planning and risk-based decision-making. *(ESN 14)*
- Children and young people who live in households where at least one parent or carer misuses substances or suffers from mental ill-health, or where there is domestic violence, are helped and protected. Incidents are monitored and multi-agency responses are effective and coordinated between agencies, including management through MARAC. *(ESN 15)*
- Children and young people who are missing from home, care<sup>23</sup> or full-time school education<sup>24</sup> and those at risk of sexual exploitation and trafficking receive well-coordinated responses that reduce the harm or risk of harm to them. Risks are well understood and minimised. Local authorities, schools and local police are aware of, and implement in full, the requirements of the statutory guidance for children and young people who are missing.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Assessments and local protocols for assessments should be in line with *Working together to safeguard children*.

<sup>22</sup> Multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARACs) are meetings where information about high-risk domestic abuse victims (those at risk of murder or serious harm) is shared between local agencies. By bringing all agencies together at a MARAC, a risk-focused, coordinated safety plan can be drawn up to support the victim and their child/ren.

<sup>23</sup> This refers both to local authorities' responsibility for all of their own looked after children, whether they live within or out of the local area, **and** their responsibility as a host authority with a duty to safeguard and promote welfare for children and young people living in the local area.

<sup>24</sup> The authority has arrangements in place to identify the number of children not in full-time school education and to respond where there are concerns about their welfare.

<sup>25</sup> *Interim guidance on the management, recording and investigation of missing persons*, Association of Chief Police Officers, 2013; [www.safecic.co.uk/news/348-misper](http://www.safecic.co.uk/news/348-misper), and *Statutory guidance on*

Comprehensive records are held and shared between agencies to help and protect children and young people. Together they take steps to ensure that all children, including those who are excluded from school, are safe and that for those who are missing or often missing there is a clear plan of urgent action in place to protect them and to reduce the risk of harm or further harm.<sup>26</sup> (ESN 16)

- Children and young people who are privately fostered are identified by the local authority, in conjunction with partners. Once they are identified, the local authority discharges in full its statutory responsibility to ensure that they are safe and that their health and well-being are properly promoted. (ESN 17)
- Allegations of abuse, mistreatment or poor practice by professionals and carers are taken seriously. Steps are taken to protect children and young people and the management of allegations is robust and effective. (ESN 18)
- Practice is informed by feedback from children and their families about the effectiveness of the help, care or support they receive from the time it is first needed until it ends. (ESN 19)
- Children, young people and families have timely access to, and use the services of, an advocate where appropriate. (ESN 20)
- Help and protection for children and young people is sensitive and responsive to age, disability, ethnicity, faith or belief, gender, gender identity, language, race and sexual orientation. (ESN 21)
- Where protection and support is provided by a third party provider to which statutory functions have been delegated, children and young people receive the same high quality services that they could expect from the social work service provided directly by a local authority. (ESN 88)<sup>27</sup>

## Outstanding

- 'The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection' is likely to be judged outstanding if, in addition to meeting the requirements of a 'good' judgement, there is evidence that professional practice exceeds the standard of 'good' and results in sustained improvement to the lives of children, young people and their families. Research-informed practice, some

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*children who run away and go missing from home or care;*

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-who-run-away-or-go-missing-from-home-or-care](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-who-run-away-or-go-missing-from-home-or-care).

<sup>26</sup> Inspectors will make enquiries about local practice in respect of responses to children who are absent as well as those who are missing. Where this is not robust, consistent or focused on the need to protect children and young people, this will be evidenced in the inspection report and will directly influence the judgement.

<sup>27</sup> Evaluation scheduled number 88 is numbered out of sequence intentionally as this is a new criteria added to this framework in September 2015).

of which will be innovative, continues to develop from a strong and confident base, making an exceptional difference to the lives and experiences of children and young people.

### **Requires improvement**

- 'The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection' is likely to 'require improvement' if there are no widespread or serious failures that create or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm. However, the authority is not yet delivering good help and protection for children, young people and families.

### **Inadequate**

- 'The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection' is likely to be inadequate if there are widespread or serious failures which leave children being harmed or at risk of harm.



## Key judgement: The experiences and progress of children looked after and achieving permanence

**Decisions about children and young people becoming looked after are made using high-quality assessments about the risk of harm or actual harm to them and the likelihood of change in their family. Thresholds are clear and applied appropriately. Children and young people are listened to by social workers who know them well. Adults working with children and young people help them to understand and manage their early childhood experiences, to progress well and achieve educationally, and to influence decisions about their future. They return home with the support they need and when it is safe for them. If this is not possible, they live in stable placements where they are helped to build positive relationships and maintain contact with their family and friends where this remains in their best interests. Care plans are regularly reviewed to ensure that the child or young person’s current and developing needs continue to be met. Permanent homes and families are found for children and young people without unnecessary delay. Their needs are met and they live with their brothers and sisters if that is assessed as being in their best interests. They do not experience placement moves unless they are part of a planned return home or in accordance with plans for their future. Their education is not disrupted unless it is their best interests and plans for their schooling provide any extra help they need to make up time and learning that has been missed. They develop safe and secure relationships with adults that persist over time. When support is needed, children, young people and families are able to access it for as long as it is needed, throughout their childhood and beyond.**

32. In making the ‘children looked after and achieving permanence’ judgement, inspectors will take into account their judgement on adoption performance and their judgement on the experiences and progress of care leavers.<sup>28</sup>
33. A local authority is likely to be judged good if:
- Decisions to look after children and young people are timely and made only when it is in their best interests. Those decisions are based on clear, effective, comprehensive and risk-based assessments involving other professionals working with the family where appropriate. (*ESN 22*)
  - There is evidence of the effective use of the Public Law Outline, including letters before proceedings, family group conferences and parallel planning.

