

# Social care common inspection framework (SCCIF): children's homes

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Guidance about how children's homes are inspected, for use from 11 November 2019.

Our first principle of inspection is to focus on the things that matter most to children's lives. The SCCIF is not a 'one-size-fits-all' framework. The evaluation criteria are broadly consistent across the different types of children's social care services but they reflect the unique nature of each type of service.

*Please make sure you refer to the [published version of the children's homes SCCIF](#) for updates or amendments.*

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## 1. Introduction

*What the social care common inspection framework means.*

The social care common inspection framework (SCCIF), devised by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) for use from April 2017, applies to inspections of:

- children's homes
- secure children's homes
- independent fostering agencies
- boarding schools and residential special schools
- voluntary adoption agencies
- adoption support agencies
- residential family centres
- residential holiday schemes for disabled children
- residential provision in further education colleges

The SCCIF means that:

- we apply the same judgement structure across the range of settings listed above
- the experiences and progress of children and other service users, wherever they live or receive help, are central to inspections
- there are key areas of evidence that we usually report on at each inspection

The SCCIF isn't a 'one-size-fits-all' framework. When it's necessary, the SCCIF reflects and addresses the unique and distinct aspects of each type of setting. However, the evaluation criteria we use to make judgements and the accompanying guidance are, wherever possible, consistent across settings.

## 2. The inspection principles

*Focusing on children, being consistent and prioritising resources.*

Ofsted's corporate strategy<sup>1</sup> outlines how we will conduct inspection and regulation that is:

- **Intelligent:** All of our work will be evidence-led and we will work to ensure that our evaluation tools and frameworks will be valid and reliable.

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<sup>1</sup> Ofsted strategy 2017–22, September 2017; [www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted-strategy-2017-to-2022](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted-strategy-2017-to-2022).

- **Responsible:** Our frameworks will be fair. We will seek to reduce inspection burdens and make our expectations and findings clear.
- **Focused:** We will target our time and resources where they can lead directly to improvement.

Our approach is further underpinned by the following three principles that apply to all social care inspections.

## **2.1 To focus on the things that matter most to children's lives**

We have reached a general consensus with the main social care stakeholders that social care inspections should focus on the experiences and progress of children. We regularly ask children, and the adults who look after them, what matters most about children's experiences and progress.

Using this to guide us, we focus the criteria for our judgements on the difference that providers are making to children's lives. Adults can only support children well if they're given the time, resources and information they need to do this, so we also take account of the quality of the support that the adults who care for children receive.

## **2.2 To be consistent in our expectations of providers**

It's important that professionals and members of the public can compare services that do similar things. We make this possible by being consistent in what we expect from providers.

We use the same judgement structure and the same evaluation criteria, wherever possible, irrespective of where children live or receive help.

Our inspection methods and published guidance only differ where there is a good reason. This includes taking a similar approach to deciding on the frequency of inspections.

## **2.3 To prioritise our work where improvement is needed most**

We are committed to inspecting in a way that focuses our resources where they are needed most. If leaders and managers have shown that they can consistently deliver services for children well, we may decide to return less often or do a more proportionate inspection.

However, we always take into account the risk to children of not inspecting as frequently. We use a broad range of information to tell us whether standards are slipping. We are always able to go back to good and outstanding providers more quickly if we have concerns.

### 3. The focus of inspections

*Evaluating the impact of services on children and young people.*

The SCCIF has a consistent and clear focus on evaluating the impact of care and support on the experiences and progress of children and young people, largely through case tracking and sampling. This means that:

- inspectors spend less time looking at policies and procedures and more time looking at the impact of services on children's lives
- we give the minimum notice of inspection, so that we can see settings as they are on a day-to-day basis, and so that the time providers may spend preparing for inspection is reduced as much as possible; we will be reviewing whether to reduce the notice period for settings that still have relatively lengthy notice arrangements
- we have set out as clearly as possible the details of the information required by inspectors to assist their inspection; this will enable providers to produce their best evidence whenever we give notice of inspection

### 4. How inspectors make judgements under the SCCIF

*Information about the judgements inspectors make.*

#### 4.1 Judgement structure

Our judgement structure stems from our first principle of inspection – to focus on the things that matter most to children's lives – and places the progress and experiences of children and other people who use children's services at the core of inspections.

All SCCIF inspections follow the 4-point scale (outstanding, good, requires improvement to be good, and inadequate) to make judgements on the overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account:

- how well children and young people are helped and protected
- the effectiveness of leaders and managers

Inspections of adoption support agencies, voluntary adoption agencies and residential family centres also look at, as appropriate, the experiences of adult service users.

The judgement about how well children and young people are helped and protected is a limiting judgement. This means that if inspectors judge this area to be inadequate, then the 'overall experiences and progress' judgement will always be inadequate.

The judgement of the effectiveness of leaders and managers is a graded judgement. If inspectors judge this area to be inadequate, this is likely to lead to a judgement of

inadequate, and certainly no more than requires improvement, for 'overall experiences and progress'.

Inspectors will make the limiting and graded judgements first so that they can take these into account for the 'overall progress and experiences' judgement.

## **4.2 How inspectors use the evaluation criteria**

Inspectors will use the descriptions of what 'good' looks like as the benchmarks against which to grade and judge performance. The judgement, however, is not derived from a checklist. It is a professional evaluation of the effectiveness and impact of the care and support provided on the experiences and progress of children and young people. Failure to meet all of the criteria for 'good' will not automatically lead to a judgement of 'requires improvement'.

Some criteria will have less relevance than others in some settings because of the nature of the setting and the needs of the children and young people.

Even when all the criteria are relevant, there is always a degree of professional judgement in weighing and balancing evidence against the evaluation criteria.

The inspector judges a setting to be good if they conclude that the evidence sits most appropriately with this finding. We call this the 'best fit'.

The evaluation criteria for SCCIF inspections are broadly consistent across different types of setting but, where necessary, they have been adapted to reflect the varying and unique nature of each type of provision.

## **4.3 Required evidence**

Inspectors look at several areas of required evidence for each judgement. Some areas are common to all SCCIF inspections but others are specific to the specific type of provision. The areas of required evidence are set out in the bullet points at the beginning of the evaluation criteria for each judgement.

## **5. Evaluation criteria**

*The criteria that inspectors use to make judgements, including benchmarks of what good looks like.*

### **5.1 The overall experiences and progress of children and young people**

Areas of required evidence are:

- the quality of individualised care and support provided and the influence and impact of the home on the progress and experiences of children

- the quality of relationships between professionals, carers and children and their parents
- the progress children make in relation to their health, education, and emotional, social and psychological well-being
- how well children’s views are understood and taken into account and how their rights and entitlements are met
- the quality of children’s experiences on a day-to-day basis
- how well children and young people are prepared for their futures and how well transitions are managed
- how well the home ensures that the needs of children and young people who live far from their home area are met

<b>Good</b>
Children are able to build trusted and secure relationships with adults who are looking after them. Staff know the children well, listen to them, invest time in them, protect them and promote their welfare. Children are able to develop an appropriate sense of permanence and belonging. They make progress and have a range of positive experiences.
Children, including those who communicate non-verbally, are supported to actively participate in day-to-day and more complex decisions about their lives, as appropriate. They are sensitively helped to understand where it may not be possible to act on their wishes and where other action is taken that is in their best interests. Children have access to, and are actively encouraged to involve, an independent advocate and, where appropriate, an independent visitor.
Children know how to complain. The setting’s complaints policy is easy to understand, accessible and child-focused. Children understand what has happened as a result of their complaint. Their complaints are treated seriously and are responded to clearly. Urgent action is taken and practice and services improve accordingly.
Children attend school or other educational provision; they are learning and making good progress from their starting points. Staff are ambitious for children and support children to attend and do well in their education. There is effective liaison with schools, colleges and virtual school heads. Where children are excluded, have no school place or attend school on a part-time basis, staff support educational activity throughout the day and advocate for a return to full-time education as soon as possible.
Children, irrespective of any disability they may have, enjoy access to a range of social, educational and recreational opportunities, including activities in the local community. They are able to participate in after-school activities, community-based activities, school trips and holidays. They are supported to engage in faith-based activities if they wish.
Children are supported to develop their independence according to their individual needs, while protecting themselves from being in unsafe situations or with unsafe people. The home challenges the responsible placing authority when staff have concerns about the future plans for the young person, including the timing of leaving care.

Children are in good health or are being helped to improve their health or to manage lifelong conditions. Their health needs (including their mental and sexual health needs, as appropriate) are identified. They have access to local health services when they need them. Arrangements for managing medication are safe and effective and promote independence wherever possible. Staff develop effective relationships with health professionals to promote good health.

