

# Joint targeted area inspections

Consultation document

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This consultation has two parts:

- The first part sets out the principles of the proposed framework for Ofsted, the Care Quality Commission, HMI Constabulary and HMI Probation to undertake joint targeted area inspections under section 20 of the Children Act 2004.
- The second part sets out how Ofsted proposes to use this framework to evaluate local authority performance as a single agency exercise. The scope of the Ofsted-only inspections under this framework will be the same as the joint targeted area inspection but will focus on the local authority and the effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Children Board in relation to the local authority.<sup>1</sup>



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<sup>1</sup> The evaluation of the local authority will be under section 136 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and the LSCB under section 15A of the Children Act 2004.



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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted)

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## Part 1 – Joint targeted area inspections

1. In February 2015, Ofsted, the Care Quality Commission (CQC), Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMI Probation) announced that we would not go ahead with the integrated inspections of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers and joint inspections of Local Safeguarding Children Boards ('integrated inspections'). We made this decision following the two pilot integrated inspections, from which we concluded that the methodology did not deliver sufficient added value and that an alternative approach should be developed.
2. At that time, we said that we all remained committed to working together and finding the right solution.
3. We are clear, based on our collective experience, that we add value when we bring our expertise together. There are areas of public and government concern where a joint interrogation and joint view from the inspectorates will add to the public debate, support improvement and most importantly have a positive impact on the experiences of children and young people.
4. At the same time, the Government report *Tackling child sexual exploitation*<sup>2</sup> sets out the intention to:

Deliver a new system of multi-agency inspections including Ofsted, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and the Care Quality Commission. This shake up of the current regime will deliver coordinated interventions and reinforce the need for joint working at all levels and better assess how local agencies are working in a co-ordinated manner to protect children and young people. Inspectorates will start a series of area inspections in 2015/16, at the same time as consulting on a joint inspection framework which they will begin to use from April 2016 onwards.
5. In our report on responses to our consultation on proposals for integrated inspections,<sup>3</sup> we set out a proposal to complete six joint targeted inspections in a local area before April 2016. These joint targeted area inspections will evaluate how local agencies work together to protect children and focus on specific areas of concern.

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<sup>2</sup> *Tackling Child sexual exploitation*; March 2015; Home Office;  
[www.gov.uk/government/publications/tackling-child-sexual-exploitation--2](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tackling-child-sexual-exploitation--2)

<sup>3</sup> *Integrated inspections: Consultation outcomes, learning from pilot inspections and next steps*;  
[www.gov.uk/government/consultations/integrated-inspections-of-services-for-children-in-need-of-help-and-protection-children-looked-after-care-leavers-joint-inspection-of-the-local-s](http://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/integrated-inspections-of-services-for-children-in-need-of-help-and-protection-children-looked-after-care-leavers-joint-inspection-of-the-local-s)

6. This document sets out our proposals for the delivery of these joint targeted area inspections under section 20 of the Children Act 2004. Inspections under section 20 are arranged and led by Ofsted. Each of the inspectorates will continue their single agency programmes of inspections of child protection and/or safeguarding.

## **How do I respond to the consultation?**

7. There are three ways of completing and submitting your response.

### **Online electronic questionnaire**

8. Visit [www.surveymonkey.com/r/JTAI](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/JTAI) to complete and submit an electronic version of the response form.

### **Download and email**

9. Visit [www.gov.uk/government/consultations/joint-targeted-area-inspections](http://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/joint-targeted-area-inspections) to download a Word version of this document and complete the questions on your computer. When you have completed the form, please email it to [socialcare@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:socialcare@ofsted.gov.uk) with the consultation name in the subject line – Joint Targeted Area Inspection.

### **Print and post**

10. Visit [www.gov.uk/government/consultations/joint-targeted-area-inspections](http://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/joint-targeted-area-inspections) to print a Word or PDF version of the response form that can be filled in by hand. When you have completed it, please post it to:

Social Care Policy Team  
Ofsted  
Aviation House  
125 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

## **Proposal one: the scope of the joint targeted area inspections**

11. We propose that the joint targeted area inspections will have a tightly defined scope focusing on areas likely to add value for the local partnership. We will evaluate the effectiveness of multi-agency practice to protect children. We also want to include some flexibility within the scope so that we have in place a joint published framework that will allow us to respond to specific areas of interest or concerns that may arise. We propose that these inspections will evaluate:
  - the multi-agency response to all forms of child abuse and neglect at the point of identification and referral/notification
  - the quality and impact of assessment and decision making in response to those notifications and referrals

- the experiences of a specific cohort of children and young people at risk of harm through a 'deep dive' investigation
  - the leadership and management of this work and the effectiveness of the local safeguarding children board (LSCB) in these areas.
12. For the period between October 2015 and March 2016, we propose that the deep dive aspect of the inspections is focused on children and young people at risk of sexual exploitation and those missing from home, school or care.
13. From April 2016, we intend that other areas of practice and/or cohorts of children and young people will be the focus of the deep dive aspect of the inspection. While not an exhaustive list, other cohorts of children could include:
- those receiving early help
  - those living with domestic abuse
  - older children at risk
  - children at risk of intra-familial sexual abuse
  - child neglect
  - girls at risk of female genital mutilation
14. The inspectorates do not plan to undertake public consultation to determine the areas of practice and/or groups of children that will be the focus of the deep dive investigation after this first round of inspections. However, we will use our existing engagement channels to gather the views of central government, children's representative groups and organisations that represent the agencies inspected as part of this programme.