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<sup>28</sup> The DfE Adoption Scorecard will inform lines of enquiry and inspection activity but it is not a limiting factor in making our judgement about the progress and experiences of children looked after and achieving permanence.

Care is used only if this is in the child's best interests. Children and young people are safely and successfully returned home; where this is not possible for them, permanent plans are made for them to live away from the family home. Families are made aware of, and encouraged to access, legal advice and advocacy. *(ESN 23)*

- Where the plan for a child or young person is to return home, there is evidence of purposeful work to help the family to change so it is safe for the child to return. Further episodes of being looked after are avoided unless they are provided as a part of a plan of support. *(ESN 24)*
- Applications and assessments for care or other orders are accepted by the courts, minimise the appointment of experts and avoid unnecessary delay. The wishes and feelings of children and young people, and those of their parents, are clearly set out and contemporary. Viability assessments of members of the family are carried out promptly to a good standard and sequential assessments are avoided. *(ESN 25)*
- Children and young people are seen by their social worker alone and understand what is happening to them. Professionals and carers, who know them well, develop positive relationships with them and are committed to protecting them and promoting their welfare. Children and young people are helped to understand their rights and the responsibilities that accompany those rights and legal entitlements. They understand how to complain and have access to an advocate and independent visitor. Complaints are treated seriously and result in a clear response, urgent action and improved services where that is required. Senior managers regularly review and act upon complaints from looked after children. *(ESN 26)*
- Children and young people are protected or helped to keep themselves safe from bullying, homophobic behaviour and other forms of discrimination. *(ESN 27)*
- Any risks associated with children and young people offending, misusing drugs or alcohol, going missing or being sexually exploited are known by the local authority and by adults who care for them. There are plans and help in place that are reducing the risk of harm or actual harm and these are kept under regular review by senior managers. *(ESN 28)*
- Children and young people are in good health or are being helped to improve their health and their health needs are identified. Child and adolescent mental health provision, therapeutic help and services for learning or physically disabled children and young people are available when needed and for as long as they are required. *(ESN 29)*
- Children and young people attend school or other educational provision and they learn. Accurate and timely assessments of their needs, as well as specialist support where it is needed, help them to make good progress in their learning and development wherever they live. They receive the same support from their carers as they would from a good parent. The attainment

gap between them and their peers is narrowing. The local authority maintains accurate and up-to-date information about how looked after children are progressing at school and takes urgent and individual action when they are not achieving well. All looked after children and young people attend a good school. *(ESN 30)*

- Children and young people who do not attend school have access to 25 hours per week of good-quality registered alternative provision. They are encouraged and supported to attend the provision and there is regular review of their progress. Urgent action to protect children is taken where they are missing from school or their attendance noticeably reduces. *(ESN 31)*
- The local authority holds clear records in respect of the numbers of children receiving alternative education and for those missing from education. *(ESN 32)*
- Social workers, residential staff and carers support children and young people to enjoy what they do and to access a range of social, educational and recreational opportunities. Those adults have delegated authority to make decisions about children's access to recreation and leisure activities. *(ESN 33)*
- Children and young people live in safe, stable and appropriate homes or families with their brothers and sisters when this is in their best interests. They move only in accordance with care plans, when they are at risk of harm or are being harmed. They do not live in homes that fail to meet their needs and they do not move frequently. *(ESN 34)*
- Care plans comprehensively address the needs and experiences of children and young people. They are regularly and independently reviewed, involving as appropriate the child or young person's parents, kinship carers (connected persons), foster carers, residential staff and other adults who know them. This helps ensure that the placement and plans for their future continue to be appropriate as well as ambitious. *(ESN 35)*
- Children and young people have appropriate, carefully assessed and supported contact with family and friends and other people who are important to them *(applies to adoption judgement)*. *(ESN 36)*
- Children and young people who live away from their 'home' authority have immediate access to education and health services that meet their needs as soon as they begin to live outside of their 'home' area. Placing authorities adhere to the requirements of the placement regulations including notifying the 'receiving' authority that a child is moving to the area and assessing the adequacy of resources to meet the child's need before the placement is made *(applies to adoption judgement)*. *(ESN 37)*
- The placement of children and young people into homes and families that meet their needs is effective because there is a comprehensive range and choice available *(applies to adoption judgement)*. *(ESN 38)*

- Family-finding strategies are informed by the assessed needs of children and young people. There is decisive action to find families and the avoidance of drift and delay is a priority. Respite care is only used when this is in the best interests of children and young people (*applies to adoption judgement*). (ESN 39)
- The recruitment, assessment, training, support, supervision, review and retention of foster carers including kinship carers (connected persons) and, as appropriate, special guardians, ensures that families approved are safe and sufficient in number to care for children and young people with a wide range of needs. This enables children to be placed with their brothers and sisters and have contact with their birth family and friends when this is in their best interests.<sup>29</sup> (ESN 40)
- Children and young people whose care and support is provided by a third party provider to which statutory functions have been delegated will receive the same high quality services that they could expect from the social work service provided directly by a local authority. (ESN 41)
- Early planning and case management results in appropriate permanent placements, including Special Guardianship or Child Arrangements Orders, that meet the needs of children and young people without delay or unnecessary moves (*applies to adoption judgement*). (ESN 42)
- Well-trained and supported social workers engage effectively with the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), courts and other partners, including health professionals, to reduce any unnecessary delay in proceedings or in achieving permanence and to support arrangements once they are made (*applies to adoption judgement*). (ESN 43)
- Children and young people are effectively prepared for, and carefully matched with, a permanent placement. Their wishes and feelings are understood and influence the decisions about where they live (*applies to adoption judgement*). (ESN 44)
- Children and young people are helped to develop secure primary attachments with the adults caring for them. Social workers help them to understand their lives and their identities through life history work that is effective and provided when they need it. Therapeutic materials are made available to the child and their family when and wherever the child is placed (*applies to adoption judgement*). (ESN 45)
- Plans to make permanent arrangements for children and young people are effectively and regularly reviewed by independent reviewing officers (IROs). IROs bring rigour and challenge to the care planning and monitor the performance of the local authority as a corporate parent, escalating issues