Specialist help is made available according to the individual needs of children, including those who live away from their 'home' authority. The help is available, as soon as it is needed, at the intensity required and for as long as it is required. Where services are not available or children are waiting for a long time for help, the home is proactive in challenging and escalating concerns with the placing authority and/or other partners.

Any specific type or model of care delivered or commissioned by the home is provided by staff who are suitably trained, experienced, qualified and supervised. There is evidence of benefits to children and the care is reviewed regularly.

Children who are new to the home are welcomed sensitively and with careful and considered planning. Where children leave the home, work promotes positive endings and helps with building their 'life story'. When endings are unplanned, then the welfare and well-being of children remain paramount and staff act at all times with this in mind. The needs and feelings of other children living in the home are taken into account.

Children develop skills and strategies to manage their own conflicts and difficult feelings through developing positive relationships with staff. There are clear, consistent and appropriate boundaries for children.

Children are treated with dignity and respect. They experience care and help that are sensitive and responsive to their identity and family history, including age, disability, ethnicity, faith or belief, gender, gender identity, language, race and sexual orientation. The care and help assist them to develop a positive self-view and to increase their ability to form and sustain attachments and build emotional resilience and a sense of their own identity. The care and help also assist them to overcome any previous experiences of neglect and trauma.

Staff place the well-being of individual children at the centre of their practice, irrespective of the challenges they may present. All their achievements are celebrated and appropriately rewarded. Their day-to-day needs are met, such as routine, privacy, personal space, nutritious meals and enjoyable mealtimes. Children have appropriate, carefully assessed, supported contact (direct and/or indirect) with their family, friends and other people who are important to them, such as previous carers. There are no unnecessary restrictions in place. Staff work proactively and positively with parents and former carers to promote meaningful and safe contact and continuity of care, where appropriate.

### **Requires improvement to be good**

The experiences and progress of children and young people are likely to require improvement when there is evidence of the following.

The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children so that they receive positive experiences and make good progress.

There are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded and promoted.



### **Inadequate**

The experiences and progress of children and young people are likely to be judged inadequate if there is evidence of the following.

There are serious and/or widespread failures that mean children are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded.

Their care and experiences are poor and they are not making, or not likely to, make progress.

### **Outstanding**

The experiences and progress of children and young people are likely to be judged outstanding if, in addition to meeting the requirements of a good judgement, there is evidence of the following.

Professional practice consistently exceeds the standard of good and results in sustained improvement to the lives of children, even where they have complex or challenging needs. There is significant evidence of change and improvement because of the excellent quality of care provided. The progress of children is exceptional, taking into account their starting points.

The experience of living in the home enhances children's life chances. For children with the most complex needs, staff are able to evidence the sustained benefit to the lives of children in their care. There are examples of excellent practice that are worthy of wider dissemination.

Research-informed practice, some of which may be innovative, continues to develop from a strong and confident base, making an exceptional difference to the lives and experiences of children.

In short break services, exceptional consistent care adds considerably to children's experiences, progress and development; this is achieved through the provision of a wide range of additional experiences and care, including interaction with their peers, opportunities to develop their independence and being able to participate in local community provision.

## **5.2 How well children and young people are helped and protected**

Areas of required evidence are:

- how well risks are identified, understood and managed and whether the support and care provided help children and young people to become increasingly safe
- the response to children who may go missing or may be at risk of harm, including exploitation, neglect, abuse, self-harm, bullying and radicalisation

- how well staff and carers manage situations and behaviour and whether clear and consistent boundaries contribute to a feeling of well-being and security for children and young people
- whether safeguarding arrangements to protect children meet all statutory and other government requirements, promote their welfare and prevent radicalisation and extremism

<b>Good</b>
Children feel protected and are protected from harm, including neglect, abuse, sexual exploitation, accidents, self-harm, bullying and radicalisation. There is a strong, robust and proactive response from all those working with children that reduces actual harm or the risk of harm to them. That response includes regular and effective contact and planning with the child's allocated social worker and their family, if this is appropriate and in accordance with plans for their future.
Children can identify a trusted adult they can talk to about any concerns. They report that adults listen to them, take their concerns seriously and respond appropriately.
Any risks associated with children offending, misusing drugs or alcohol, self-harming, going missing or being sexually exploited are known and understood by the adults who look after them. Individual, up-to-date risk assessments effectively address any known vulnerabilities for each child and set out what action should be taken to address the risks. There are plans and help in place that are reducing actual harm or the risk of harm and there is evidence that these risks are being minimised.
Children who go missing experience well co-ordinated responses that reduce actual harm or risk of harm to them. Risks are well understood and minimised. There is a clear plan of urgent action in place to protect them and to reduce further harm or the risk of harm. The home is aware of, and implements in full, the requirements of the statutory guidance for children who are missing. It challenges the local authority where an independent return home interview is not offered or arranged by the local authority. The home takes appropriate steps to escalate concerns. Parents and carers are made aware of incidents where the child has been or is missing, where this is appropriate and relevant to the plans for that child's future care. Staff look for children when they are missing.
Children are supported to take age-appropriate risks as part of their development of independent living skills.
Children are protected and helped to keep themselves safe, from bullying, homophobic behaviour, racism, sexism, radicalisation and other forms of discrimination. Any discriminatory behaviours are challenged and help and support are given to children about how to treat others with respect.
Children receive help and support to manage their behaviour and feelings safely. Staff respond with clear boundaries about what is safe and acceptable and seek to understand the triggers for behaviour.
Positive behaviour is consistently promoted. Staff use effective de-escalation techniques and creative alternative strategies that are specific to the needs of each child or young person and planned in consultation with them where possible.
Restraint is used only in strict accordance with the legislative framework to protect the child or young person and those around them. All incidents are reviewed, recorded and

<p>monitored and the views of the child or young person, dependent on their age and understanding, are sought and understood.</p>
<p>Conflict management is effective and includes the appropriate use of restorative practices that improve relationships, increase children’s sense of personal responsibility and reduce the need for formal police intervention.</p>
<p>Proactive and effective working relationships with the police help to support and protect children. Staff work with the police to protect the children living in the home from any unnecessary involvement in the criminal justice system.</p>
<p>Staff understand the risks that use of the internet may pose for children, such as bullying, sexual exploitation and radicalisation. They have well-developed strategies in place to keep children safe and to support them in learning how to keep themselves safe.</p>
<p>Any searches of children or their rooms and possessions are carried out sensitively by appropriately trained staff with due consideration given to their need to feel safe and to have their dignity and needs respected. All searches are appropriately recorded, including the reasons for the search, efforts to seek the young person’s consent, any risk assessment and management oversight of the decision to undertake a search.</p>
<p>Careful recruitment and regular monitoring of staff and volunteers prevent unsuitable people from being recruited and having the opportunity to harm children or to place them at risk. The relevant authorities and professional bodies are informed of any concerns about inappropriate adults.</p>
<p>Staff working within the home are clear about, and follow, procedures for responding to concerns about the safety of a child or young person. Any child protection concerns are immediately shared with the placing and/or host local authority as required and a record of that referral is retained. There is evidence that staff follow up the outcome of the referral quickly and that appropriate action has been taken to protect the child or young person from further harm. Where the setting is not satisfied with the response from either the local authority where the setting is situated or the placing authority, it escalates its concerns appropriately, including by writing to the director of children’s services in the local authority placing the child.</p>
<p>Investigations into allegations or suspicion of harm are shared with the appropriate agencies and are handled fairly, quickly and in accordance with statutory guidance. Children are supported and protected. Support is given both to the person making the allegation and the person who is the subject of the allegation.</p>
<p>The home has effective links with local authorities, designated officers and other important safeguarding agencies. There is good communication about safeguarding issues, such as any injuries sustained during restraints or allegations against staff. The home has good relationships with relevant local voluntary sector organisations that may be able to offer specialist support to children in keeping themselves safe.</p>
<p>The physical environment for children is safe and secure and protects them from harm or the risk of harm. Risk assessments are regularly reviewed and updated and comply with statutory requirements.</p>

**Requires improvement to be good**

The help and protection offered to children and young people are likely to require improvement if children are not yet receiving good enough help and protection, but there are no serious failures that leave them either being harmed or at risk of harm.

**Inadequate**

The help and protection offered to children and young people are likely to be inadequate if there are serious and/or widespread failures that leave children being harmed, at risk of harm or their welfare not being safeguarded.

**Outstanding**

The help and protection offered to young people are likely to be judged outstanding if there is evidence of the following.

Professional practice results in sustained improvement to the lives of children; highly effective planning manages and minimises risks inside and outside of the home; where children are new to the home, any risks are well understood and are significantly reducing; proactive and creative safeguarding practice means that all children, including the most vulnerable, have a strong sense of safety and well-being and they are unlikely to be missing from the home on a regular basis; children are involved in creating ways to de-escalate situations and finding creative alternative strategies that are effective.

