

# Inspection of residential family centres

Framework for inspection from April 2013

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This document sets out the framework and guidance for the inspection of residential family centres from April 2013.

It should be read alongside the evaluation schedule for the inspection of residential family centres.

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## Introduction

1. This document sets out the framework for Ofsted's inspections of residential family centres. It explains: how we apply the principles and processes underlying all our inspections; the statutory basis for inspection; and a summary of the main features of the inspection process.
2. Ofsted's general principles of inspection and regulation are to:
  - support and promote improvement
  - be proportionate
  - focus on the needs of service users
  - focus on the needs of providers
  - be transparent and consistent
  - be accountable
  - demonstrate value for money.
3. The framework and the inspection judgements are underpinned by the [regulations](#) and the [national minimum standards](#). The inspections are intended not only to test compliance, but also to help raise standards and drive improvement in the sector. This requires a focus on how the residential family centre undertakes effective assessments, the support and guidance they provide to help parents protect their children and to promote their welfare, and the impact the centre has on outcomes for children. Inspectors will evaluate the extent to which the service contributes to delivering these improved outcomes.
4. There is more detailed guidance included in 'Inspections of residential family centres: evaluation schedule and grade descriptors' and 'Conducting the inspection'.

## Legal basis for inspection

5. The power to inspect residential family centres transferred to Ofsted under section 148 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.<sup>1</sup> This Act requires Ofsted to encourage the services it inspects and regulates to:
  - improve
  - focus on the experiences of those who use the service
  - be efficient and effective in the use of resources.
6. The Care Standards Act 2000, including regulations made under section 22 of the Act, sets out the legal basis for regulating residential family centres. It sets

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<sup>1</sup> The Education and Inspections Act 2006: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/40/contents>.

out Ofsted's powers to register, inspect and, where necessary, enforce compliance with the Act and relevant regulations.

7. A residential family centre is any establishment that provides residential services for parents and their children in order to assess the parents' capacity and potential to respond to their children's needs and to safeguard and promote their children's welfare. The assessments are usually ordered by the family courts during care order proceedings where a local authority is the applicant. The residential family centre can also provide advice, guidance and counselling to the parents. All residential family centres must register with Ofsted before they can operate.
8. When inspecting residential family centres, Ofsted gives consideration to knowledge and understanding gained from previous inspections, and to relevant legislation including:
  - The Children Act 1989
  - The Care Standards Act 2000
  - The Residential Family Centres Regulations 2002 (as amended)
  - Residential family centres: national minimum standards (2013)
  - The Care Standards Act 2000 (Registration)(England) Regulations 2010
  - The Equality Act 2010.

## Frequency of inspection

9. The frequency of inspections is set out in regulations.<sup>2</sup> All residential family centres must have at least one inspection during each three-year inspection cycle.
10. The timing of any inspection will be influenced by an assessment of:
  - the outcomes of previous inspections
  - any current complaints or enforcement action
  - notifications received from a residential family centre
  - other relevant information including complaints, allegations and whistleblowing received by Ofsted.

## Types of inspection

11. The following types of inspection may be carried out by Ofsted in residential family centres.

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<sup>2</sup> Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills (Fees and Frequency of Inspections) (Children's Homes, etc.) (Amendment) Regulations SI 2007/694, as amended.

- A **full inspection** is carried out at least once during each three-year cycle. This inspection is conducted against the evaluation schedule and will result in a set of graded judgements and a published report.
- A **monitoring inspection** may be carried out if there is an incident, complaint or concern regarding the residential family centre, or to follow up on enforcement action.
- A **survey or thematic inspection** may be carried out to gather evidence on a particular theme, issue or aspect of best practice that Ofsted is examining with the intention of publishing a report on the findings. A survey inspection may be conducted as part of a thematic inspection or separately as part of Ofsted's programme of surveys.

We will not conduct a survey or thematic inspection at the same time as a monitoring inspection.

## Notice given for inspection

12. Full inspections are always unannounced. Monitoring inspections will usually be unannounced. Survey inspections will be arranged with a short notice period.

## Inspectors

13. Residential family centres are usually inspected by one social care inspector.

## Evaluation schedule

14. The evaluation schedule is set out in a separate document. It outlines the judgements that inspectors make during inspection and the grade descriptors that they use to arrive at their judgements.
15. Inspectors make judgements on:
  - overall effectiveness
  - the quality of assessment
  - the quality of care, support and guidance
  - safeguarding children and parents
  - leadership and management.
16. In all residential family centre inspections, we will examine the extent to which the service fulfils its main purpose and responsibility which is to assess parental capacity to respond to their children's needs, to promote their welfare and to protect them from harm. The quality and accuracy of these (usually court-ordered) assessments are not only fundamental to the protection of the children but will significantly affect their futures and those of their families.