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<sup>29</sup> Services should be delivered in accordance with the national minimum standards and regulations.

as appropriate. They enable timely plans to be agreed to meet the needs of children and to ensure that their best interests remain paramount. IROs engage with children's guardians and there is evidence that this is focused on what children need and how the plans for them can be properly progressed (*applies to adoption judgement*). (ESN 46)

- Case records reflect the work that is undertaken with children and clearly relate to the plans for their futures. The style and clarity of records enhances the understanding that children and young people have about their histories and experiences. (ESN 47)
- Children and young people are represented by a Children in Care Council or similar body which is regularly consulted on how to improve the support they receive. (ESN 48)
- Children and young people receive care that is sensitive and responsive to age, disability, ethnicity, faith or belief, gender, gender identity, language, race and sexual orientation (*applies to adoption judgement*). (ESN 49)

### **Outstanding**

- 'The experiences and progress of children looked after and achieving permanence' is likely to be judged outstanding if, in addition to meeting the requirements of a 'good' judgement, there is evidence that professional practice exceeds the standard of 'good' and results in sustained improvement to the lives of children, young people and their families. Research-informed practice, some of which will be innovative, continues to develop from a strong and confident base, making an exceptional difference to the lives and experiences of children and young people.

### **Requires improvement**

- 'The experiences and progress of children and young people looked after and achieving permanence' requires improvement when there are no widespread or serious failures or unnecessary delays that result in the welfare of looked after children not being safeguarded and promoted. However, the authority is not yet delivering good help and care for looked after children and young people and families.

### **Inadequate**

- 'The experiences and progress of children and young people looked after and achieving permanence' is likely to be inadequate if there are widespread or serious failures, including unnecessary delay in identifying permanent solutions for them and which result in their welfare not being safeguarded and promoted.

## Adoption performance

**Suitable adoptive families are identified without delay for all children for whom adoption is in their best interests. The recruitment and assessment arrangements are aligned with national systems and enable potential adopters to consider and to be considered for a wide range of children for whom they may provide a home. Children are able to develop safe and secure relationships with their adoptive family that persist over time. When support is needed, children, young people, families and carers are able to access it for as long as it is needed, throughout their childhood and beyond.**

34. Adoption is likely to be judged good if the criteria identified in the earlier judgement for looked after children (where adoption is being considered or is the plan) are met<sup>30</sup> and in addition:
- Adoption is considered for all children who are unable to return home or to their birth families and who need a permanent alternative home. *(ESN 50)*
  - The local authority demonstrates a sense of urgency and care in all adoption work including the appropriate use of concurrent and parallel planning, the Adoption Register and Fostering for adoption, resulting in children being able to live at the earliest opportunity with an adoptive family who are able to meet their needs. *(ESN 51)*
  - Recruitment, preparation, prompt assessment, training and support of adopters enables them to meet the needs of children and young people and to keep them safe. Those arrangements support the placement of children with their brothers and sisters where this is in their best interests and sufficient families are available to accommodate sibling groups, older children and children with complex needs. *(ESN 52)*
  - The panel and agency decision-maker ensure that children are effectively matched with the most appropriate families and the panel promotes good practice through its work and regular reports to the local authority. *(ESN 53)*
  - Children who are adopted, their adoptive families, their birth relatives and adopted adults are informed of their entitlement to receive an assessment of their adoption support needs. When support is needed, it is provided quickly, effectively and leads to improved circumstances for the children, young people, families and carers involved. *(ESN 54)*

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<sup>30</sup> These criteria are located in the looked after children judgement and are clearly labelled as applying to children where adoption is being considered or is planned.

## **Outstanding**

- Adoption performance is likely to be judged outstanding if, in addition to meeting the requirements of a 'good' judgement, there is evidence that professional practice is creative, innovative and leads to success in finding permanent adoptive families for children, including those with complex needs. The adoption agency uses nationally available systems to help maintain the interest and availability of potential adopters. Sustained improvement in the lives of children, young people and their families is supported through highly effective adoption support.

## **Requires improvement**

- Adoption performance requires improvement when there are no widespread or serious failures that result in children looked after who should be adopted not being adopted by a family who can meet their needs or within appropriate timescales. However, the characteristics of good are not in place.

## **Inadequate**

- Adoption performance is likely to be inadequate if there are widespread or serious failures that result in children looked after who should be adopted not being adopted by a family who can meet their needs in a timescale that meets their best interests.