Research-informed practice, some of which may be innovative, continues to develop from a strong and confident base, making an exceptional difference to the lives and experiences of children.

**5.3 The effectiveness of leaders and managers**

**Areas of required evidence are:**

- whether leaders and managers show an ambitious vision, have high expectations for what all children can achieve and ensure high standards of individualised care
- whether leaders and managers have a clear understanding of the progress children and young people are making in respect of the plan for them and take effective action when necessary
- whether leaders and managers provide the right supportive environment for staff through effective supervision and appraisal and high-quality induction and training programmes that are tailored to the specific needs of the children and young people
- how well leaders and managers know and understand the home’s strengths and weaknesses, prevent shortfalls, identify weaknesses and take decisive and effective action

- whether the home is achieving its stated aims and objectives
- the quality of professional relationships to ensure the best possible all-round support to children and young people in all areas of their development
- whether leaders and managers actively challenge when the responses from other services are not effective
- the extent to which leaders and managers actively promote tolerance, equality and diversity
- the impact of children’s views and participation

<b>Good</b>
The home is effectively and efficiently managed by a permanent, suitably experienced and qualified registered manager. Urgent action is taken to address any vacancy of the registered manager post.
The home is properly staffed and resourced to meet the needs of the children. Staff are suitably vetted and qualified and are able to deliver high-quality services to children and their families. Arrangements for recruitment and appraisals are robust and include children as appropriate.
Leaders and managers actively and regularly monitor the quality of care provided. Those employed to undertake external monitoring have the necessary skills and experience. Leaders and managers use learning from practice and feedback to improve the experiences and care of children including, for example, direct testimony from children, young people, parents, carers, other professionals and other stakeholders. They learn from complaints, staff feedback, placement successes and breakdowns, and any serious events. They identify strengths and areas for improvement and implement clear development plans that continually improve the experiences of children. Robust action is taken to address all issues of concern, including any concerns or complaints from children and local residents. Proper investigations are undertaken. Placing and host authorities are engaged as necessary. Effective action has been taken to address all requirements and recommendations from previous inspections.
Leaders and managers take steps to ensure that plans for individual children comprehensively identify their needs. Plans take into account the local authority care plan for each child. Leaders and staff work proactively and positively with other agencies and professionals. They seek to build effective working relationships with parents and social workers from placing authorities and with the local authority where they are located to secure positive outcomes for children.
Leaders and staff work proactively with the local community, including neighbours, faith groups, leisure organisations and local businesses, to support children to use the facilities and to develop a sense of belonging, security and purpose.
Where children are not settling into the home, leaders and managers take steps to ensure that the plan is reviewed with the placing authority and the family (where this is appropriate) to consider the best steps to take next. They challenge effectively and take action when they are concerned that placing authorities are not making decisions that are in children’s best interests, when the statutory requirements for looked-after children are not met or when they cannot keep children safe.

<p>Leaders and managers understand the plans for the children and actively drive the achievement of important milestones, goals and permanence for their futures. Leaders and managers monitor the progress that individual children make and can demonstrate the positive impact that living at the home has had on individual children’s progress and life chances.</p>
<p>Managers and staff receive regular and effective supervision that is focused on children’s experiences, needs, plans and feedback. Supervision is recorded effectively. There are effective support and challenge, including through team and management meetings, to ensure that the professional development of staff and leaders results in the right environment for good practice to thrive. The emotional impact on staff of the work is recognised and managed well by leaders and managers.</p>
<p>Training, development and induction activities are effective. They are focused on ensuring that staff can meet the specific needs of the children who they are responsible for. Activities are evaluated to ensure that they lead to effective practice. Leaders, managers and staff are up to date with current practice in their specialist area.</p>
<p>The staff team works collaboratively to provide consistency and stability. There are clear responsibilities and accountabilities and the staff team has a sense of shared ownership about its practice. Staff report that they are well led and managed and there is other evidence to support this.</p>
<p>Leaders and managers make child-centred decisions about children coming to live at the home, including giving consideration to the needs of children already living at the home.</p>
<p>The statement of purpose, which is kept under review, clearly sets out the ethos and objectives of the home.</p>
<p>The manager and responsible individual ensure that the physical environment is maintained to a high standard, meets the needs of the children and feels and looks like a family home for children. Any damage or wear and tear is quickly and regularly repaired.</p>
<p>The registered provider is financially viable and can deliver high quality, stable care for children.</p>
<p>Case records reflect children’s everyday lives and the work that is undertaken with children. They reflect their achievements and clearly relate to the plans for their futures. The style and clarity of records increases the understanding that children have about their histories, background and experiences. The records are available to children who are able to see or contribute to them as they wish, with appropriate support.</p>
<p>Volunteers who work with children living in the home are trained, supervised and supported to undertake their roles appropriately and to provide a high quality service that enhances the experiences of children.</p>
<p>The registered person ensures that notifications of all significant events that relate to the welfare and protection of children living in the home are made to the appropriate authorities. The registered person takes the necessary action following the incident to ensure that the child or young person’s needs are met and that they are safe and protected.</p>
<p>The culture of the home is characterised by high expectations and aspirations for all children. The ethos and objectives of the home are demonstrated in practice.</p>
<p>Leaders and managers regularly review and act on any known risks to children, taking advice and guidance from local partners and agencies.</p>

In short break services, there are effective relationships with parents or carers so that they feel confident leaving their child for their stay and they understand what the service can offer. Parents feel involved in the running of the service and they are able to raise concerns and complaints. Staff are accessible and keep parents informed about their child's stay at the home.

### **Requires improvement to be good**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers is likely to require improvement if there is evidence of the following.

The characteristics of good leadership and management are not in place.

Where there are weaknesses in practice, leaders and managers have identified the issues and have plans in place to address them or they are less serious and there is capacity to take the necessary action.

### **Inadequate**

The judgement on the effectiveness of leaders and managers will be inadequate if:

The experiences, progress or protection of children are inadequate and leaders and managers do not know the strengths and weaknesses of the home. They have been ineffective in prioritising, challenging and making improvements.  
and/or

The provider has not taken effective and timely steps to appoint an appropriate, permanent manager within a reasonable timeframe and/or the appointed manager has not registered as soon as possible.

### **Outstanding**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers is likely to be judged outstanding if, in addition to meeting the requirements of a good judgement, there is evidence of the following.

Leaders and managers are inspirational, confident and ambitious for children and young people and influential in changing the lives of those in their care.

They create a culture of high aspiration and positivity and they have high expectations of their staff to change and improve the lives of the children they are responsible for.

They lead by example, innovate and generate creative ideas to sustain the highest quality care for children.

They know their strengths and weaknesses well and can provide evidence of improvement over a sustained period.

They have working relationships with partner agencies and schools that ensure the best possible care, experiences and futures for children.

## 6. Legal context

*Children's homes inspections and the law.*

Under the Education and Inspections Act 2006 ([www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/40/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/40/contents)), Ofsted carries out its work in ways that encourage the services it inspects and regulates to:

- improve
- be user-focused
- be efficient and effective in the use of resources

Section 5(1A) of the Care Standards Act 2000 provides that HMCI is the registration authority for children's homes and other establishments and agencies to which part 2 of that act applies.

The Care Standards Act 2000 sets out Ofsted's powers to regulate, inspect and enforce compliance with the Act and relevant regulations. The Act also defines a children's home (section 1).

When inspecting children's homes, Ofsted considers the knowledge and understanding gained from previous inspections, and:

- the Care Standards Act 2000 ([www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/14/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/14/contents))
- the Children's homes (England) regulations 2015 ([www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2015/541/contents/made](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2015/541/contents/made))
- the 'Guide to the children's homes regulations, including the quality standards' ([www.gov.uk/government/publications/childrens-homes-regulations-including-quality-standards-guide](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/childrens-homes-regulations-including-quality-standards-guide))
- other statutory guidance issued by the DfE

## 7. The regulations, the government guide and the SCCIF

*How inspectors use the quality standards.*

Children's homes must meet the statutory requirements of the regulations. Where they do not, inspectors identify clearly what they must do in the form of setting requirements or through enforcement action.

The Department for Education (DfE) has published the 'Guide to the children's homes regulations, including the quality standards' ('the Guide') ([www.gov.uk/government/publications/childrens-homes-regulations-including-quality-standards-guide](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/childrens-homes-regulations-including-quality-standards-guide)), which explains and supplements the regulations. Registered persons must have regard to the guide in interpreting and meeting the regulations. If providers do not take account of the guide, this may indicate a failure



to meet the regulations. Inspectors consider carefully the impact on children and whether it should influence the judgements and outcome of the inspection, including any enforcement action.

