

Inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers

Consultation document

This is a consultation document on proposals to inspect services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers. Ofsted seeks the widest possible range of views from those who have an interest in, or expertise relating to, child protection and provision for children looked after in order to ensure that the changes proposed take proper account of the needs and circumstances of all interested parties.

The closing date for the consultation is 12 July 2013.

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361

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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Contents

About Ofsted	4
Purpose and background to the consultation	4
How we will inspect	6
Changes to inspection	6
Proposal (I): That the grade descriptors describe the characteristics of 'good' in each judgement area	8
Proposal (II) Undertaking a review of the Local Safeguarding Children Board	20
Proposal (III): That a judgement of 'inadequate' in any key judgement area limits the overall effectiveness judgement to inadequate	22
The consultation process	23
Sending back your questionnaire	23
Questionnaire for the inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers	24
What did you think of this consultation?	30
How did you hear about this consultation?	30
Additional questions about you	31
Annex A. Summary of the outcomes of consultation on the inspection of multi-agency arrangements for the protection of children, and services for children and young people looked after and care leavers	33

About Ofsted

1. The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages.

Purpose and background to the consultation

2. This consultation seeks your views on the proposed new arrangements for inspecting services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers. Your views will help to refine and develop the framework for inspecting these services.
3. The proposed new inspection framework supersedes plans to launch separate frameworks for inspections of child protection and services for children looked after. It brings together much of the content of those two frameworks; therefore this consultation seeks views only on those areas not previously consulted upon. We have included a summary of the responses to earlier consultations on the two separate inspection frameworks that ended in summer 2012. These responses would ordinarily have been published in April 2013, alongside the new frameworks. Since those inspections will now not take place and will instead be replaced by a single integrated framework, we have taken the decision to present the views already shared with us in this report. A summary of those consultation responses is in Annex A.
4. Children and young people who are in need of help and protection, or who are looked after, are vulnerable and face considerable disadvantages. They deserve to be protected and cared for by people and services whose practice is judged to be at least 'good'. The proposed new inspection framework sets out the characteristics of 'good'. This is the minimum standard that children, young people and their families and carers have a right to expect.
5. We are seeking views and comments to help us to describe 'good' and to base that on the knowledge and experience of all those with an interest in child protection and children looked after. We are not consulting on our decision to replace 'adequate' with a 'requires improvement' judgement. We are convinced it is right to emphasise that each child should receive a service from authorities that are good or better and any that are not yet 'good' will by definition 'require improvement'. These authorities should be taking immediate and decisive action to improve.
6. This framework proposes three key judgements. We propose that a judgement of 'inadequate' in any of these three key judgements should lead to a judgement of 'inadequate' in overall effectiveness. To be judged 'inadequate' in any key area means that children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not being promoted.

7. In addition to the key judgements, there are two contributory and graded judgements to describe significant and statutory aspects of provision for adoption and for care leavers. The performance and effectiveness of these services heavily influence the key judgement they are part of. If any one of these two judgements is 'inadequate' this will not automatically limit the local authority to an overall judgement of 'inadequate' (as is the case for the key judgements). However, in some instances the significance and seriousness of inadequacy may be such that the key judgement is held at 'inadequate', thereby limiting the overall effectiveness judgement to 'inadequate'.
8. Statutory guidance and regulations¹ set out that the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) have a key role in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in the area and ensuring the effectiveness of the contribution of statutory partners. The Department for Education will be consulting in the near future on legislation² and regulations that will allow Ofsted to review the effectiveness of LSCBs. Subject to the necessary regulations coming into force, we propose to conduct this review at the same time as inspecting the local authority. We propose that the review of the LSCB will include a graded judgement and that, subject to the contents of the regulations, we will produce a report on the effectiveness of the LSCB. We propose to combine our report on the effectiveness of the LSCB with our report on the inspection of the local authority. We are seeking views on the detail of how we will make our judgements in this review of the effectiveness of the LSCB. The review judgement is standalone and will not limit the overall effectiveness judgement.
9. Following the commencement of section 15A of the Children Act 2004 and the regulations under it coming into force, we will undertake a further consultation to enable interested parties to comment on our proposals about the review of LSCBs in light of the finalised regulations.
10. Following this consultation we propose to implement the changes from November 2013. We will use the information gathered from the consultation to finalise the revised arrangements for inspection.
11. We will evaluate the responses received from this consultation and in November 2013 we will publish the main findings from the consultation on our website.