## 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.**

35. When evaluating the experience and progress of care leavers, such as their successful transition to adulthood, inspectors will take into account the young person's development and achievements at the point they became looked after, the age they became looked after and the age they were when they became the responsibility of the authority being inspected.
36. The experiences and progress of care leavers is likely to be judged to be good if:
- Care leavers are safe and feel safe, particularly where they are living, and are helped to understand how their life choices will affect their safety and well-being. Any risks associated with offending, drug or alcohol misuse, going missing or with sexual exploitation are known by adults who have a responsibility for them and effective plans are in place to reduce the risk of or actual harm to them. Care leavers are supported to take responsibility for their behaviour. *(ESN 55)*
  - Pathway planning is effective and plans (including transition planning for looked after children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities) address all young people's needs and are updated as circumstances change. *(ESN 56)*
  - The health needs of care leavers are clearly assessed, prioritised and met. Child and adolescent mental health services, adult mental health provision, therapeutic help and services for learning or physically disabled young people and adults are available when they are needed. *(ESN 57)*
  - Care leavers have access to and understand their full health history and are provided with all key documents they need to begin their lives as young adults, for example national insurance numbers, birth certificates and passports. *(ESN 58)*
  - Care leavers develop the skills and confidence they need to maximise their chances of successful maturity to adulthood, including parenthood. This includes learning to budget, to live independently and to manage safe relationships and behaviour. Care leavers form and maintain relationships with carers and staff from the local authority and develop supportive relationships within the community, including where appropriate contact



with family and friends. They are confident that the local authority or a provider of social work services to which statutory functions have been delegated will act as a reasonable parent in supporting their transition into adulthood and providing practical, emotional and financial support until they are at least 21 and, where necessary, until they are 25. This will include the availability of a trusted and known adult (for example, the allocated personal adviser or their social worker) to support them. *(ESN 59)*

- Care leavers succeed in their transition to greater independence and adulthood at a time that is right for them. Young people aged 16 and 17 are encouraged to remain looked after until their 18th birthday where (and this will usually be the case) this is in their best interest. They can remain in placements beyond their 18th birthday or, where more appropriate, live in permanent and affordable accommodation that meets their needs and those of their children, where relevant. *(ESN 60)*
- Care leavers have access to appropriate education and employment opportunities, including work experience and apprenticeships. They are encouraged and supported to continue their education and training, including those aged 21 to 24 years. Care leavers are progressing well and achieving their full potential through life choices, either in their attainment in further and higher education or in their chosen career/occupation. *(ESN 61)*
- Care leavers are positive about themselves. Their achievements are celebrated and the local authority shows they are positive and proud of their care leavers. *(ESN 62)*
- Care leavers are helped to find housing solutions that best meet their needs. Risks of tenancy breakdown are identified and alternative plans are in place. *(ESN 63)*
- Accommodation for care leavers is appropriate for each young person to safely develop their independence skills. Houses of multiple occupancy are only used when it is a young person's preferred option and it can demonstrably be shown to be in their best interests. *(ESN 64)*
- Care leavers are provided with information (including through the care leaver's pledge) about their legal entitlements such as access to their records, assistance to find employment (including work experience), training, financial support and how to complain where necessary supported by an advocate. *(ESN 65)*

## Outstanding

- 'The experiences and progress of care leavers' is likely to be judged outstanding if, in addition to meeting the requirements of a 'good' judgement, there is evidence that professional practice exceeds the standard of 'good' and results in sustained improvement to the lives of children, young people and their families. The local authority is ambitious

and aspirational for its young people as they mature to adulthood. The authority is assertive and proactive in keeping in touch with all young people who have left care and, as a result, young people have a sense of security and connection with adults who they know well. Research-informed practice, some of which will be innovative, continues to develop from a strong and confident base, making an exceptional difference to the lives and experiences of children and young people.

### **Requires improvement**

- 'The experiences and progress of care leavers' requires improvement when there is no widespread or serious failure that results in care leavers not having their welfare safeguarded and promoted but the characteristics of a 'good' judgement are not in place.

### **Inadequate**

- 'The experiences and progress of care leavers' is likely to be inadequate if there is widespread or serious failure that results in care leavers not having their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

## Key judgement: Leadership, management and governance<sup>31</sup>

**Leadership, management and governance arrangements comply with statutory guidance<sup>32</sup> and together establish an effective strategy and good-quality services for children, young people and their families. There is a clear and up-to-date strategy for commissioning and developing services delivered by a suitably qualified and experienced workforce that meets the needs of local children and young people and families. The Director of Children’s Services (DCS), the lead elected member and the senior management team have a comprehensive knowledge about what is happening at the ‘front line’ to enable them to discharge their responsibilities effectively. They know and understand the difference that help, care and protection are making. They oversee systematic performance management and monitoring that demonstrate rigorous and timely action in response to service deficiencies or new demands. The local authority works with partners to deliver early help, protect children and young people, improve educational attainment and narrow the gap for the children looked after and care leavers. It acts as a strong and effective corporate parent for children looked after and those leaving or who have left care. Leaders, both professional and political, drive continuous improvement so that the local authority is consistently effective as the lead agency for the protection and care of children and young people and as a corporate parent. Partnerships are supported by transparent and rigorous governance between the local authority and key statutory, private and voluntary organisations. Shared priorities are clear and resourced. There is effective engagement with the relevant local partnerships including the Health and Well-being Board. The DCS works closely with the local authority’s safeguarding partners.**

37. Leadership, management and governance are likely to be judged good if:

- Local authority senior managers, leaders and elected members discharge their individual and collective statutory responsibilities. There are clear lines of accountability and governance with a clear distinction between political, strategic and operational roles. Leaders, including elected members and managers, have a comprehensive and current knowledge of what is

<sup>31</sup> For information on how the grade descriptors for leadership, management and governance are applied where local authority functions have been delegated to a third party provider, see paragraphs 3–5 and Annex B of this framework.