A failure to meet a regulation does not automatically lead to a requires improvement judgement. Requirements may still be made where providers are judged to be good.

In addition to the quality standards, there are management and administrative regulations that we also take into account when making judgements, taking statutory enforcement action and setting requirements: the Children's homes (England) regulations 2015 ([www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2015/541/contents/made](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2015/541/contents/made)).

We use recommendations to indicate where practice can improve. These are always related to the Guide.

## 8. Types of inspection

*The differences between full inspections, interim inspections and monitoring inspections.*

We carry out the following types of inspection of children's homes.

- A full inspection is carried out usually at least once annually. This inspection is conducted against the evaluation criteria and will result in a set of graded judgements. The inspector will normally be on site for up to 2 days
- An interim inspection is carried out for some children's homes at least once annually. See 'frequency of inspections' for more information. This inspection focuses on the effectiveness of the home and the experiences and progress of children since the most recent full inspection. The judgement will be made on a 3-point scale: improved effectiveness; sustained effectiveness; or declined in effectiveness. The inspector will normally be on site for one day
- There are further specific inspections related to particular children's homes.

If there is an incident, a complaint or concerns, we conduct a monitoring inspection. We may also carry out monitoring visits to review any building work, to ensure that the design and layout remains suitable for achieving the aims and objectives set out in the home's statement of purpose or where we wish to gather information on a particular aspect of care or service provision or monitor specific issues or compliance with a notice.

## 9. Notice

*The length of notice given before an inspection and the information we request.*

### 9.1 Notice of an inspection

All inspections of children's homes are unannounced.

We ask homes to give the inspector access to premises and records and space for the inspector to work. The inspector may need some help to navigate the system where records are electronic. Homes don't need to provide files in hard copy unless these are already used, although the inspector may ask for specific reports or documents to be printed.

## 9.2 Request for information at an inspection

When notification of an inspection is given, inspectors give the provider a copy of Annex A of the inspection framework and agree when the information will be available.

This information is requested under section 31 of the Care Standards Act ([www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/14/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/14/contents)). The information supports the inspection process and informs the inspection findings.

Providers can download a copy and keep this updated in preparation for their full inspection and send this electronically to the inspector during the inspection. Some of the information is stored by Ofsted for data analysis purposes (see Section 30 - use of personal data).

Inspectors use Annex A data to generate lines of enquiry about the safety and welfare of children. Specifically, inspectors want to assure themselves that:

- where children are considered to be at risk of, or subject to, child sexual exploitation or extremism, all agencies including the relevant local authorities are working together to support the child
- return home interviews are being offered when children have been missing from the home
- children are receiving the educational provision as outlined in their relevant plan
- there are plans in place to ensure that staff have an appropriate qualification in order to meet regulation 32 of the Children's homes (England) regulations 2015 (<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2015/541/regulation/32/made>)

Where a placing authority or other agency has not fulfilled their statutory duties or met the child's needs as identified in their care plan, the inspector should evaluate the action the manager has taken. Inspectors must inform the relevant senior HMI of any placing authorities that have not offered and then arranged a return home interview for any child who has been missing from the home (without good reason) or where they have concerns that a local authority is not meeting its statutory duties.

## 10. Scheduling and the inspection team

*How an inspection is scheduled and who makes up the team.*

## 10.1 Frequency and type of inspections

We have a duty to inspect children's homes as set out in Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills (fees and frequency of inspections) (children's homes, etc.) regulations 2015 as amended (<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2015/551/contents/made>) .

We inspect children's homes that were judged inadequate or require improvement to be good at their last full inspection at least twice in each year-long inspection period (from 1 April to 31 March).

In most instances where a home is inspected twice during the year, one inspection is a full inspection and the other is an interim inspection. Different patterns of inspection may occur if a home has been judged inadequate or if a home is not operating at the time of inspection.

We carry out at least one full inspection of homes that were judged as outstanding or good during a year-long inspection period. We conduct an initial risk assessment for every children's home judged as good or outstanding at the start of the inspection year to inform an initial decision of whether these homes will be subject to a second inspection (an interim inspection) in addition to a full inspection.

This takes into account:

- the most recent interim inspection
- reports received under regulations 44 and 45
- notifications received under regulation 40
- information from complaints, whistleblowers and local authorities
- changes to the home's management
- any other relevant information

The initial risk assessment will be reviewed regularly in light of further information received during the year (see 'Notifications under regulation 40 and regulations 44 and 45 reports').

If a home is judged to have declined in effectiveness at an interim inspection after being judged outstanding or good at a full inspection, we then decide when to inspect it again. (See 'Inadequate judgements: next steps for more information'.)

Where the children's home provides education, we inspect its educational provision once every 3 years. We do this at the same time as the full inspection where it is sensible and practical to do so, but we always publish a separate report. This is known as an aligned inspection.

If there is an incident, complaint or concern, we may conduct a monitoring inspection. We may also carry out monitoring inspections to review any new building work, to ensure that the design and layout remains suitable for achieving the aims

and objectives set out in the children's home's statement of purpose or, where we wish to gather information on a particular aspect of care or service provision, to monitor specific issues or compliance with a notice.

## 10.2 Scheduling

The scheduling of inspections takes account of:

- legal requirements
- previous inspection findings
- complaints and concerns about the service
- returned questionnaires from children, young people, social workers and other stakeholders
- notifications
- monitoring reports given to Ofsted by children's homes under regulations 44 and 45 of the Children's homes (England) regulations 2015 ([www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2015/541/contents/made](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2015/541/contents/made)).

Where possible, the same inspector will not inspect a home for more than three consecutive full inspections. However, in certain instances, for example, if Ofsted is taking enforcement action, it may be important for continuity purposes to retain the same inspector until the enforcement action has been concluded.

## 10.3 Length of inspection

Children's homes are usually inspected by a single social care inspector. Where the children's home provides education or is also registered with the DfE as a school, one of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) (Education) inspects the educational provision.

For a full inspection of a children's home, an inspector usually spends a maximum of 2 days on site.

For interim inspections, the inspector is usually on site for a maximum of 1 day.

The inspector and the regulatory inspection manager (RIM) should determine how best to allocate resources for inspections. In some circumstances, it may be necessary for more inspectors to be involved in the inspection. The nature of some inspections, such as residential special schools that are also registered as children's homes or homes with satellite sites, may require extra inspector time on site to:

- give due consideration to the issues relating to the evaluation criteria that are specific to that provision
- find opportunities to talk to staff who are in direct supervision of children at all times

Inspectors should consider whether the length of time on site should be reduced in certain circumstances, such as for inspections of homes with a very small number of children.

Inspectors should consider:

- a risk assessment that takes into account previous inspection judgements, notifications and any serious incidents
- the number of children who live in the home
- the size of the establishment, including the number of separate homes on site

## 10.4 Deferrals

Inspections will not normally be deferred. Absence or unavailability of important staff (unless the provider is a single person) or accommodation issues such as refurbishment will not usually be reasons for deferral. If no staff are available, the inspector should contact the responsible individual or person in charge to arrange access.

An inspection will only be deferred when it might place children or others at risk if it goes ahead or if the ability to gather secure evidence is severely restricted. These conditions might include:

- serious weather conditions that make access to sites difficult or dangerous or both
- a serious incident where the presence of an inspector would have an adverse impact on the safety and well-being of children, young people or adults

Decisions about deferrals are agreed by the regulatory inspection manager (RIM).

## 11. Timeframe

*Timeframe for an inspection from planning to publication of the report.*

Day	Full inspection activity
1	Preparation
2	Site visit
3	Site visit
4	Drafting report
5 to 8	Inspection evidence and report submitted for quality assurance
21	Report sent to the registered provider for any comments on factual accuracy within a maximum of 18 working days of the end of the inspection
26	Provider returns the report within 5 working days with any comments on factual accuracy

31	The final report will be published on the <a href="#">Ofsted reports website</a> within a maximum of 28 working days of the end of the inspection
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## 12. Preparing for an inspection

*What happens before a full inspection.*

### 12.1 Analysis and planning

Pre-inspection analysis and planning are important parts of all SCCIF inspections. Inspectors are allocated 1 day to prepare for a full inspection and half a day to prepare for an interim inspection. This time should be used to review the information held by Ofsted and to ensure that the fieldwork is properly focused and used to best effect in collecting first-hand evidence.

Inspectors look at the information that Ofsted already holds about the home, including:

- previous inspection reports
- completed questionnaires from children, young people, parents and stakeholders and associated summary reports
- the home's statement of purpose and children's guide
- any concerns and complaints received
- notifications of serious events
- reports of monthly visits received under regulation 44
- quality assurance reports received under regulation 45 (including monitoring by the registered person of any incident when a child accommodated in the home goes missing or is at risk of, or subject to, child sexual exploitation)
- any changes to registration, including change of manager or the responsible individual
- any enforcement activity within the last inspection year

In addition, the inspector should always familiarise themselves with relevant background and context information, such as the most recent inspection of the local authority, any linked setting (including possible unregistered schools) and review of the local safeguarding children board/partners where the home is situated.