¹ Children Act 2004: www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/31/contents; The Local Safeguarding Children Boards Regulations 2006: www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2006/90/contents/made; and *Working together to safeguard children* (DfE), 2013;

www.education.gov.uk/aboutdfe/statutory/g00213160/working-together-to-safeguard-children.

² Children Act 2004, Section 15A: www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/31/section/15A.

How we will inspect

12. Inspectors will look closely at the experiences of children and young people who have needed or still need help and/or protection. This also includes children and young people who are looked after and young people who are leaving care and starting their lives as young adults. Inspectors will consider the quality of work and the difference adults make to the lives of children, young people and families. They will read case files, observe how professional staff work with families and each other and discuss the effectiveness of help and care given to children and young people. Wherever possible, they will talk to children, young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors will try to understand what the local authority knows about how well it is performing and the difference it is making for the children and young people it is trying to help, protect and look after. There will be an inspection of each local authority on a three-year cycle.

Changes to inspection

13. From November 2013, the framework will include:
- a judgement grade of 'requires improvement' that will replace the current 'adequate' judgement
 - grade descriptors to describe 'good' in each of the following three key judgement areas:
 - the experiences and progress of children who need help and protection
 - the experiences and progress of children looked after and achieving permanence (including additional graded judgements on (i) *adoption performance* and (ii) *the experiences and progress of care leavers*)
 - leadership, management and governance
 - a review of *the effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Children Board* and will include a graded judgement of this effectiveness³
 - grade descriptors for 'outstanding', 'requires improvement' and 'inadequate' that are derived from 'good' as the benchmark
 - an overall effectiveness judgement that will be made based on the evaluation of performance in the three key judgements; a judgement of 'inadequate' in any of the three key judgements will mean that overall effectiveness will also be judged inadequate.
14. We are seeking your views on three specific proposals.

³ This is subject to commencement of section 15A of the Children Act 2004.

15. The first proposal concerns the grade descriptors for the judgement of 'good' in each of the five performance areas. These include the three key judgements and two graded judgements. We want to know if they describe what children and young people should experience; the help, protection and care they should receive; and the progress they should make.
16. The second proposal is how we will review the effectiveness of the LSCB. We have set out how we propose to make a graded judgement about the LSCB and want to know if this is how we should review whether an LSCB is 'outstanding', 'good', 'requires improvement' or 'inadequate'.
17. The third proposal is that a judgement of 'inadequate' in any of the three key judgement areas should limit the overall effectiveness judgement to 'inadequate'. We want to know what you think about this.
18. Proposal (I) below sets out the grade descriptors for 'good' for each of the six performance areas; this is followed by proposal (II) in relation to a review of the LSCB and proposal (III). You can read about the consultation process on page 23. The consultation questions that we would like you to answer start on page 24. Annex A sets out a summary of responses to the previous consultations on the separate inspection of arrangements to protect children and the inspection of services for children looked after and care leavers.

Proposal (I): That the grade descriptors describe the characteristics of 'good' in each judgement area

Key judgement 1: 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 through multi-agency arrangements. Thresholds between early help and statutory child protection work are appropriate, understood and operate effectively. 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. Children and young people experience timely, multi-agency help and protection through risk-based assessment, authoritative practice, planning and review that secures change.

A local authority is likely to be judged to be 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.
- Children and young people 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.
- 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.
- Children, young people and families are offered help when 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 services is lessened or avoided. The interface between early help and statutory child protection work is clearly and effectively differentiated.
- Information-sharing between agencies and professionals is timely, specific and effective.
- 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, including out of normal office hours.

- Thresholds⁴ for intervention accord with the requirements of legislation, are understood by partners, consistently applied, well embedded, reviewed and updated regularly. Drift and delay are avoided.
- 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.
- Child protection enquiries are thorough and timely and always led by a suitably qualified, experienced registered social worker. Findings in relation to significant harm are clear.
- Decision-making is undertaken by suitably qualified and experienced social workers and managers, with decisions clearly recorded.
- For children who need help and protection, assessments (including common assessments) are timely, proportionate to risk, informed by research and learning and by the historical context and significant events, and address all domains of the local framework for assessment.
- Assessments⁵ (including children in need assessments) result in a direct offer of help. 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.
- Children and young people who need protection are subject to a child protection plan that clearly identifies the necessary changes to be achieved within appropriate timescales for the child or young person. Children in need also have a plan setting out the help that is offered. Social workers engage with the family who understand what has to change, the help they will receive and the options for the future.
- Plans and decisions are reviewed and alternative action is taken where the circumstances for children do not change and the risk of harm or actual harm remains.
- Children and young people are protected through effective multi-agency arrangements. Case conferences, strategy meetings, core groups and MARAC⁶ risk meetings are attended by key participants and are effective forums for timely information-sharing, planning and risk-based decision making.