<sup>32</sup> Statutory guidance on the roles and responsibilities of the Director of Children's Services and the Lead Member for Children's Services, Department for Education, 2013; [www.gov.uk/government/publications/Directors-of-childrens-services-roles-and-responsibilities](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/Directors-of-childrens-services-roles-and-responsibilities).

happening at the 'front line' and how well children and young people are helped, cared for and protected. *(ESN 66)*

- The local authority has detailed and relevant knowledge of its local communities, including looked after children and care leavers. Commissioned and in-house services respond to and meet the needs of local children, young people and families in need of help, care and protection. The local authority works effectively with their safeguarding partners and other strategic bodies, such as the Health and Well-being Board and Clinical Commissioning Groups, to promote and secure a sufficient range of good-quality provision to meet local need. This should include services, placements and adoptive families for children and young people for whom the authority has a statutory responsibility and where necessary for vulnerable adults who are also parents. *(ESN 67)*
- The joint strategic needs assessment and the sufficiency statements are aligned and set out clear local priorities and the range of available services that respond to and meet the needs of local children, young people and families in need of help, care and protection. *(ESN 68)*
- The local authority is an active, strong and committed corporate parent that knows the children and young people it looks after well. It is an effective and successful champion of their progress (particularly in education and learning) and an ambitious corporate parent, ensuring that each child has every opportunity to succeed. It actively challenges and engages partners where appropriate to support children and young people, such as engaging the local authority strategic housing function. *(ESN 69)*
- The local authority, through performance management and monitoring, has an accurate and systematically updated understanding of its effectiveness. It demonstrates a track record of dealing rigorously and effectively with areas for development. Leaders, including elected members and managers, have a comprehensive and current knowledge of what is happening at the 'front line' and a track record of responding appropriately and quickly to service deficiencies or new demands. *(ESN 70)*
- Management oversight of practice, including practice scrutiny by senior managers, is established, systematic and demonstrably used to improve the quality of decisions and the provision of help to children and young people. *(ESN 71)*
- The local authority knows itself well, is a learning organisation and can demonstrate evidence of practice that is informed, modified and sustainably improved by feedback, research and intelligence about the quality of services and the experiences of children, young people and families who use them. This may, for example, include feedback from the children in care council, change that arises from complaints that children and families make about their experiences or from successful or disrupted placements or adoption breakdown. *(ESN 72)*

- Effective relationships with Cafcass, the health community, the family courts and the local Family Justice Board ensure that avoidable delay in care proceedings is reduced and children, young people and their families benefit from efficient and effective progress through legal proceedings. *(ESN 73)*
- The local authority social care workforce is sufficient, stable, suitably qualified and competent to deliver high-quality services to children and their families. Managers and practitioners are experienced, effectively trained and supervised and the quality of their practice improves the lives of vulnerable children, young people and families. There is effective organisational support for the professional development of social workers with reference to the employer standards,<sup>33</sup> and leaders provide the right environment for good social work to take place. *(ESN 74)*
- Where a local authority delegates any of its statutory functions to a third party provider, commissioning and contract compliance ensures those children and young people receiving this service progress at least as well as those served by a good local authority. *(ESN 75)*

## Outstanding

- Leadership, management and governance are likely to be outstanding if, in addition to meeting the requirements of a 'good' judgement, there is evidence that leaders (both professional and political) and managers are inspirational, confident, ambitious and influential in changing the lives of local children, young people and families, including children who are looked after and those who have left or who are leaving care. They innovate and generate creative ideas to sustain the highest-quality services, including early help services, for all children and young people. They know their strengths and weaknesses well and can provide evidence of improvement over a sustained period of time. Professional relationships between the local authority and partner organisations are mature and well developed. Accountabilities are embedded and result in confident, regular evaluation and improvement of the quality of help, care and protection that is provided.

## Requires improvement

- Leadership, management and governance require improvement when any widespread or serious failures have been identified by the local authority **and** are being effectively addressed, but the characteristics of good leadership are not in place.

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<sup>33</sup> *Standards for employers and supervision framework*, Department for Education, 2012; [www.education.gov.uk/swrb/a0074263/standards-for-employers-and-supervision-framework](http://www.education.gov.uk/swrb/a0074263/standards-for-employers-and-supervision-framework).

## **Inadequate**

- Leadership, management and governance are likely to be inadequate if either of the two main judgements is inadequate and leaders and managers have not been able to demonstrate sufficient understanding of the failure. They have been ineffective in prioritising, challenging and making improvements.

## **Annex A. Identifying cases for tracking and sampling, including management and performance information**

### **Introduction**

This annex sets out a number of requirements for local authorities in respect of the inspection. It includes requests to:

- provide child-level data so that the lead inspector can establish those that will be tracked and sampled
- provide the most up-to-date performance information used by the local authority to manage services for looked after children and child protection (including early help for families)
- review the context section of the inspection report called *information about this local authority area*.

### **Details of planned multi-agency meetings**

The details of multi-agency meetings planned to take place during the fieldwork period – including initial and review child protection conferences, looked after children reviews, multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARAC), core groups, planned strategy discussions and legal planning meetings – should be provided to the lead inspector, who may specify the geographical areas to be covered. These will be reviewed on a regular basis between the lead inspector and the local authority during the inspection.

### **Child-level data for the case sample and case tracking**

When the lead inspector contacts the local authority, she/he will ask for lists containing child-level data. The local authority should provide the child-level data lists as soon as they are able. The table below sets out expected deadlines for submission. Please provide these lists in Excel.