If information has been received that indicates potential non-compliance with regulatory requirements, Ofsted may use this information as a line of enquiry during a full or interim inspection. The inspector usually outlines the concern to the registered person(s) or person in charge of the home at the time of the inspection. There may be circumstances where it is not appropriate to share all the information about a concern - for example, where the allegation is about the registered person or

person in charge themselves, or where sharing the information could compromise an investigation being carried out by another agency, such as the police.

The inspector carries out an analysis of the available evidence and information and must record their planning notes on the inspection database.

The plan for the inspection sets out lines of enquiry, any areas of apparent weakness or significant strength, or areas where further evidence needs to be gathered. The focus of the inspection may change during its course as further evidence emerges.

## **12.2 Questionnaires**

Each year, Ofsted uses online questionnaires to gather a range of views about different types of setting. Where relevant, this includes the views of:

- children and young people
- parents and carers
- staff
- foster carers
- adopters
- adult service users
- other interested parties such as placing social workers and independent reviewing officers

Ofsted sends links to the questionnaires annually to each provider by email and asks them to distribute those links on its behalf. The responses are submitted directly to Ofsted.

Responses are shared with the inspector for the service or setting and are used to inform the planning and scheduling of inspections. Where there are no responses for a service or setting, this also forms a line of enquiry for the inspection.

## **12.3 Notifications under regulation 40 and reports under regulations 44 and 45**

Inspectors must regularly review notifications, regulation 44 reports and regulation 45 reports. This is important regulatory activity. Inspectors must focus on both the content and the quality of the reports as part of their evaluation of how well the home monitors its impact on the experiences of children.

Information from any of these sources may result in:

- further activity, such as speaking to the registered manager and/or responsible individual or other stakeholders

- a decision to carry out an interim inspection of a home judged outstanding or good at its last full inspection and that Ofsted had previously assessed as only requiring 1 full inspection in that year-long inspection period
- rescheduling of inspections based on either identified concerns within reports and/or notifications or based on a failure to submit reports or notifications
- lines of enquiry for the next inspection – emerging lines of enquiry must be noted in the inspection database and inform pre-inspection planning

Registered persons (providers and managers) must notify Ofsted without delay about specific events and incidents as set out in regulation 40.

Online forms and further guidance about notifications are available ([www.gov.uk/government/publications/notify-ofsted-of-an-incident-form-for-childrens-social-care-providers](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/notify-ofsted-of-an-incident-form-for-childrens-social-care-providers)). Providers should always seek advice from their link inspector about individual cases if they are uncertain how to proceed. If a provider is notifying where regulation 40 does not require it, inspectors should discuss this with the provider at the inspection.

Where it is clear that the provider has taken appropriate action, the inspector should record this on the inspection database. If the inspector identifies issues that give them cause for concern about the welfare of children, they should ask for evidence that shows what has been done to help and protect the child. If notifications are incomplete, the inspector should always contact the home to ask for more information.

Whenever there are concerns about the safety or welfare of a child, the inspector must contact the home's manager so that Ofsted is fully aware of the actions being taken by the home, the placing authority and other relevant parties (such as the host authority and police) to promote and safeguard the welfare of the child. Managers and staff should take into account the appropriate parts of the statutory guidance outlined in *Working together to safeguard children (2018)* ([www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2)).

If the inspector has any concern about the practice of either the placing or host local authority, this is managed in line with the published policy *Concerns about children: guidance for all Ofsted staff* ([www.gov.uk/government/publications/concerns-about-children-guidance-for-all-ofsted-staff](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/concerns-about-children-guidance-for-all-ofsted-staff)). The director of children's services must be notified immediately of the concerns so that they can review the situation. This information also informs planning for any forthcoming local authority inspection.

Providers are required to notify Ofsted of the outcome of any child protection enquiry in line with regulations and statutory guidance. If the inspector requires an update on the progress of an investigation, the provider must send it via email and not via the notification system.

Regulation 44 requires that an independent person visits the children's home at least once a month and that this visit may be unannounced. The regulation also requires that the independent person must write a report and provide a copy for HMCI.



Ofsted therefore requires that the independent person or provider sends the report to Ofsted before the end of the month that follows the month in which the visit took place. This requirement still applies when there are no children living in the home.

Regulation 45 requires the registered person to produce a report at least every 6 months, reviewing the quality of the care provided by the home, the experiences of children living there and the impact the care is having on outcomes and improvements for children at the home.

Regulation 44 and 45 reports can be sent to:

Document Handling Centre Manager  
Ofsted  
Applications, Regulatory and Contact Team  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

Providers must include Ofsted's unique reference number (URN) and the date on which the visit occurred on the report. Regulations 44 and 45 reports can also be submitted electronically to [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk). Reports received in this way are processed. However, information sent by email is not secure. Providers should be aware of the associated risks while operating within the information assurance guidelines of their own organisation.

## 13. The on-site inspection

*What happens during a full inspection.*

### 13.1 The start of the inspection

At the start of all inspections, the inspector confirms their identity by producing their Ofsted inspector identification. They don't need to carry paper copies of Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks.

The inspector always meets with the registered manager/ person in charge at the beginning of the inspection to:

- outline the plan for the inspection and confirm whether it is a full or an interim inspection
- make arrangements to interview the registered manager during the course of the inspection; if the registered manager is not available and the responsible individual is not able to attend the inspection, the responsible individual should identify who is to be their representative during the inspection.
- outline any lines of enquiry for the inspection, including those generated through the reading of the statement of purpose

- provide the person in charge with the opportunity to share any current information or personal issues relating to any of the children living in the home or members of staff that the inspector needs to be aware of during the inspection
- ensure that Ofsted holds the correct details on the inspection database, including email address and contact telephone numbers for the manager, registered provider and/or responsible individual, any other partners, or directors or trustees (see Annex A)
- ensure that Ofsted hold records of the latest qualifications for the registered manager or progress made on any qualifications being undertaken to comply with regulation 28
- arrange the approximate time that verbal feedback will be given and who is to receive this; feedback will normally be given to the registered manager or senior member of staff present and the responsible individual; additional senior staff linked to the home may also attend at the discretion of the inspector, if agreed in advance
- Where an inspection has been prompted following receipt of information describing a concern or allegations, the inspector should explain to the registered manager or person in charge of the establishment or agency the nature of that information, so that the manager is fully aware of the concerns. This provides an opportunity for the manager to provide additional information and for the inspector to be as open with them about the information as possible. If the information is from a whistle-blower or from someone who wishes to remain anonymous, then the utmost care must be taken to ensure that the person's identity is not revealed.

## **13.2 Case tracking and sampling**

Evaluating the experiences and progress of children and young people at the home is a core inspection activity. This is largely based on evidence from case tracking and sampling.

For tracked cases, the inspector takes an in-depth look at the quality of the help, care and protection that individual children have experienced. For sampled cases, the inspector looks at elements of practice within individual cases, usually to follow lines of enquiry.

We take into account individuals' starting points and circumstances during inspections. We recognise that even slight progress in a particular aspect of their lives may represent a significant improvement for some children and young people. We also recognise that for some children, because of their experiences of trauma, abuse or neglect, progress is not always straightforward. Progress in one area may result in deterioration in another as they work through the impact of their past experiences.

Children's overall experiences and progress are, in part, a result of how well they are helped and protected and the effectiveness of leaders and managers. Inspectors consider the 'help and protection' and 'leadership and management' judgements first so that they can take these into consideration when reaching the 'overall experiences and progress' judgement.

In small homes, the inspector tracks the experiences and progress of all children living there. In larger homes, the inspector tracks the experiences and progress of a representative sample of children.

The inspector may also sample elements of further cases to follow specific lines of enquiry. The size of the provision and the nature of any line of enquiries determines how many cases are tracked and sampled.

Tracked and sampled cases should be selected by the inspector from the case list provided and may include (where relevant):

- children who have recently moved into the home (or in the case of a service providing short breaks, a child or young person who has recently started using the service)
- children who have recently left the home (whether their move was planned or unplanned)
- any children who have gone missing from the home since the last inspection
- any child at risk of, or subject to, child sexual exploitation
- any child who lives a considerable distance from their placing authority
- in a short breaks service, a child who is subject to a child protection plan or a child whose services are delivered as a child in need, to see how well the service works with others to help and protect children

Inspections also usually assess the management of a recent serious incident (where relevant) so that they can understand how the staff team responds to complex and difficult circumstances and whether the actions and responses of leaders, managers and staff are focused on promoting and safeguarding the welfare of children.