⁴ Children Act 1989; www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents and *Working together to safeguard children*.

⁵ Assessments and local protocols for assessments should be in line with *Working together to safeguard children*.

⁶ 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.

- 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 co-ordinated between agencies, including management through MARAC.
- Children and young people who are missing from home, care⁷ or education⁸ 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.⁹ 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 action in place to protect them and to reduce the risk of harm of further harm.¹⁰
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- Children, young people and families have timely access to, and use the services of, an advocate where appropriate.

⁷ This refers to both local authorities' responsibility for 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.

⁸ The authority has arrangements in place to identify the number of children receiving home education and to respond where there are concerns about their welfare.

⁹ *Interim guidance on the management, recording and investigation of missing persons*, Association of Chief Police Officers, 2013; <http://www.acpo.police.uk/documents/crime/2013/201303-cba-int-guid-missing-persons.pdf> and statutory guidance once published.

¹⁰ 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.

Key judgement 2: 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 siblings 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 are in accordance with their plan for permanence. 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.

In making the children looked after and achieving permanence judgement, inspectors will take into account their judgement on adoption performance and the experiences and progress of care leavers.

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.
- There is evidence of the effective use of the Public Law Outline, including letters before proceedings, family group conferences and parallel planning. 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.
- 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 plan of support.

- Applications and assessments for care or other orders are accepted by 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.
- 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 understand how to complain and have access to an advocate and independent visitor.
- Children and young people are protected or helped to keep themselves safe from bullying.
- 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.
- Children and young people are in good health. Their health needs are identified and they receive help to be healthy and to improve their health. 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.
- Children and young people attend school or other educational provision and accurate assessments of their needs help them to make progress in their learning and development. The attainment gap is narrowing. The local authority maintains accurate and up-to-date information about how looked after children are progressing at school and takes action when they are not achieving.
- Those who do not attend school have access to 25 hours per week of good-quality registered alternative provision and there is regular review of their progress.
- 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.
- Children and young people live in safe, stable and appropriate homes or families with their siblings 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.

- 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, 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.
- Independent reviewing officers effectively challenge the quality of care plans and influence positively the work and planning for children's futures. Where they need to share evidence of poor practice, they escalate this appropriately to senior managers and leaders. As a result there is meaningful change and improved progress for children and young people who either return home or who are helped to find permanent alternatives that are in their best interests.
- Children and young people have appropriate, carefully assessed and supported contact with family and friends and other people who are important to them.
- 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.
- 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.
- Family-finding strategies are informed by the assessed needs of children and young people, there is decisive action and the avoidance of drift and delay is a priority.
- 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.
- Children and young people, whose care and support is provided through a 'social work practice', receive the same high-quality help that they could expect from the social work service provided directly by a local authority.
- Early planning and case management results in appropriate permanent placements that meet the needs of children and young people without delay.

- Well-trained and supported social workers engage effectively with 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.
- 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.
- 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 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.
- Plans to make permanent arrangements for children and young people are effectively and regularly reviewed by independent reviewing officers (IROs). These bring rigour and challenge to care planning and monitor the performance of the local authority as a corporate parent. 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.

Graded judgement 2a: The quality of an adoption service

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.

Adoption is likely to be judged good if:

- Adoption is considered for all children who are unable to return home or to their birth families and who need a permanent alternative home.
- The local authority demonstrates a sense of urgency (including the appropriate use of concurrent planning, parallel planning and fostering to adopt) in all adoption work, resulting in children being able to live at the earliest opportunity with an adoptive family who are able to meet their needs.
- Recruitment, preparation, prompt assessment, training and support of adopters enable the needs of children and young people to be met and help 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.
- The panel and agency decision-maker ensure that children are effectively matched with the most appropriate families and the panel promotes good practice through their work and regular reports to the local authority.
- Children who are adopted, their adoptive families, their birth relatives and adopted adults are informed of their entitlement to receive adoption support. When support is needed, it is provided quickly, effectively and leads to improved circumstances for the children, young people, families and carers involved.