The table below is an outline of the broad contents of each list. Further detailed guidance about the fields for each list is available at [www.gov.uk/government/publications/inspecting-local-authority-childrens-services-framework](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inspecting-local-authority-childrens-services-framework).

To reduce burden on local authorities we have aligned the information within the child-level lists with Department for Education guidance.<sup>34</sup> If possible please use descriptors and codes in line with the DfE 'common basic data set' and Department for Education definitions.<sup>35</sup> If this is not possible, the local authority should provide a description or metadata explaining the codes they use.

<b>Child protection</b>		
<b>List</b>	<b>Submission date – stage 1</b>	<b>Submission date – stage 2</b>
1. All those who have been the subject of a contact in the three months prior to inspection	Week 1 (Tuesday am)	Not applicable
2. All those who have been the subject of an early help assessment, a common assessment or a targeted intervention in the six months prior to inspection	Week 1 (Thursday am)	Not applicable
3. All those who have been the subject of a referral in the three months prior to inspection	Week 1 (Tuesday am)	Not applicable
4. All those who have been the subject of a statutory assessment in accordance with section 17 or section 47 of the Children Act 1989 in the six months prior to inspection	Week 1 (Tuesday am)	Week 1 (end of Friday)
5. All those who have been the subject of a section 47 enquiry in the six months prior to inspection	Week 1 (Tuesday am)	Week 1 (end of Friday)
6. All those in receipt of services as a child in need at the point of inspection and those who ceased to receive services as a child in need in the three months prior to inspection	Week 1 (Tuesday am)	Week 1 (end of Friday)
7. All those who are the subject of a child protection plan at the point of inspection and those who ceased to be the subject of a child protection plan in the three months prior to inspection	Week 1 (Tuesday am)	Week 1 (end of Friday)
<b>Children looked after and care leavers</b>		
<b>List</b>	<b>Submission date – stage 1</b>	<b>Submission date – stage 2</b>
8. All those children looked after as at the point of inspection and all those children who ceased to be looked after in the six months prior to	Week 1 (end of Tuesday)	Week 2 (end of Tuesday)

<sup>34</sup> Children looked after return 2017 to 2018: guide, October 2017;  
[www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-looked-after-return-2017-to-2018-guide](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-looked-after-return-2017-to-2018-guide)

Children in need census 2016 to 2017: guide, November 2016;  
[www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-in-need-census-2016-to-2017-guide](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-in-need-census-2016-to-2017-guide)

<sup>35</sup> Common basic data set (CBDS): database, October 2017;  
[www.gov.uk/government/publications/common-basic-data-set-cbds-database](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/common-basic-data-set-cbds-database)



inspection		
9. All those care leavers who are receiving leaving care services as at the point of inspection	Week 1 (end of Tuesday)	Week 2 (end of Tuesday)
10. All those children who have been adopted in the 12 months prior to inspection, those where the decision that the child should be placed for adoption has been made but they have not yet been adopted, and those who had an adoption decision which was subsequently reversed during the period.	Week 1 (end of Tuesday)	Week 2 (end of Tuesday)
11. All those individuals who in the last 12 months have had contact with the local authority adoption agency by having: (a) made an enquiry, received an information pack and attended a follow-up interview; and/or (b) had an enquiry or application in progress 12 months ago and have subsequently been approved/rejected; and/or (c) had a child placed with them in the last 12 months	Week 1 (end of Tuesday)	Week 2 (end of Tuesday)

Some children may appear on more than one list. The consistent use of the child ID across the lists will enable the lead inspector to recognise where this occurs.

For lists 3 to 10, please provide only one row for each unique child ID where possible. Information should relate to the most event (for example: in list 3, the most recent referral; or in list 6, the most recent episode of need).

Some of the requested data – particularly in relation to list 1 ‘contacts’ and list 2 ‘early help assessments’ – may not be recorded on the main ICT systems. In these circumstances, the local authority is free to use the solution that suits it best and enables them to provide the data in the timeframe requested. Whatever the format, the data should be clearly identifiable.

For list 8, it would assist inspectors to have information about the number of brothers and sisters each child has. This will help them when they select the children whose experiences they will evaluate. The local authority can choose how to provide this information. Two possible options for this are:

- including an extra column in list eight showing the number of brothers and sisters that each child in care has
- providing a separate Excel sheet containing each child in list eight with their unique child ID and the number of brothers and sisters that each child has.

If certain data are unavailable, we will ask the local authority to demonstrate how they have sufficient management oversight of the specific issue.

After the local authority share annex A, we may arrange a brief telephone conversation between an Ofsted analytical officer and a local authority analyst. This is to help us understand the composition and content of the local authority's information and the layout of their management information systems.

Queries about the child-level data should be sent to [SocialCareSAO@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:SocialCareSAO@ofsted.gov.uk). However, if you have any queries after you have been notified that an inspection is to take place, please contact the lead inspector

## Performance information required to support the inspection

The lead inspector will also ask for documented performance information to help understand the work of the local authority. It should not be all documents that the authority holds that refer to the topics listed below. This needs to be the local authority's **best**, and **most recent** evidence. Where multiple documents are provided, the local authority must clearly direct the lead inspector to the relevant sections so that inspection time can be used effectively. Where the reason for presenting a document is unclear or if the information is unprocessed or unfit for the purpose of strategic understanding, the document will be returned unread. The information provided should be the information that the local authority is currently using to understand and manage its own performance.

Each of the topics has been numbered sequentially. When the local authority provides the information to the inspection team, they should include the number in the document name as a prefix. This will enable the inspectors to easily identify and retrieve information and support the local authority to link their evidence to the topic.

