

Requirements for completing a children's centre inspection evidence base

Guidance for inspectors

This document sets out the guidance for inspectors when completing an evidence base for a children's centre inspection. It should be read in conjunction with parts 1 and 2 of the *Children's centre inspection handbook*.

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361

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Contents

Introduction	4
The evidence form (EF)	4
Summary evidence forms	5
Other evidence includes:	6
Post inspection checklist for inspection	6
Simultaneous inspection event	6
Lead inspector's checklist of evidence to be returned to ISP via prepaid envelope	7
Lead inspector's checklist for items to be submitted via the ISP portal	7
Table 1	8
Ofsted children's centres evidence form	8

Introduction

1. The following information provides a list of requirements and indicators for building and completing an evidence base. A checklist is available at the end for lead inspectors to attach when sending the evidence base to inspection service providers (ISPs). This will enable lead inspectors to verify 'at a glance' what relevant evidence material is included. The checklist can be given to each inspector at the beginning of an inspection or completed post-inspection. In addition, table 1 provides coding information for evidence forms.
2. The requirements are in four parts:
 - Observation evidence forms
 - Summary evidence forms
 - Other types of evidence
 - Evidence checklist

The evidence form

3. The evidence form (EF) remains the document for recording all first-hand evidence. They are completed for any observation of delivery, interviews, analysis of case files and documents or other evidence that may be collected during inspection. They can also be used for recording evidence from meetings such as end of day feedback meetings. EFs must be written at the time of the observation/review and/or meeting and not left to be typed up at a later date. The evidence base should provide convincing evidence to support the main findings and sufficient detail to substantiate the recommendations.
4. When completing the EF, inspectors should note carefully the following:
 - Ensure that the key labelling information is recorded accurately at the top of the EF. Include clear information on the context and focus of the observation, meeting or activity.
 - No one observed or interviewed should be named or be referred to by initials on the EFs. Recording the individual's role is sufficient.
 - All EFs should be written in black ink, legible and sufficiently clear for scanning. Each team member's set of EFs should be individually initialled and numbered from one upwards.
 - Strengths and areas for improvement should be clearly summarised on EFs and be convincingly supported.
 - The lead inspector will sample EFs from all team members to check the robustness of the evidence against the judgements as part of routine quality assurance checks.
 - A short note should be made on the EF detailing any feedback given to a member of staff by an inspector following the observation of an activity.

It is often helpful, particularly in complaint investigations, to record the member of staff's response, particularly when their view differs from that of the inspector.

- A record or summary of any conversations held with the ISP and/or national helpdesk should be kept and included in the evidence.
- The EF can be used flexibly as a '**running EF**'. This might consist of repeated visits to a given activity to see, for example, the progress of work in a long session without remaining present the whole time.
- The information contained within evidence forms may be open to disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act (FOI), especially where they do not comprise personal data.
- **Where information is given in confidence, inspectors should underline/highlight the relevant parts of the EF and make a note to that effect.** This will make it very clear, if release is requested, which elements will be considered for non-disclosure.
- However, it should be pointed out that it will not always be possible for the inspector to prevent others guessing where the information originated. There are also further circumstances where Ofsted are unable to maintain confidentiality. The most likely scenario would be where inspectors have a duty to pass on disclosures that raise child protection or safeguarding issues, or circumstances where serious misconduct or potential criminal activity are involved. In such circumstances, inspectors should make clear that it may not be possible to guarantee anonymity.

Summary evidence forms

5. Each team member will complete a summary EF based on the centre they have been linked with and/or the theme or aspect they are pursuing during the inspection.
6. Each single centre, including those inspected as part of a simultaneous inspection, will require a summary EF. The allocated lead inspector will need to submit the summary EF they have completed for their designated centre (that is the centre they are designated to write the report for) onto the ISP portal.
7. The lead inspector for a children's centre group inspection will complete the final summary EF pulling together the main strengths and areas for development from the team.
8. Summary evidence forms **MUST** be completed electronically in full and **must not** just record the grades.
9. Summary EFs should contain a range of clearly marked and recorded examples which support each key judgement and link to the final text. The source EF number(s) for judgements should be clearly recorded.

10. The body of evidence supporting judgements should link and build logically throughout the inspection and be reflected in the summary EF.

Other evidence includes:

- any information recorded or provided on inspection is evidence; inspectors, where appropriate, should record and logically arrange any information they receive
 - an accurate account of feedback provided by the inspection team members at team meetings, along with any significant issues raised by the centre leader/s, action(s) agreed by the centre leader/lead inspector and any comments from the centre leader/s, including where they agree with inspectors' feedback
 - notes from the final judgement team meeting and formal feedback meeting, including any likely follow-up, acknowledgement, or specific feedback from the centre
 - other additional direct evidence that the lead inspector believes is important to retain, such as key data tables.
11. Lead inspectors should check or delegate to a team member the responsibility for ensuring that the body of evidence from each team member is cross-referenced to the summary EF.

Post-inspection checklist for inspection

12. The checklist below should be attached to an inspector's evidence base as an indication of what is included and submitted in the pre-paid ISP envelope.
13. Inspection team evidence to be submitted contains:
 - evidence forms for each inspector in numerical order
 - a final electronically **completed** summary EF for each centre/aspect/theme (collected on inspection using an encrypted memory stick).

Simultaneous inspection event

14. The coordinating lead inspector for a simultaneous inspection is responsible for collating the evidence base and sending to the ISP. The lead inspector for each single centre must complete a summary EF and submit to the ISP portal.

Lead inspector's checklist of evidence to be returned to ISP via prepaid envelope

Inspector's name	Complete Y/ N	EF numbers	Summary EF(s)	Additional evidence. Please indicate what

Lead inspector's checklist for items to be submitted via the ISP portal

Item	Submitted (Y/ N)
Team inspection briefing	
Full report	
Final summary evidence form (this must be completed in full)	

Table 1: Information required on an EF

Ofsted children's centres evidence form					
Children's centre		Date/time		EF no	
Required on all EFs Insert name of provider or inspection number.		Required on all EFs Date/time of the EF.		Required on all EFs Number the EFs consecutively and insert your initials.	
OIN		EF type	L A D O	Observation/interview time (minutes)	
This is your Ofsted inspector number, which is shown on your Ofsted photo-identity card.		Required on all EFs L for observations of learning, assessment, activity/service A for analysis D for discussions O for any other EF If 'dropping in' to a number of sessions without awarding individual grades, put O.		Required on all EFs* Enter an estimate of the time, in minutes, spent observing an activity or interview.	
Context and focus					
<p>What is the reason for this observation/inspection activity? Ensure that EFs include a specific focus and identify links to the inspection theme/issues.</p> <p>*A single EF may be used to record a number of short observations linked to exploring a particular theme. In this case enter the total observation time and note the split observations in this box.</p>					
<p>Evidence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Make good use of the inspection guidance and grade descriptions. ■ Use EFs to record all meetings, observations and document reading. ■ Ensure that the balance of strengths and weaknesses reflects the grade. ■ Grades should be unequivocal. ■ EFs should be clear and legible. ■ No individual should be named on any evidence form. ■ Ensure that writing is professional as EFs could be subject to external scrutiny through FOI. 					
<p>Evaluation</p> <p>In the overall evaluation box, provide a clear summary identifying the main strengths and weaknesses on every EF. Ensure that the balance of strengths and weaknesses reflects the grade.</p> <p>Ensure that as many grades as possible are entered on EFs and that these are unequivocal and substantiated.</p>				<p>Grades</p> <p>Ensure that as many grades as possible are entered on EFs.</p>	