Graded judgement 2b: 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 supported to have successful access to education, employment and training and enduring relationships they enjoy with staff and carers who meet their needs.

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.

The experiences and progress of care leavers is likely to be judged 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 plans are in place to reduce the risk of or actual harm to them.
- Pathway 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.
- The health needs of care leavers are clearly assessed, prioritised and met. Child and adolescent mental health, adult mental health provision, therapeutic help and services for learning or physically disabled young people and adults are available when they are needed.
- 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.
- Care leavers are positive about themselves, show emotional resilience and take responsibility for their behaviour or have support to do so. They are able to ask for and identify an adult who can help them.
- 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 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 social worker) to support them.

- Care leavers succeed in their transition to greater independence and adulthood at a time that is right for them. Where appropriate, 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 when relevant.
- Care leavers develop the skills and confidence they need to maximise their chances of successful growth to adulthood and, where relevant, maximise their chances of successful parenthood. 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.
- Care leavers have access to employment opportunities, including work experience, and those who pursue this option achieve their potential.
- Care leavers who are supported by providers of social work services (a social work practice) are as well cared for and supported as those care leavers who are supported by local authorities.

Key judgement 3: Leadership, management and governance

Leadership, management and governance arrangements comply with statutory guidance¹¹ 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 most disadvantaged. 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. There is effective engagement with the relevant local partnerships including the Health and Well-being Board. The DCS works closely with the LSCB chair and the chief executive holds the LSCB chair to account for the effectiveness of the LSCB.

Leadership, management and governance is likely to be judged good if:

- Local authority senior managers, leaders and elected members discharge their individual and collective statutory responsibilities with a clear distinction between political, strategic and operational roles.
- The local authority has detailed and relevant knowledge of its local communities, including looked after children and care leavers. There is evidence that it works well with other strategic bodies such as the Local Safeguarding Children Board, 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.
- 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

¹¹ *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, 2012; www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/DFE-00034-2012.

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.

- The joint strategic needs assessment and the sufficiency statements are aligned, 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.
- 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 engages partners where appropriate to support children and young people.
- The local authority establishes effective relationships with Cafcass, the health community and the family courts to 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.
- The local authority workforce is sufficient, 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.¹²
- 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.
- 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.
- Where a local authority delegates any of its statutory functions to a 'social work practice', 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.

¹² *Standards for employers and supervision framework*, Department for Education, 2012; www.education.gov.uk/swrb/a0074263/standards-for-employers-and-supervision-framework.

Proposal (II) Undertaking a review of the Local Safeguarding Children Board

That the following grade descriptors describe the characteristics we should take into account when reviewing the effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Children Board

The Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) complies with its statutory responsibilities in accordance with the Children Act 2004 and the Local Safeguarding Children Boards Regulations 2006. The LSCB is able to provide evidence that it coordinates the work of statutory partners in helping, protecting and caring for children in its local area and there are mechanisms in place to monitor the effectiveness of those local arrangements. Multi-agency training in the protection and care of children is effective and evaluated regularly for impact on management and practice. Policies and procedures in respect of thresholds for intervention are understood and operate effectively. Practice challenge and casework audits drive improved front-line performance and strong management oversight. Serious case reviews, management reviews and reviews of child deaths provide learning and feedback opportunities to the local authority that drive local improvement. The LSCB is influential in using its evaluation and analysis of local performance to inform the planning and delivery of high-quality services.

The LSCB is likely to be judged to be good if:

- The governance arrangements enable statutory partners (including the Health and Well-Being Board and the Children's Trust) to assess whether they are fulfilling their statutory responsibilities to help (including early help), protect and care for children and young people. There is evidence that this leads to clear improvement priorities being identified that are incorporated into a delivery plan that improves outcomes.
- There is evidence of regular and effective monitoring and evaluation of front-line practice and the quality of management oversight. This extends across the breadth of child protection, services for children who are looked after and those who are leaving or who have left care. It leads to improvements in the quality of service that children and young people receive.
- The local authority is made aware of the findings and analysis of case audits, including the impact on children, young people and families. The experiences of children and young people are used as a measure of improvement. There is evidence of audit findings improving practice.
- Practitioners working in core groups with families are able to be involved in practice audits, identifying strengths, areas for improvement and lessons to be learned. These experiences are used effectively to improve practice and front-line management.