Case files (either electronic or paper-based) are usually discussed with the allocated key worker (unless on leave), using their knowledge of the case, file structure and recording systems. In the absence of the allocated key worker, a suitable colleague will be asked to assist.

Case files are only one aspect of tracking the child's journey. The inspector increases their understanding of the child's experience through evidence from other sources. These sources include observation of practice and evidence from the child themselves, their carers, birth family (where appropriate), social worker, the children's guardian, health and education professionals and other practitioners involved in their care. When tracking the case of a looked-after child, the inspector

must always consult the independent reviewing officer, the placing social worker and the key worker.

The inspector examines, discuss and evaluates cases in line with the evaluation criteria set out in the evaluation schedule. They look for evidence that living at the home has had a positive impact on the experiences and progress of children and how managers and staff know they are making a difference to children's lives.

The detail of activities undertaken and discussions held varies depending on the lines of enquiry for each individual inspection.

### **13.3 Listening and talking to children and young people**

The views of children who live in or stay at the children's home provide important evidence of their experiences and progress.

The inspector assesses how well the children's home consults with children. Children's views that have been gathered by the home are taken into account as part of the inspection evidence.

The inspector always tries to meet with children during the inspection. The inspector may make alternative arrangements to speak to children, such as telephone calls at a pre-arranged time. Sometimes, inspectors will spend time observing activities and situations where children are present rather than engaging in direct communication with them. This is to limit any stress caused to children. These approaches will be discussed throughout the inspection as necessary.

The inspector must take into account the specific communication needs of individual children. For some children, the inspector may request the assistance of staff who know and understand the young person's preferred means of communication, particularly if this is unique to the child. In other instances, it may also be appropriate for the inspector to spend time observing children and how they interact with staff and respond to their environment.

Children can use a range of non-verbal and alternative methods for communicating with their families, other children and the adults who care for them. For example, these methods can include their behaviour and sounds, signs and symbols or a variety of specialist electronic devices, and any combination of these. Inspectors are required to discuss with staff the individual communication methods used by a child, review any communication/sensory assessments plan and determine if this informs staff's approach and practice throughout the care plan. They will use this knowledge when they observe any interaction between staff and children. Inspectors are particularly interested in the quality of interaction between them - to understand how staff recognise and respond to children's changing needs. For example, they want to know that staff understand when a child may be in distress or pain, confused, or happy and content. How staff use children's own communication methods to respond to them, reassure them and help them to enjoy positive experiences and make progress contributes to the overall inspection judgement.

Inspectors have to balance spending sufficient time observing interaction between staff and children and avoid causing children distress or confusion because an adult who is unfamiliar to them is upsetting their routines and feelings of security. Inspectors will follow up with staff separately to explore any lines of enquiry arising from their observations.

Some children use a form of sign language, for example Makaton or British Sign Language. An independent trained signer will accompany the inspector if this is necessary. However, some children will use localised signs known only to their community, staff or parents and they may be reluctant to sign to someone who is unfamiliar to them or who does not understand their particular 'accent' or vocabulary.

The inspector can request the services of an interpreter to join the inspection. This is helpful when the children are fluent in British Sign Language. The inspector requests this service via the inspection support team and gives 2 weeks' notice where possible.

Many of the experiences of children living in the home take place after the normal school, college or work day and it is therefore essential that the inspector is present at this time. The inspector should involve the children in inspection activity wherever they can. Opportunities to gather the views and experiences of children may include:

- asking children to show inspectors around the premises
- holding structured meetings (as a general guideline, a meeting should not include more than 5 children)
- having individual conversations
- joining in leisure activities such as computer or console games
- preparing snacks or drinks
- spending mealtimes with children
- conversations during homework
- outdoor activities

Children, including those with limited or no verbal communication, may wish to share their views in a letter to the inspector.

Inspectors demonstrate safe and sensitive practice by:

- telling staff where conversations with children are taking place and who is involved
- being sensitive to the fact that some children may not want to be involved in the inspection
- explaining to children that they will not include comments that will identify them in the inspection report or in feedback to staff working in the home without their permission

- ensuring that staff are aware of any arranged meetings with children and that children may leave the meeting at any time
- where appropriate, explaining to that information suggesting that they or another child is at risk of harm will be passed by the inspector to an appropriate person able to take necessary action about that concern

### **13.4 Observation of activities**

Inspectors can use the home’s scheduled activities as opportunities for observing and following lines of enquiry. These activities could include:

- staff handover between shifts
- children’s meetings
- staff meetings or briefings

The privacy and confidentiality of personal information are respected at all times by inspectors. The inspector always involves staff in any decisions about children’s involvement in the inspection.

Inspectors always try to strike a balance between the time taken to observe an activity and the significance of the likely evidence to be gained.

### **13.5 Gathering views of other professionals**

Inspectors consult with professionals to inform the inspection findings. This is usually through a telephone call during the inspection and may not always take place on site. These professionals may include:

- placing social workers
- independent reviewing officers
- school staff
- local police
- the placing authority’s quality assurance officer (or equivalent) and designated officer
- youth offending teams
- monitors from the youth justice board or independent visitors

Inspectors ask for the relevant contact details via Annex A. Inspectors should always take account of privacy and confidentiality when talking to stakeholders on the telephone during the inspection.

### **13.6 Discussions with managers and staff**

Individual interviews are held with the registered manager/person in charge and other staff. The inspector should always try to talk to the responsible individual. The

number of staff interviewed depends on the size of home but includes a sample of permanent staff and any agency staff working in the home at the time of inspection.

Where the registered manager is not available, the inspector should ask to interview the responsible individual.

The inspector always asks to interview the responsible individual where:

- there is no registered manager in post
- there are concerns about the quality of care and/or the effectiveness of monitoring arrangements, or the quality of the leadership and management of the home or
- evidence indicates that the home is failing to protect children or
- there are concerns about staffing, the premises or resources to manage and run the provision

The interview with the registered manager usually covers:

- issues that have arisen from pre-inspection information/early lines of enquiry
- a discussion about the ethos of the home as described in the statement of purpose and any specific lines of enquiry arising from this
- the registered manager's evidence of the effectiveness of the home on the experiences and progress of the children living there and those who have recently left; this includes how the home works with individual children to meet their needs and the help on offer to support them to make and sustain attachments with adults
- questions about the theoretical and professional understanding and approach to work with vulnerable and upset children
- a summary of the needs of the children living at the home, including how any incidents or concerns are managed and the action taken to prevent similar situations or difficulties arising
- discussions about how regular routines are established for children around meal times, bed times, school and weekend activities
- the registered manager's knowledge and understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the home and plans for future development and how they effectively lead the team and promote a culture of continuous improvement
- discussions about helping children to have safe contact with their families and friends
- follow-up on progress in response to previous requirements and recommendations
- the quality and effectiveness of practice-related supervision received by the manager and given by the manager to staff

- challenge and enquiry about the relationship of the children’s home with other professionals and services
- plans for staff development, including arrangements to ensure that staff have obtained appropriate qualifications by the relevant dates
- discussions about the recruitment and selection of staff to ensure that they have an appropriate qualification or are able to get one
- the manager’s qualification; if their qualification does not meet regulation 28 of the Children’s homes regulations (England) 2015, how they intend to obtain an appropriate qualification
- any further evidence that the manager may wish to highlight to the inspector

During the inspection, the inspector shares emerging findings about the home’s strengths and weaknesses with the registered person (usually the registered manager) so that they fully understand emerging issues. The inspector usually meets with the registered person at the end of day 1 to share emerging findings. The inspector normally sets out for the manager what they intend to consider later in the inspection (where relevant) so that the manager can prepare or direct inspectors to any specific information or evidence required.

Shortfalls that could have an immediate impact on the safety of staff or children should be brought to the attention of the manager or senior member of staff on duty as soon as the inspector has identified the problem.

Inspectors want to establish that the monitoring systems in the home are robust enough to identify any strengths and weaknesses in practice. Inspectors do not spend time routinely counting medication or petty cash, undertaking vehicle checks, checking water temperatures or contents of fridges, freezers and food storage areas unless these are a specific line of enquiry.

Inspectors should be prepared to alter interview arrangements if staff have to attend to the needs of children.

### **13.7 Assessing financial viability**

The children’s homes regulations state that the ‘registered provider must carry on the children’s home in such manner as is likely to ensure that the home will be financially viable for the purpose of achieving the aims and objectives set out in its statement of purpose’ (regulation 47(1) of the Children’s homes (England) regulations 2015 ([www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2015/541/contents/made](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2015/541/contents/made))).