- **1.01 organisational structure** showing lines of reporting and accountability (including, where relevant, for third party providers who exercise functions delegated to them as the agent of the local authority)
- **1.02 arrangements for decision-making, workflow and case management**
- **1.03 monthly management information reports** for child protection and looked after children, at **both** team (locality) and departmental level
- **1.04 the workforce profile** for social care staff working with children in need, children subject to child protection plans, children looked after and care leavers (including: the number of qualified social workers and their post-qualifying experience; the number of vacancies for permanent staff; the number of locum/agency staff; the extent of staff turnover/stability and sickness levels; and average caseloads of staff by team)
- **1.05 the training and development strategy** for the workforce, including arrangements to accommodate **feedback from children and families** and **learning from case and serious case reviews**
- **1.06 social work caseload and supervision** policy

- **1.07 assessment and threshold criteria** for helping families, protecting children and looking after them
- **1.08** number of **complaints and follow-up** activity
- **1.09 local strategic needs analysis**, including the number of children living in homes where there is a **parent/carer** known to be receiving treatment for **drug or alcohol misuse, known to be suffering from mental ill health and/or experiencing domestic abuse**. This should also include details of any commissioned services in support of children and families living in these circumstances. The number and needs of looked after children and care leavers should also be included in respect of the provision of **sufficient placements and choices** for care leavers.
- **1.10** details of findings from any **peer review** type activity of child protection or services for looked after children within the last 12 months
- **1.11** the annual report by the local safeguarding partners
- **1.12** the safeguarding arrangements agreed by the local safeguarding partners
- **1.13** minutes from the last 12 months of meetings of the local safeguarding partners

*Children in need of help and/or protection*

- **2.01 early help strategy and impact analysis**, including management information on **availability of services** (family support), **numbers of families receiving help** following an early help assessment or similar (CAF) in the last 12 months
- **2.02 sample practice audits, including some that are multi-agency** over the six months prior to inspection and associated **improvement/action plans**
- **2.03** a report on those children known to the local authority who are currently being **privately fostered**. This report should include for each child:
  - child unique ID, date of birth
  - date private fostering arrangement commenced
- **2.04 number of young people placed under secure accommodation welfare orders** (section 25 of the Children Act 1989)
- **2.05 number of children who are electively home educated** known to the authority
- **2.06** a report on children, for whom the local authority is responsible, who are of school age and **who are not in receipt of full-time school education** at the time of inspection. This report should include for each child:
  - child unique ID or UPN, date of birth
  - type of educational provision that they are receiving, including home tuition

- number of hours provision per week (in particular whether they are receiving more or less than 25 hours per week)
  - type of exclusion (if the child has been excluded)
  - date when alternative provision commenced.
- **2.07** a report on all **children missing from home or care**. The report should include for each child:
- child unique ID and date of birth (where available)<sup>36</sup>
  - number of episodes when the child or young person has been missing
  - a short summary of action and decisions
  - details about whether they are known to be vulnerable to sexual exploitation.

*Children looked after and care leavers*

- **3.01 strategic plan for looked after children, including corporate parenting objectives, education and housing priorities, planning for permanence and children’s futures**
- **3.02 Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) strategy**, including length of waiting time and average length of help offered
- **3.03 commissioning and sufficiency** strategy
- **3.04** annual report of the **Virtual Head Teacher**
- **3.05 sample practice audits, including some that are multi-agency** over the six months prior to inspection and associated **improvement/action plans**
- **3.06** management report of the **independent reviewing officer service**
- **3.07** evidence from **complaints and feedback** from **children and families**
- **3.08** evidence on **educational progress and outcomes**, including data on attainment, progress, attendance, exclusion, personal education plans, alternative educational provision, employment and training at age 16
- **3.09** the local family justice board minutes from the last six months
- **3.10** evidence of children’s health, including data on health (physical, psychological and emotional) assessments and dental checks.

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<sup>36</sup> There may be children about whom the police have concerns but who may not be known to the local authority. In these cases there will be no unique ID available. For the purpose of the meetings between inspectors and the local authority/police leads for missing children in weeks one and three of the inspection, it is expected that the police will share information about children known to them to be missing or vulnerable to sexual exploitation. See paragraph 23 and Annex M of the inspection handbook for further information.

## Information about the local authority area

All reports include a section about the local authority area. This information is important for understanding how the local authority operates. The information required to populate this section will come from either published information that is available for all local authority areas or from the most up-to-date information available within the local authority.<sup>37</sup> The lead inspector will make the final decision about whether and what updates to include in the report.

The content of this section must be referenced in the main body of the report where required to understand the inspection findings. All outliers should be fully explored and explained in the report and specifically in respect of their impact on the judgement of which they form a part. The items in this section are:

### Previous Ofsted inspections

- The local authority operates XXX children’s homes. XXX were judged to be good or outstanding in their most recent Ofsted inspection.
- The previous inspection of the local authority’s safeguarding arrangements / arrangements for the protection of children was in MONTH YEAR. The local authority was judged to be XXX.
- The previous inspection of the local authority’s services for looked after children was in MONTH YEAR. The local authority was judged to be XXX.