- The LSCB is an active and influential participant in informing and planning services for children, young people and families in the area and draws on its assessments of the effectiveness of multi-agency practice to help, protect and look after children and young people.
- The LSCB ensures that sufficient, high-quality multi-agency training is available and can demonstrate its effectiveness and its impact on improving practice and the experiences of children, young people, families and carers.
- The LSCB through its annual report provides a rigorous and transparent assessment of the performance and effectiveness of local services. It identifies areas of weakness, the causes of those weaknesses, evaluates and where necessary challenges the action being taken. The report includes lessons from management reviews, serious case reviews and child deaths within the reporting period.

Outstanding

- The LSCB is likely to be outstanding if in addition to meeting the requirements for a good judgement, it provides evidence of being a highly influential strategic arrangement that directly influences and improves performance at the frontline. That improvement is sustained and extends across multi-disciplinary practice with children, young people and families. Analysis and evaluation of performance is exceptional and helps the local authority and partners to properly understand the impact of services and the areas for improvement. There is a comprehensive range of training for managers and practitioners that is directly related to multi-agency improvement priorities.

Requires improvement:

- The LSCB is likely to require improvement if it is not yet demonstrating the characteristics of good.

Inadequate:

- The LSCB is likely to be inadequate if it is not demonstrating that it has effective arrangements in place and the required skills to discharge its statutory functions set out in *Working together to safeguard children*, the Children Act 2004 and the LSCB regulations 2006.

Proposal (III): That a judgement of 'inadequate' in any key judgement area limits the overall effectiveness judgement to inadequate

The three key judgement areas are:

- 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.

The consultation process

We welcome your responses to this consultation paper. The consultation opens on 14 June and closes on 12 July 2013.

The information you provide us with will inform our consideration of the framework for the inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers.

We will publish a response to the consultation at the same time that we intend to implement the new inspections, in November 2013.

Sending back your questionnaire

There are three ways of completing and submitting the questionnaire in the next section and/or sending us comments:

Online electronic questionnaire

Visit our website to complete and submit an electronic version of the questionnaire: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/ofsted-sif2013>

Print and post

Visit our website to print a Word or PDF version of the questionnaire that can be filled in by hand: www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/130168

When you have completed the questionnaire, please post it to:

8th floor
Ofsted
Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

Download and email

Visit our website to download a Word version of the questionnaire that you can complete on your computer: www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/130168

When you have completed the questionnaire, please email it to socialcare@ofsted.gov.uk with the consultation name in the subject line.

Questionnaire for the inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers

Confidentiality

The information you provide will be held by us. It will only be used for the purposes of consultation and research to help us to become more effective, shape policies and inform inspection and regulatory practice.

We will treat your identity in confidence, if you disclose it to us. However, we may publish an organisation's views.

Are you responding on behalf of an organisation?

Yes please complete Section 1

No please complete Section 2

Section 1

If you are completing the consultation on behalf of an organisation and would like us to consider publishing the views of your organisation, please indicate this below.

Organisation: .

Section 2

Which of the below best describes you? Please tick one option.

I am:

young person	<input type="checkbox"/>	parent/carer	<input type="checkbox"/>
charity	<input type="checkbox"/>	elected representative	<input type="checkbox"/>
foster parent/carer	<input type="checkbox"/>	independent provider	<input type="checkbox"/>
local authority Chief Executive	<input type="checkbox"/>	local authority Director of Children's Services	<input type="checkbox"/>
Local Safeguarding Children Board Chair	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ofsted employee	<input type="checkbox"/>
practitioner in health	<input type="checkbox"/>	senior manager in health	<input type="checkbox"/>
practitioner in social care	<input type="checkbox"/>	senior manager in social care	<input type="checkbox"/>

practitioner in education	<input type="checkbox"/>	senior manager in education	<input type="checkbox"/>
umbrella group	<input type="checkbox"/>	voluntary sector organisation	<input type="checkbox"/>
criminal justice agency	<input type="checkbox"/>	other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>
prefer not to say	<input type="checkbox"/>		

Q1. Key judgement 1 (pages 8–10): To what extent do you agree or disagree with the grade descriptors describing 'good' experiences and progress of children who need help and protection?

Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/>	Agree <input type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree <input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree <input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly disagree <input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know <input type="checkbox"/>
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Comments:

Q2. Key judgement 2 (pages 11–14): To what extent do you agree or disagree with the grade descriptors describing 'good' experiences and progress of children who are looked after and achieving permanence?

Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/>	Agree <input type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree <input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree <input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly disagree <input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know <input type="checkbox"/>
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Comments:

Q3. Graded judgement 2a (page 15): To what extent do you agree or disagree that the quality of an adoption service that is 'good' has the characteristics described?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Comments:

Q4. Graded judgement 2b (pages 16–17): To what extent do you agree or disagree that the experiences and progress of care leavers are 'good' when the service has the characteristics described?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Comments:

Q5. Key judgement 3 (pages 18–19): To what extent do you agree or disagree that leadership, management and governance arrangements that are 'good' have the characteristics described?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Comments:

Q6. Undertaking a review of the Local Safeguarding Children Board (pages 20–21): To what extent do you agree or disagree that the grade descriptors describe the characteristics we should take into account when reviewing the effectiveness of the LSCB?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Comments:

Q7. To what extent do you agree or disagree that a judgement of 'inadequate' in any of the three key judgement areas should limit the overall effectiveness judgement to inadequate (page 22)?

Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/>	Agree <input type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree <input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree <input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly disagree <input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know <input type="checkbox"/>
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Comments:

Q8. Do you have any further comments? Please write them here.

What did you think of this consultation?

One of the commitments in our strategic plan is to monitor whether our consultations are accessible to those wishing to take part.

Please tell us what you thought of this consultation by answering the questions below.

	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Don't know
I found the consultation information clear and easy to understand.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I found the consultation easy to find on the Ofsted website.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I had enough information about the consultation topic.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I would take part in a future Ofsted consultation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

How did you hear about this consultation?

- Ofsted website
- Ofsted News*
- Ofsted email alerts service
- Ofsted conference
- Another organisation (please specify, if known)
- Other (please specify)

Is there anything you would like us to improve on or do differently for future consultations? If so, please tell us below.

Thank you for taking part in our consultation.

Additional questions about you

Your answers to the following questions will help us to evaluate how successfully we are communicating messages from inspection to all sections of society. **We would like to assure you that all responses are confidential and you do not have to answer every question.**

Please tick the appropriate box.

1. Gender

Female <input type="checkbox"/>	Male <input type="checkbox"/>
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2. Age

Under 14 <input type="checkbox"/>	14–18 <input type="checkbox"/>	19–24 <input type="checkbox"/>	25–34 <input type="checkbox"/>	35–44 <input type="checkbox"/>	45–54 <input type="checkbox"/>	55–64 <input type="checkbox"/>	65+ <input type="checkbox"/>
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3. Ethnic origin

a) How would you describe your national group?

British or mixed British	<input type="checkbox"/>	English	<input type="checkbox"/>
Irish	<input type="checkbox"/>	Northern Irish	<input type="checkbox"/>
Scottish	<input type="checkbox"/>	Welsh	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (specify if you wish)	<input type="checkbox"/>		

How would you describe your ethnic group?

Asian		Mixed ethnic origin	
Bangladeshi	<input type="checkbox"/>	Asian and White	<input type="checkbox"/>
Indian	<input type="checkbox"/>	Black African and White	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pakistani	<input type="checkbox"/>	Black Caribbean and White	<input type="checkbox"/>
Any other Asian background (specify if you wish)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Any other mixed ethnic background (specify if you wish)	<input type="checkbox"/>

Black		White	
African	<input type="checkbox"/>	Any White background (specify if you wish)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Caribbean	<input type="checkbox"/>	Any other ethnic background	
Any other Black background (specify if you wish)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Any other background (specify if you wish)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Chinese			
Any Chinese background (specify if you wish)	<input type="checkbox"/>		

4. Sexual orientation

Heterosexual <input type="checkbox"/>	Lesbian <input type="checkbox"/>	Gay <input type="checkbox"/>	Bisexual <input type="checkbox"/>
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5. Religion/Belief