Do you agree that the joint targeted area inspections can best help the local partnership to improve by focusing on:

- the multi-agency response to all forms of abuse and neglect at the point of identification, referral/notification?
  - Yes
  - No
  - Don't know
- the quality and impact of assessment and decision making in response to referrals?
  - Yes
  - No
  - Don't know

- the leadership and management of this work and the effectiveness of the LSCB in these areas
  - Yes
  - No
  - Don't know

Do you agree that the deep dive aspect of inspections between October 2015 and March 2016 should focus on experiences of children at risk of sexual exploitation and those missing from home, school or care?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

## **Proposal two: notice period and duration of fieldwork**

15. The inspection fieldwork will be contained within one week (Monday to Friday). We propose to notify the local partnership eight working days before the start of the inspection. For practical reasons, it is not possible to simultaneously notify, by phone, the full range of local service leaders. To reflect the joint nature of the inspection, we propose to contact the chair of the LSCB first (in their absence we would contact the LSCB business manager). Each inspectorate will contact each agency's senior leader immediately after we notify the chair of the LSCB.
16. During this short notice period, we will identify a small number of cases associated with the deep dive aspect of the inspection. We will ask the local area to undertake a joint audit of the quality, impact and effectiveness of the practice and an evaluation of the impact of management oversight of decision making for these children and young people. This will provide a baseline for the inspectorates to understand the quality of local practice with children and families and the effectiveness of multi-agency quality assurance arrangements.

Should the chair of the LSCB be the first person we notify of the inspection?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

If you have answered 'No', please tell us who you think should be notified first.

How many children's cases could the local partnership jointly audit in the eight working days before inspectors arrive in the local area?

- 5 cases or fewer
- 6 to 10 cases
- More than 10
- None, it is not possible to jointly audit cases in eight working days

### **Proposal three: inspection methodology**

17. Our experience of joint inspection tells us that setting up the inspection jointly is a vital first step to its smooth operation. We propose to use the short notice period to arrange a joint set-up meeting of all local senior agency leaders on the first day of the inspection. A representative of each of the inspectorates will attend to ensure that all parties have a shared understanding of how we will conduct the inspection.
18. Inspection fieldwork will focus on children's experiences. We propose that inspectors will work in small, multi-disciplinary teams. These teams will jointly track and sample cases to evaluate multi-agency practice to protect children at risk of harm rather than the inspectors gathering evidence independently. These teams may not be located together and may be located in different agencies.
  - Case tracking will be an 'end to end' look at specific children's experience and includes reviewing case records and discussions with children, their families/carers and the practitioners supporting them.
  - Case sampling looks at the experiences of a greater number of children but focuses on particular points in children's journeys.
19. Evidence from tracking and sampling will be triangulated to give depth and breadth to inspectors' evaluation of services.
20. The primary focus of the inspection will be on casework and practice, but inspectors will meet with key managers – for example, the chair of the LSCB, designated health leads and elected individuals (such as the elected member and the Police and Crime Commissioner) – to provide them with the opportunity to set out the relationship between practice, strategy and governance in the area.
21. Inspectors will seek to speak with children and families during the inspection and will evaluate each agency's engagement with children and their families in respect of their individual experiences and how their views influence the overall service offer.



22. We think joint feedback is the best way to help the local agencies understand what inspectors have found. We propose a single meeting of the joint inspection team and all local senior leaders on the final day of the inspection. The inspection team will set out the key findings, including strengths and areas for improvement/recommendations that will appear in the report and the evidence that supports the findings.

Is it feasible (with eight days' notice) to organise a joint set-up meeting on the first day of the inspection that brings together all the inspectorates and all the local service leaders?

- Yes, this is achievable with eight days' notice
- No, this is not achievable with eight days' notice
- Don't know

Is a joint feedback meeting involving all inspectorates and service leaders the best way to help local agencies understand the findings of the inspection or should each local agency meet with the relevant inspectorate separately so that they can focus on their part of the service?

- All local agencies should hear the findings together at a joint feedback meeting
- Each local agency should have the opportunity to receive feedback from the relevant inspectorate following the joint feedback
- Don't know

## **Proposal four: reporting the inspection outcome**

23. We propose to set out our inspection findings in a published letter to the chair of the LSCB and senior agency leaders responsible for the agencies inspected that make up the local partnership. The letter will set out the key findings of the inspection but will not make a graded judgement. The letter will set out key strengths and recommendations for either the local partnership or for a particular agency, where appropriate, to be clear what needs to improve and where the partnership needs to focus its attention.
24. We are interested to hear whether we should present recommendations arising from joint inspections as a single list without any indication of priority or whether it would be more helpful to separate them out into 'areas for priority (or urgent) action' and 'areas for development/improvement'. Where the inspectorates identify an area for priority or urgent action, we think this will be

an indicator of concern about something the local area must do as opposed to an area for development, which the area can improve on. We think this is the most effective way to indicate concern in a report that does not have graded judgements.