### Local leadership

- The Director of Children’s Services has been in post since MMM/YYYY.
- (Delete if not applicable) The DCS is also responsible for (e.g. Adult services)
- The Chief Executive has been in post since MMM/YYYY.
- (Delete if not applicable) The functions that the local authority has delegated to a third-party provider are:
  - XXX
  - XXX
- The local authority has commissioned out XXX services (Delete if not applicable – this bullet only needs to be included where the commissioning of a service can be

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<sup>37</sup> The information we require from the local authority is highlighted in red. Ofsted will source all other information from either published information or the most recent information we hold. Where we ask for the most up-to-date information from a local authority, this should preferably be as at the point of inspection. If this is not possible, we will accept information from the most recent monthly or quarterly performance report. Please note that all figures used in this section should be rounded to the nearest whole number

directly linked to a subsequent change, positive or negative, in the experiences and progress of children.)

- The local authority uses the **XXX** model of social work.

### Children living in this area

- Approximately **XXX** children and young people under the age of 18 years live in **XXX**. This is **XX%** of the total population in the area.
- Approximately **XX%** of the local authority's children aged under 16 years are living in low income families.
- The proportion of children entitled to free school meals:
  - in primary schools is **XX%** (the national average is **XX%**)
  - in secondary schools is **XX%** (the national average is **XX%**)
- Children and young people from minority ethnic groups account for **XX%** of all children living in the area, compared with **XX%** in the country as a whole.
- The largest minority ethnic groups of children and young people in the area are **XXX** and **XXX**.
- The proportion of children and young people with English as an additional language:
  - in primary schools is **XX%** (the national average is **XX%**).
  - in secondary schools is **XX%** (the national average is **XX%**).
- **Additional contextual statement (example): A large Traveller and Eastern European population seeks seasonal work in the agricultural parts of the county, but is not resident.**

### Child protection in this area

- At **INSERT DATE**, **XXX** children had been identified through assessment as being formally in need of a specialist children's service. This is a reduction/increase from **XXX** at 31 March **YYYY**.
- At **INSERT DATE**, **XXX** children and young people were the subject of a child protection plan (a rate of **XXX** per 10,000 children). This is a reduction/increase from **XXX** (**XXX** per 10,000 children) at 31 March **YYYY**.
- At **INSERT DATE**, **XXX** children lived in a privately arranged fostering placement. This is a reduction/increase from **XXX** at 31 March **YYYY**.
- In the two years before inspection, **XXX** serious incident notifications have been submitted to Ofsted and **XXX** serious case reviews have been completed.
- There are **XXX** serious case reviews ongoing at the time of the inspection.

## Children looked after in this area

- At **INSERT DATE**, **XXX** children are being looked after by the local authority (a rate of **XXX** per 10,000 children). This is a reduction/increase from **XXX** (**XXX** per 10,000 children) at 31 March YYYY.
  - Of this number, **XXX** (or **XX%**) live outside the local authority area
  - **XXX** live in residential children’s homes, of whom **XX%** live out of the authority area
  - **XXX** live in residential special schools,<sup>38</sup> of whom **XX%** live out of the authority area
  - **XXX** live with foster families, of whom **XX%** live out of the authority area
  - **XXX** live with parents, of whom **XX%** live out of the authority area
  - **XXX** children are unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.
  
- In the last 12 months:
  - there have been **XXX** adoptions
  - **XXX** children became subject of special guardianship orders
  - **XXX** children ceased to be looked after, of whom **XX%** subsequently returned to be looked after
  - **XXX** children and young people ceased to be looked after and moved on to independent living
  - **XXX** children and young people ceased to be looked after and are now living in houses of multiple occupation.

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<sup>38</sup> These are residential special schools that look after children for 295 days or less per year.

## **Annex B: delegation of local authority functions**

This annex provides further information in respect of local authority functions that have been delegated to a third party provider. The single inspection framework was updated with effect from September 2015 to take account of such arrangements.

### **Local authority functions**

Under Part 1 of the Children and Young Persons Act 2008 (CYPA) local authorities may make arrangements with a body corporate for the discharge by that body of some or all of the relevant care functions of the authority.

Relevant care functions are those functions set out in section 1(2) of the CYPA and regulation 3 of the Children and Young Persons Act 2008 (Relevant Care Functions) (England) Regulations 2014. Relevant care functions do not include those functions set out in section 2 of the CYPA. A body corporate which is carried on for profit may not be a party to an arrangement for the discharge of a function set out in regulation 3 of the 2014 Regulations.

Where a local authority has made such arrangements in respect of all or part of its functions, the inspection is still an inspection of the local authority – the third party is acting as agent for the local authority.

### **Direction by the Secretary of State**

Under section 497A of the Education Act 1996 the Secretary of State may direct a local authority to contract out its social services functions relating to children or transfer those functions to a nominee.

Where the Secretary of State has given a direction under section 497A(4A), then by virtue of section 497A(4AA) any reference to a local authority is to be read as a reference to the person by whom the function is exercised.

### **The leadership, management and governance judgement**

Where a local authority makes arrangements with a third party provider to discharge functions, that provider is acting as the agent of the authority and must demonstrate that they meet the leadership, management and governance standards set out for local authorities in this key judgement area. In addition: effective contract monitoring arrangements by the local authority are in place to ensure that children receive services which meet their needs and such arrangements are reviewed regularly by the local authority to ensure they remain effective; proportionate scrutiny arrangements by the local authority are in place to ensure the role of the local authority as the corporate parent is effective; where the third party provider is responsible for the management of local authority partnerships, the provider engages with partner organisations to ensure that their responsibilities are undertaken to a high standard. In cases where a local authority has delegated all of



its functions to a third party provider, the Chief Executive or equivalent and the Board of that provider discharge the individual and collective responsibilities of local authority leaders (as outlined). In cases where only some functions have been delegated, the arrangements for how the local authority holds the provider to account are proportionate to the nature and extent of delegation.



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