Inspectors are only expected to undertake a lay person’s assessment of the financial information. Their assessment of financial viability focuses on whether an applicant’s financial plans appear broadly realistic and are likely to result in, at a minimum, acceptable outcomes for children. Where, during the course of a routine inspection, the inspector has concerns about the financial viability of a provider due to, for example, the poor repair of premises or the standard of day-to-day care or services, they should follow registration guidance.



Inspectors should explain to providers why they are requesting financial information during an inspection or at any other time.

The financial information Ofsted can request ranges from professionally produced business plans to a collection of accounts (including profit and loss accounts), records and financial forecasts (regulation 47(3) of the [Children's homes \(England\) regulations 2015](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2015/541/contents/made)) ([www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2015/541/contents/made](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2015/541/contents/made)).

### **13.8 Examining records, policies and procedures**

The home's statement of purpose should be available on its website and form part of the pre-inspection data. We should also hold a copy in our database because homes are required to submit this document to Ofsted whenever they are changed.

Inspectors do not routinely examine all policies and procedures. Documents are examined where it is a line of enquiry for that individual inspection.

Inspectors focus on the impact of documents such as risk assessments and how they work in practice, rather than the format. What matters is that they are fit for purpose, and provide enough information to all relevant people so that they can care for the children safely and appropriately. Where paper or electronic personnel records are maintained at the home, the inspector may ask to see those records, if they are included within the lines of enquiry for the inspection. Homes can maintain electronic records if:

- they meet the requirements of regulation
- are appropriately accessible to children if they want to access their records
- staff have access to the information they require to care for those placed

Where recruitment records are not maintained at the home, inspectors look at the home's list or electronic records that summarise the vetting and recruitment checks for staff. These records could be maintained in checklist or spreadsheet formats. The manager must be able to provide evidence that they are satisfied that all staff working at the home are fit to do so and that recruitment and selection arrangements comply with regulations 32 and 33 of the [Children's homes \(England\) regulations 2015](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2015/541/contents/made) ([www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2015/541/contents/made](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2015/541/contents/made)).

Where the provider uses the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) update service to check the status of an individual's DBS certificate, the home should be able to demonstrate how it manages and records details of any check it carries out. If any lines of enquiry require additional information, then the inspector may request that a small sample of full personnel records are made available at the inspection visit.

Where members of staff are subject to TUPE arrangements, we recognise that the new employer is reliant on the previous employer for all recruitment records relating to those staff and in some instances may not be able to access all the information including documents required by the regulations. Where this is the case, we still expect the new employer to hold enough relevant information to make sure staff are

suitable, including criminal record checks or vetting records. Where there are any gaps in requirements, the new employer should have taken steps to assure themselves that the person is suitable to work in their role. This would include reference to employment records such as appraisals.

### **13.9 Regulation 46 review of premises**

Regulation 46 sets out the requirements for the registered person to review the premises.

There is no set format for location assessments in children's homes. Inspectors should not impose their preference for a style of assessment. Nor should they 'recommend' their preferred model.

Managers should update location assessments annually or when there is a change of circumstances, or when the strategies the manager has put in place to reduce or minimise risk are not effective. The annual update will need to be proportionate. Managers will not usually need to carry this out at the same level of the initial assessment.

On inspection, inspectors should check that the provider has reviewed the appropriateness and suitability of the location of the premises. They should check that the provider has assessed whether the location can continue to support the needs of the children placed there. They should also evaluate the action taken to address any identified risks. Inspectors should talk with children in the home's care about the quality of life in the area. These conversations should establish whether the children feel safe and how to manage any risks that they identify.

The review by the provider should involve consulting and taking into account the views of appropriate local bodies or services. These are likely to include local agencies responsible for children's safeguarding. In particular this is likely to include the home's local authority children's services and the police.

#### **Management of risk**

Producing a location assessment, like any other risk assessment does not in itself keep children safe. Assessment is only one part of any overarching approach to risk management.

Risk management is an umbrella term that includes:

- the identification of hazards
- the effects of hazards
- the degree of severity of the incident/issue happening
- the likelihood of the incident/issue happening
- the overall assessment of risk

- broader thinking about how to manage that risk.

It is a continuing process of proactively managing risk and minimising hazards. It is not always straightforward to define a 'safe' area. Whether a location is safe or not can change rapidly and may depend on the vulnerabilities of children. Some individual children may be more at risk because of their particular vulnerabilities.

Some locations and neighbourhoods may change over time and become increasingly unsafe. Inspectors should take a proportionate view when this happens. What is important is that the manager and staff have recognised the changes and have put in place strategies to minimise the risk. This includes taking appropriate action if the risks become unmanageable.

### **New admissions**

The location assessment is not just about risk and hazards. It is also an assessment of the services available. Providers should review the location assessment to ensure that there are suitable, appropriate and sufficient resources and services to meet the needs of any proposed new child to the home.

### **13.10 Implications of the Equality Act**

The [Equality Act 2010](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents) (the Act) ([www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents)) came into effect on 1 October 2010. The Act makes it unlawful for an employer to ask a potential employee questions about their health or disability before they are offered employment, whether on a conditional or unconditional basis.

Social care providers must comply with both the Equality Act and the remit-specific regulations that require them to employ people who are fit, both physically and mentally, for the work. In order to comply with both laws, this means that providers may give conditional offers of employment to potential employees after the recruitment process, subject to appropriate medical and health checks. However, there are a number of exemptions to the provisions in the Act. If a provider believes that an exemption applies to their recruitment of staff, they should take their own legal advice on the matter.

Inspectors will assess whether providers have a rigorous recruitment and vetting process in place, including ensuring that their employees are mentally and physically fit before they commence work as part of their inspection.

### **13.11 How inspectors record the evidence**

The inspector must analyse the information they gather on inspection and use their professional judgement to assess the impact on the experiences and progress of children and other service users.

The inspector's evidence should be clear, evaluative and sufficient to support the judgements.

The evidence should tell the story of the experiences and progress of children and other service users, as appropriate. Evidence should not include information that could identify individuals unless it is necessary to protect a child or to support further action. In these instances, the inspector can use individuals' initials.

The inspector can record direct quotes from children, adult service users and other interested parties in evidence to support judgements.

The record should clearly indicate the source of the evidence (for instance, whether the evidence is from observation, a written record or a face-to-face interview). If evidence comes from an interview, the record must indicate the time of the interview and the interviewee's job title or relationship to the child.

Throughout the inspection, inspectors maintain a record of their evidence. Electronic evidence is recorded within the inspection database. Summarised evidence must be sufficient to support the judgements and any recommendations or requirements. The inspector must ensure that the provider understands the evidence that the judgements are based on and any requirements that stem from the judgements.

After the summarised evidence has been placed in the inspection database, any duplicate handwritten evidence should not be destroyed by the inspector until at least 10 days after the inspection. In some circumstances, the inspector will be required to keep any handwritten notes they have made during the inspection for longer. This may, for example, be necessary when legal action or a complaint about the judgement is being considered.

All handwritten evidence should be legible and dated. Handwritten evidence that has not been summarised forms part of the inspection evidence base and should therefore be scanned and added into the inspection database within 5 working days of the end of the on-site visit.

Evidence may be scrutinised for quality assurance and will be considered in the event of any complaint.

### **13.12 Feedback at the end of the inspection**

At the end of the inspection, the inspector will give verbal feedback of the main findings and provisional judgements. This feedback will usually be given to the responsible individual (as appropriate). Additional senior staff from the provider may also attend, if agreed in advance with the inspector. In some circumstances, the inspector may need extra time after the inspection fieldwork to take advice before giving feedback. The day of feedback is counted as the last day of the inspection.

The inspector should:

- cover the main findings of the inspection, including both strengths and weaknesses
- clearly communicate the likely judgements

- indicate likely requirements and recommendations, with clear reference to the relevant regulation or guidance in the Guide to The Regulations and Quality Standards, providing a clear direction for improvement
- use the grade descriptors and the evidence to clearly indicate how the judgements have been reached
- confirm when the report will be sent to the manager for comments on factual accuracy (see 'timeframe')

Inspectors will not provide a written summary of the inspection or written feedback in advance of the inspection report being sent. Providers may choose to take their own notes at feedback.

### **13.13 Feedback to children and young people**

Inspectors should give feedback to children and young people, as appropriate to their age and understanding. Inspectors should make efforts to address matters raised by children.

## **14. Making requirements and recommendations**

*What inspectors must do when imposing requirements and making recommendations.*

### **14.1 Requirements**

Inspectors impose requirements when there has been a breach of a regulation.

When imposing a requirement, inspectors must ensure that there is enough evidence to support the breach and that they are able to show that this is having an impact, or is likely to have an impact, on children's experiences and progress. They must weigh up and balance evidence from more than one source to support making a requirement.

The requirement should refer to the specific regulation and should be detailed enough for the registered person to be clear about what they need to do to correct the breach of regulation and a date by which they should achieve this.