17. Residential family centres must meet their statutory obligations, as set out in legislation and regulations, and must take account of the national minimum standards.
18. However, failure to meet all the legal requirements in full may not necessarily result in a judgement of inadequate. The seriousness of the failure and its potential impact on children and parents is considered carefully to determine how it should impact on the overall judgement. Inspectors use their professional judgement to assess the impact of any breach against other aspects of the service provided.
19. The evaluation schedule sets out the criteria for outstanding, good, adequate and inadequate services. Inspectors must evaluate the evidence in a particular area and consider how it best fits against the descriptors for outstanding, good, adequate or inadequate, before making a judgement. Examples of practice may be used to support more than one judgement. Judgements are made on carefully balanced consideration of the impact on children and parents, and not on a formulaic approach.

## Grading inspection findings

20. Inspectors make judgements against the evaluation schedule using a four-point scale.

<b>Outstanding</b>	a service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements
<b>Good</b>	a service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements
<b>Adequate</b>	a service that only meets minimum requirements
<b>Inadequate</b>	a service that does not meet minimum requirements

21. The descriptors are hierarchical: an outstanding service should meet the grade descriptors for an outstanding service and also for a good and an adequate service, and a good service should meet those for good and adequate.

## The approach following an overall judgement of inadequate

22. An overall effectiveness judgement of inadequate is made where there are failures to comply with requirements and, as a result, the outcomes for children and parents are inadequate or they are not protected from significant harm.
23. Where a residential family centre is judged inadequate, inspectors set requirements, clearly identifying the regulatory failures under the Care Standards Act 2000 or the Residential Family Centres Regulations 2002 as amended (2012). The registered person/s must meet these requirements as set out in regulation.

24. Inspectors may also make recommendations to help the registered person/s to further improve the quality and standards of care. Recommendations always relate to the national minimum standards.
25. On making a judgement of inadequate for a residential family centre, the inspector must always consult with a Compliance, Investigation and Enforcement (CIE) Professional, who must instigate a case discussion where:
  - there is evidence of any immediate risk of harm to children and/or parents, breach of regulations that constitutes an offence, or breach of any conditions placed on the registration
  - the last inspection resulted in a judgement of inadequate for overall effectiveness.
26. The inspector should also consider consulting with a CIE Professional where there is any history of:
  - complaints against the residential family centre that have not been dealt with in a satisfactory way
  - failure to comply with regulations and/or national minimum standards that have not been dealt with in a satisfactory way
  - failure to take satisfactory action to meet requirements/actions and recommendations that call into question the suitability of the registered person.
27. The purpose of the case discussion is to consider whether any enforcement action should be taken. The CIE handbook<sup>3</sup> contains detailed information about the criteria for instigating a case discussion, the enforcement options available, and the arrangements for following up enforcement activity.
28. Where we judge a residential family centre to be inadequate for overall effectiveness, the next inspection will normally take place within 12 months.

## Reporting findings at inspections

29. Each full inspection is followed by a report that sets out the inspection findings using text and grades, organised under the headings below.

### Report contents

Service information	Brief contextual information about the service
Overall effectiveness	Grade

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<sup>3</sup> Compliance, Investigation and Enforcement handbook, Ofsted, 2012;  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/compliance-investigation-and-enforcement-handbook](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/compliance-investigation-and-enforcement-handbook).



Areas for improvement	No grade
Quality of assessment	Grade
Quality of care, support and guidance	Grade
Safeguarding children and parents	Grade
Leadership and management	Grade
About this inspection	Information about the legal basis for the inspection

30. The inspection report is sent to the provider within 10 working days of the end of the inspection for a factual accuracy check. The registered provider or representatives should return the full inspection report with any comments on factual accuracy within five working days. The final report is published on the Ofsted website within 20 working days of the end of the inspection (irrespective of appeals or complaints).

## Inspection activity

31. Inspectors focus their inspection activities on evaluating the quality and impact of services in assessing parents' ability to safeguard and promote their children's welfare, and the impact that the residential family centre has on the plans for children's lives.
32. In preparation for inspection, inspectors consider the information that Ofsted has about the service. This includes:
- the results of the annual online questionnaires completed by service users, staff, commissioners and partner organisations
  - previous inspection reports
  - the statement of purpose and the residents' guide
  - concerns and complaints received
  - notifications of significant events received
  - regulation 25 reports received
  - any changes to registration, including change of manager
  - any current or recent enforcement activity.
33. On arrival at the residential family centre, inspectors will request specific information from the registered manager or person in charge (see Annex A of *Conducting the Inspection*).
34. Inspection activities, where possible, include
- examining a sample of assessments submitted to the court
  - listening to and talking with children and parents

- observing staff interactions with children and parents
  - observing key activities, such as handovers of information between staff
  - gathering views from partners and stakeholders, such as: representatives of the local authorities that have made placements; social workers; Independent Reviewing Officers; Cafcass; school staff; local police; the Local Authority Designated Officer; relevant health professionals; Children's Guardians; independent visitors
  - sampling case files and records
  - inspecting premises, facilities, surveillance methods and health and safety arrangements
  - discussions with managers and staff.
35. A maximum of four and a half inspector days will be allocated to each residential family centre inspection. This includes time for preparation, fieldwork and report writing. This may vary in exceptional circumstances.
36. The inspection specifically focuses on gathering evidence against the evaluation schedule. The detail of activities undertaken and discussions held may vary depending on the lines of enquiry for each individual inspection.