25. Ofsted, as the lead inspectorate, will quality assure the inspection report (letter), but it will be agreed by all inspectorates before it is sent to the partnership. We propose to send the draft report to the chair of the LSCB to coordinate a single factual accuracy response on behalf of the local partnership.
26. We propose that the final published inspection report will be available through each of the inspectorate's websites.
27. We propose to publish a joint overview report after each round of inspections that share a specific deep dive theme. The overview will identify strengths and lessons learnt from across the scope of the inspection, including lessons specific to the deep dive theme of that round.

Should the report list the recommendations without any indication of priority or should it indicate which issues need urgent or priority attention?

- Without prioritisation
- Indicate which issues need priority/urgent action
- Don't know

Should each agency and the chair of the LSCB be asked to comment on the factual accuracy of the draft report separately or should the chair of the LSCB be asked to coordinate a single joint response?

- A single joint response coordinated by the chair of the LSCB
- Separate responses from each agency and the chair of the LSCB
- Don't know

## Post inspection action plan

28. The current Children Act 2004 (Joint Area Reviews) Regulations 2005 require the local authority to draft an action plan in response to the inspection report.<sup>4</sup> The Department for Education (DfE) is holding a public consultation about changes to these Regulations that will enable Ofsted to determine who is to lead the response to the inspection report (an action plan) in collaboration with other agencies. Our approach to this aspect of the inspection will be based on the outcome of the DfE's consultation and the changes to the Regulations.

## Proposal five: identifying areas of good and best practice

29. To identify where we undertake joint targeted area inspections, we will consider a number of factors. Many of these factors will relate to known concerns in an area. For example, serious incidents referred to the Independent Police Complaints Commission, the outcome of serious case reviews, high profile media stories and other local intelligence. To help services across the country to improve, we are very keen to inspect areas where good or best practice can be highlighted.
30. For each of the inspectorates, the most reliable source of information about practice is their most recent inspection report. We are very interested in your views on what factors we should consider when identifying areas demonstrating good practice we could inspect. This will help our decision making on selecting geographical areas to inspect as part of the programme so that we can share this good practice more widely.

Please give us your views on how the inspectorates can identify areas where good or best practice exists.

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<sup>4</sup> Provision 4 of the Joint Area Review Regulations 2005 made under section 20 of the Children Act 2004; [www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2005/1973/made](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2005/1973/made)

## Part 2 – Ofsted’s proposals for a single agency inspection

31. Ofsted is confident that the scope of the joint targeted area inspections will provide effective assurance about decision making and assessment in child protection and will give the opportunity to look closer into a specific service or the experiences of a specific group of children and young people. Ofsted would therefore like to use the framework to evaluate local authority performance as a single agency exercise.
32. We do not propose to predetermine the number of these inspections we will undertake each year. Rather, we will use this inspection framework where concerns have been identified but the response would be disproportionate if we were to undertake a full inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers using our single inspection framework.<sup>5</sup> This single agency inspection would not replace any local authority inspection planned as part of the single inspection framework programme.
33. The scope of the Ofsted-only inspections under this framework will be the same as the joint targeted area inspection, but will focus on the local authority and the effectiveness of the LSCB in relation to the local authority.<sup>6</sup> We propose that these inspections will evaluate:
  - the local authority response to all forms of abuse and neglect at the point of identification and referral/notification
  - the quality and impact of assessment and decision making in response to those notifications and referrals
  - the experiences of a specific cohort of children and young people at risk of harm through a deep dive investigation
  - the leadership and management of this work and the effectiveness of the local safeguarding children board (LSCB) in these areas
34. We also propose to use the same methodology:
  - a notice period of eight working days
  - fieldwork contained within one week (Monday to Friday)
  - focus on case tracking and sampling

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<sup>5</sup> Inspecting local authority children's services: the framework;  
[www.gov.uk/government/publications/inspecting-local-authority-childrens-services-framework](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inspecting-local-authority-childrens-services-framework)

<sup>6</sup> The local authority inspection will be carried out under section 136 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and the review of the LSCB in relation to that authority under section 15A of the Children Act 2004.

- team of three inspectors
- a narrative style report in the form of a letter, focusing on key strengths and recommendations
- a post-inspection action plan.<sup>7</sup>

Could Ofsted use the joint targeted inspection model to undertake a single-agency targeted area inspection of the local authority and LSCB where concerns are identified?

- Yes, Ofsted could use the joint inspection model for single agency targeted area inspection
- No, Ofsted should use their current full single inspection framework only which is specific to local authorities and LSCBs.
- Don't know

If you have any further comments about Ofsted using the joint framework for single agency inspection, please specify below.

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<sup>7</sup> Under the requirements of the Education and Inspection Act 2006 (section 136) and Children Act 2004 (section 20)