

Implementation review of the social care common inspection framework

Overview of findings

Review purpose and methodology

This document gives an overview of Ofsted's work to review the implementation of the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF). It assesses the extent to which we are:

- focusing on the things that matter most to children's lives
- consistent in our judgements and expectations of providers
- prioritising our work where improvement is needed most.

To write this review, we commissioned or carried out the following pieces of work:

- four workshops with a total of 74 provider representatives inspected under the SCCIF; meetings took place in Birmingham, Manchester and London
- two workshops with a total of roughly 125 social care regulatory inspectors (including small group discussions)
- one meeting with regulatory inspection managers
- reviews of
 - inspection outcomes data across regions and settings
 - post-inspection questionnaires
 - complaints data
 - 50 complaints from before and after the SCCIF
 - reports and evidence bases from 30 children's homes inspections
 - inspection summary letters for children
- feedback from regulatory inspection managers and inspection support teams
- review of the quality of risk assessments for children's homes.

Due to the sensitivity of the information shared during this evidence collection, we have decided not to publish these pieces of analysis separately.

Findings

There have been several successes with the SCCIF implementation, summarised below:

- **The SCCIF has been well received by providers and the inspection workforce.** It has helped continue to improve the quality and perception of social care regulatory inspection in a number of important respects, noted below. Importantly, the concept of a common framework that can capture the uniqueness of different types of children’s care provision is now widely accepted, and has been borne out in practice. Although we asked children and young people how they experienced social care inspection, we were not able to separate general comments from those about the SCCIF.
- **Inspectors appear to spend longer with children and less time looking at policies and procedures on inspection.** Both inspectors and providers believe that the SCCIF has increased the time inspectors are able to spend with children, and that inspectors give greater attention to the experience and progress of children. While we were not able to objectively assess how time is spent on inspection, the providers we consulted were almost unanimous that inspectors give more attention to this than previously.
- **Overall, reports are better able to demonstrate the impact of providers on children’s lives.** Many provider representatives commented that the voice of the child was more present in reporting than it had been prior to SCCIF. These comments were made before we introduced our new reporting guidance. Since then, we have found that overall quality of writing and explanation of judgements for reports of outstanding residential special schools and boarding schools has improved significantly. There is ongoing work to review the template for all reports under the SCCIF.
- **We have successfully implemented a significantly more proportionate approach to inspecting children’s homes.** Only 31% of good and outstanding children’s homes were inspected twice in 2017–18 compared with 100% before the SCCIF. This has been enabled by changes to the legal requirements in relation to the frequency of inspection. Our risk assessments help us deliver this more proportionate system. We do identify providers that are likely to fall to requires improvement to be good, which provides assurance for the new model.

These are very positive changes that have resulted in significant shifts in the perception of our social regulatory inspection.

Nevertheless, we are not complacent. The SCCIF is not a one-size-fits-all model. Each inspection should have the right balance between a uniqueness that responds to the individual service and the commonality that is set out in the SCCIF. As with all our work, we are alert to this challenge. We know that some providers remain concerned about the consistency of our work and that implementing the SCCIF has not completely addressed their concerns.

To address this, our commitment following the review is:

- to ensure that our quality assurance activity is sufficiently focused on inspection practice as well as the quality of written evidence and reports
- to continue to look carefully at how grade profiles vary across regions to assure ourselves that this is about the quality of provision and not inspection practice
- to maximise opportunities for inspectors to be coached 'on the job' or learn from other inspectors and remits. Children's homes inspections are usually, as with our regulatory inspection of early years, only carried out by one person.

Conclusions

The new framework has been well received by the sector, which has welcomed the increased attention given to impact over process. Inspection reporting generally is better able to outline the difference that providers are making to children's lives and to outline the evidence for the overall judgement. We have also successfully implemented a more proportionate system overall.

The SCCIF, by establishing a common framework for social care inspection, has provided us with a good platform to achieve our overall aim of being a force for improvement. There is no need for the framework document to be amended as a result of this review.



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