## **The views of children, parents, professionals and stakeholders: questionnaires**

37. We will gather the views of children and parents and other interested parties using online questionnaires. These questionnaires are available in different formats and languages on request. Hard copies will also be available for parents. The questionnaires will be anonymous so that those completing them cannot be identified.
38. In this context, professionals and stakeholders include commissioners and professionals who support the work of the centre, for example: healthcare professionals, social workers, Children's Guardians and family therapists.
39. Inspectors take account of the extent to which residential family centres have asked for and acted upon the views of children and parents in reviewing and improving services and outcomes. Inspectors also consider the views of those children, parents and partners they speak to during on-site evidence gathering.

## **Communication and feedback**

40. Inspectors provide regular opportunities for dialogue and feedback during the inspection. Oral feedback about draft findings, including strengths and weaknesses in practice, is given to the residential family centre at the end of the inspection. Requirements and recommendations to be made are clearly stated at this time.

## Confidentiality

41. Ofsted takes all steps necessary to ensure that information provided to inspectors remains confidential where appropriate, but cannot guarantee this. Evidence gathered during inspections may be subject to disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, but the identity of individuals will not be disclosed.
42. Where Ofsted considers that any information provided indicates the actual or likelihood of harm to a child or young person, we pass the necessary information to the local authority children's service for action and we would inform the manager of the centre where appropriate.

## Quality assurance

43. Quality assurance describes the action that we take to ensure that an inspection is of the quality needed and expected by users, providers and Ofsted.
44. The inspector has responsibility for ensuring that all the evidence gathered is robust, reliable and secure.
45. For national consistency, some inspections include an Ofsted inspector whose role is to quality assure the inspection process. During these visits, the visiting inspector talks with managers and other staff and, where appropriate, those living at the centre. S/he should always seek the views of staff at the residential family centre about the conduct of the inspection and sample the way that evidence is being gathered and used.
46. All inspection reports are subject to a quality assurance process. This may result in changes to provisional judgements.
47. Ofsted asks the manager of the residential family centre to complete a short evaluation form following each inspection, which is used to improve the quality of inspections.

## Conduct during the inspection

48. Inspectors must uphold the highest professional standards in their work, and ensure that everyone they encounter during inspections is treated fairly and with respect. The code of conduct requires inspectors to:
  - evaluate objectively, be impartial and inspect without fear or favour
  - evaluate provisions in line with frameworks, national standards or requirements
  - base all evaluations on clear and robust evidence
  - have no connection with the provider that could undermine their objectivity

- report honestly and clearly, ensuring that judgements are fair and reliable
- carry out their work with integrity, treating all those they meet with courtesy, respect and sensitivity
- endeavour to minimise the stress on those involved in the inspection
- act in the best interests and well-being of service users
- maintain purposeful and productive dialogue with those being inspected, and communicate judgements clearly and frankly
- respect the confidentiality of information, particularly about individuals and their work
- respond appropriately to reasonable requests
- take prompt and appropriate action on any child protection or health and safety issues.

## Expectations of providers

49. For inspection and regulation to be productive and beneficial, inspectors and providers must establish and maintain a professional working environment based on courtesy and professional behaviour. Inspectors are expected to uphold the code of conduct, and Ofsted also expects providers to:
- be courteous and professional
  - apply their own codes of conduct in their dealings with inspectors
  - allow inspectors to conduct their visit in an open and honest way
  - allow inspectors to evaluate the provision objectively against the standards and framework
  - provide evidence that enables the inspector to report honestly, fairly and reliably about their provision
  - work with inspectors to minimise disruption, stress and bureaucracy
  - ensure the health and safety of inspectors while on their premises
  - maintain a purposeful dialogue with the inspector
  - draw any concerns about the inspection to the attention of the inspector promptly and in a suitable manner
  - respect that inspectors need to observe practice and talk to staff and users without the presence of a manager or registered person.

## Complaints

50. The great majority of Ofsted's work is carried out smoothly and without incident. If concerns arise during an inspection, these should be raised with the inspector as soon as possible during the inspection visit. This provides an opportunity to resolve the matter before the inspection is completed. Any

concerns about the factual accuracy of the findings in the report can be raised after the inspection and will be considered as part of the quality assurance process.

51. If it has not been possible to resolve concerns through these means, a formal complaint can be raised under Ofsted's complaints procedure:  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/130128](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/130128).

## More information

52. We hope that you find this document useful in helping you to prepare for your inspection. If you have any queries about your inspection, please discuss them with your inspector when they contact you.
53. If you have any other general queries about the inspections of residential family centres, please contact Paul Armitage on 0300 123 1231 or by email at [socialcare@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:socialcare@ofsted.gov.uk).