Buddhist	<input type="checkbox"/>	Muslim	<input type="checkbox"/>
Christian	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sikh	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hindu	<input type="checkbox"/>	None	<input type="checkbox"/>
Jewish	<input type="checkbox"/>	Any other, please state:	<input type="checkbox"/>

6. Disability

Do you consider yourself to have a disability?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
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Annex A. Summary of the outcomes of consultation on the inspection of multi-agency arrangements for the protection of children, and services for children and young people looked after and care leavers

In 2012, Ofsted consulted on proposals for the development of inspections in two key areas of local authority children's services: multi-agency arrangements for the protection of children, and services for children and young people looked after and care leavers. The consultation on the former focused on local authority and partnership arrangements for children and young people who are being or who may be at risk of harm, including the provision and effectiveness of early help. Ofsted led the consultation. In respect of the latter, Ofsted proposed to replace three separate inspection frameworks with a single inspection to focus on local authority performance of its statutory responsibilities for children looked after and care leavers under the Children Act 1989, the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 and the Adoption and Children Act 2002.

Ofsted consulted on both proposals using an online survey, as well as feedback from focus groups and meetings. Over 500 individuals, including 244 parents and a wide range of practitioners and managers from social care, education, health and criminal justice agencies took part. Almost 200 responses came from groups, which included national bodies, charities and local authorities. We received 120 responses to a version of the online consultation written specifically for children and young people. Seventy-one per cent of this group were children looked after or care leavers. A further 183 children and young people from Ofsted's Your Say panel also gave their views.

The very large majority of respondents, including children, young people and parents, supported the proposed developments in both areas of inspection. They welcomed the clear and explicit focus on the experiences of children and young people. Respondents felt that the scope of the inspections was specific, extensive and appropriate. There was very strong support for a national programme of universal and unannounced inspections, with many comments on the importance of seeing services 'as they are' and evaluating how well they work together. Most respondents agreed that the methodology should be predicated on case-tracking and sampling to get as close as possible to children and young people's direct experiences of the services they receive. Respondents also stressed the importance of selecting a case sample that could test the quality of work in and across different agencies and additionally provide secure evidence of outcomes for different groups of children and young people over time.

Almost all parents and most other respondents agreed with the strong emphasis on evaluating the quality of front-line practice and for inspectors to shadow staff, observe meetings and to speak with parents and carers. The very large majority of respondents agreed with the proposals for inspecting leadership and governance and with each of the proposed judgement areas in the respective frameworks. Responses

from the Association of Directors of Children's Services supported the principle of shared judgements for child protection, but not the four-point scale ranging from outstanding to inadequate and not the integration of the performance of all partners into one overall judgement. The association proposed a pass or fail approach, with one key question: 'Is this good enough?' Individual local authorities who took part in the consultation expressed a wider range of views. For example, those who supported the four-point scale argued strongly that it enabled Ofsted to highlight and promote good practice through the use of 'good' and 'outstanding' judgements linked to published grade descriptors.

For inspections of services for children looked after and care leavers, there were mixed views on the proposal to include a sub-judgement on adoption as part of the judgement on achieving permanence. A common concern was that this might give undue weight to adoption over other equally valid permanence options, such as long-term fostering.

Most children and young people welcomed the new proposals for both inspection remits. They gave positive and creative suggestions on how children's views and experiences could be gathered effectively and reflected in inspections. Some were concerned that a single inspection of services for children looked after and care leavers would not afford the same level of scrutiny as the current and separate adoption and fostering inspections have been able to achieve. Care leavers, in particular, stressed the importance of focusing on young people's experiences and outcomes beyond the care system and how well they are supported in moving towards adulthood and independence.

In response to the consultation findings, Ofsted adapted the draft frameworks, evaluation schedules and methodology to be tested in pilot inspections from November 2012 to March 2013. Three pilots for services for children looked after and care leavers took place, alongside five pilots for multi-agency child protection arrangements.

Although these pilots were successful in part, they also highlighted methodological challenges that need to be resolved, including the transparency and accountability of judgements across all statutory partners with a responsibility for the protection and care of children. The learning from our pilots and the concerns expressed regarding the use of a single judgement for a complex multi-agency system led to Ofsted taking the decision to defer the multi-agency inspection of child protection and instead implement, from September 2013, an inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers. The valuable lessons from the consultation exercises and many of the positive elements of the inspection frameworks that were piloted have been brought forward and incorporated into the new inspection framework that is the subject of this consultation.