In deciding whether to impose a requirement, the inspector must assess the extent of the impact, or potential impact, on the experiences and progress of children and whether the matter could be dealt with more appropriately by making a recommendation.

The inspector will always impose requirements where there are significant concerns for the welfare, safety and quality of care for children.

Sometimes the registered person needs to take action to meet a requirement that they can complete quickly. Inspectors can impose a requirement with a date that is likely to be before the registered person will receive their inspection report. Here, the

inspector must be clear at the inspection feedback what the requirement and its deadline is.

## 14.2 Recommendations

Inspectors make recommendations when necessary to improve practice.

In 2015, the Department for Education published the Guide to the children's homes regulations, including the quality standards ('the Guide') ([www.gov.uk/government/publications/childrens-homes-regulations-including-quality-standards-guide](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/childrens-homes-regulations-including-quality-standards-guide)) that explains and supplements the regulations.

The Guide is made under section 23 of the [Care Standards Act 2000](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/14/contents) ([www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/14/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/14/contents)). Providers are required to take the Guide into account. Ofsted must also take it into account when making decisions under the Care Standards Act 2000.

The Guide replaced the national minimum standards. Registered persons must have regard to the Guide in interpreting and meeting the regulations. Where the registered person does not have regard to the Guide, this may result in a failure to meet the regulations. This may influence the inspection judgement and may result in requirements being imposed or recommendations being made.

In making a recommendation, inspectors should refer to the Guide. They should always provide enough detail to ensure that the registered person is clear what they need to do. The relevant part of the Guide should be summarised and the page and paragraph number included. Inspectors may also make recommendations in relation to other relevant statutory guidance such as:

- Working together to safeguard children (DfE, 2018) ([www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children))
- Statutory guidance for children who run away or go missing from home or care (DfE, 2014) ([www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-who-run-away-or-go-missing-from-home-or-care](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-who-run-away-or-go-missing-from-home-or-care))

If, during an inspection, the registered person rectifies a minor administrative error that has minimal impact on the experiences and progress of children, an inspector may not need to make a requirement or recommendation about that matter. However, they may refer to it in the leadership and management section of the report.

Where the registered person has failed to comply with a requirement within the timescale set by the inspector, we consider carefully whether it is necessary to take any enforcement action to address the breach and the associated risks to children and young people living in the home. Such action may include, but is not limited to, issuing a compliance notice.

Where the home has not acted on recommendations made at a previous inspection, the inspector considers carefully the impact of this on children and may impose a requirement.

### **14.3 Compliance notices and enforcement action**

Ofsted's compliance powers are set out in the Care Standards Act 2000 ([www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/14/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/14/contents)) and associated regulations. Ofsted's Social care compliance handbook ([www.gov.uk/government/publications/social-care-compliance-handbook-from-september-2014](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/social-care-compliance-handbook-from-september-2014)) has the details.

We serve a compliance notice following an inspection if:

- we consider that this is the most appropriate way to promote the welfare of children or we believe that they are being harmed or at risk of harm or
- a registered provider has failed to comply with a requirement made at an inspection and we consider that this is the most appropriate way to deal with this concern

## **15. Inadequate judgements: next steps**

*What happens following inadequate judgements, including urgent case reviews.*

### **15.1 Post-inspection debrief and case reviews**

Where a children's home is judged inadequate for 'the overall experiences and progress of children and young people' at a full inspection, this leads to a post-inspection debrief as soon as possible, and then a case review. The timing of the case review should be proportionate to the risk and certainly no later than 5 working days following the inspection.

If an interim inspection identifies that the home has declined in effectiveness or there is enough cause for concern, this also leads to a post-inspection debrief and then a case review on the same timescales.

The inspector and their manager have the post-inspection debrief. It provides an opportunity for them to discuss the inspection and the quality of the evidence, and to consider a recommendation for further action to take to the case review. The recommendation of further action should include the scheduling of future inspections and/or compliance action. The [Social care compliance handbook](#) has detailed information about the enforcement options available and the arrangements for following up enforcement activity.

The case review considers the recommended future action and allows the manager to decide which action to take.

The timing and nature of subsequent inspection and monitoring visits following a judgement of inadequate is set on a case-by-case basis. We always return to

undertake some inspection activity within 6 to 8 weeks to ensure that children are safe. This is either a monitoring visit or a full inspection. Where concerns are serious, we are likely to return to undertake a monitoring visit to check that the manager and responsible person have taken adequate steps to safeguard and protect the welfare of children living in the home. A monitoring visit usually results in a published report, although regulatory inspection managers (RIMs) can decide not to publish monitoring reports in exceptional circumstances.

An inspection visit takes place sooner if any further significant concerns arise during this period or if an earlier inspection is necessary to make statutory requirements to safeguard and protect the welfare of children.

All inadequacy is serious and requires immediate action to be taken. However, in some cases, the inadequacy derives from fire risks, health and safety hazards or other environmental factors. While serious and high risk for children and young people, these can be quickly rectified in many instances. Inspectors always seek to understand how and why such serious inadequacy has occurred.

Where the concerns are serious, but generally limited to one area of risk and likely to be rectified relatively quickly, we may in specific circumstances be satisfied at the monitoring visit that the situation has been made safe for children. We seek assurance that leaders and managers can and are acting appropriately in respect of their responsibilities. All requirements that have been made will have had to be met in full. In these instances, the inspector may determine that an improved inspection judgement can be awarded. If this is the case, the monitoring visit results in a new inspection judgement.

Where the situation has not improved enough, or there is insufficient evidence to demonstrate that the matter has been addressed fully, the inadequate judgement remains, a report of the monitoring visit is published with the original judgement and we decide what steps to take next.

We consider new inspection judgements in circumstances where:

- the RIM agrees that the concerns are discrete enough and that without these very specific concerns, the home would have achieved a higher inspection judgement
- the home has a previous good track record of addressing concerns and issues and there are no concerns about the leadership and management of the home or the protection of children
- the nature of the concerns means they can be rectified quickly

Therefore, where we have followed up an inadequate judgement with a monitoring visit, the outcome may be to:

- carry out further monitoring and take steps towards cancellation



- schedule a full inspection (usually within 16 weeks from the original inspection), which may either support our steps to cancel the home's registration or give the home the opportunity to show improvement and secure an improved inspection judgement
- consider whether the monitoring visit provides enough evidence to secure an improved inspection judgement

## 15.2 Feedback to local authorities

Wherever children are at immediate risk, inspectors must follow Ofsted's '[Safeguarding children and young people and vulnerable adults policy](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted-safeguarding-policy)' ([www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted-safeguarding-policy](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted-safeguarding-policy)). In addition, whenever a children's home is judged inadequate at the full inspection, the inspector must alert the placing authority for any child currently placed in the home to the concerns that have been identified. The inspector must also notify the local authority where the home is based because they have a duty to safeguard the welfare of all children and young people living in the local authority area. This also applies where we have judged a decline in effectiveness at the interim inspection and it has been agreed at the case review that the relevant local authorities should be notified.

The inspector sends an email to the directors of children's services in the relevant local authorities after the case review when we have decided what further action to take. Ofsted follows this email up with a telephone call to ensure receipt. Where there are a large number of placing authorities, the inspector should discuss arrangements for contacting them with their manager. The inspector should also ensure that the email to local authorities is forwarded to the provider.

The inspector gives feedback to the relevant local authorities in line with the feedback given to the provider and that will appear in the report. This must include a summary of the main concerns so that relevant local authorities understand these and can make their own decisions. The inspector must make clear that the provider has not at this point had an opportunity to challenge the findings.

The details of the email and any phone calls must be recorded on the inspection database for future reference and the email or letter should be shared with the provider.

We contact placing authorities to follow HMCI's powers detailed in paragraph 8 of schedule 13 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 ([www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/40/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/40/contents)), 'to provide assistance to other public authorities in the exercise of the placing authorities' functions'.

## 15.3 Children who are not looked after

Where children who are not looked after are accommodated in a children's home, the local authority is not the placing authority (as set out in the definition of a placing authority in Regulation 2 of the Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015) ([www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2015/541/contents/made](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2015/541/contents/made)). Inspectors need to

ensure that the relevant organisation or people who are the placing authority are alerted to the inadequate judgement; for example, they should send a copy of the inspection report to parents who have placed their children in the home themselves.

## 15.4 Children’s homes that are also independent schools or non-maintained special schools

Where children’s homes are registered by the DfE as an independent school, or approved by them as a non-maintained special, inspectors should notify the DfE where we have judged them inadequate at a full inspection or where they have declined in effectiveness at an interim inspection.

## 16. The inspection report

*What is in the report and how the inspector checks and submits it.*

The report should be succinct and evaluative. Inspectors’ analysis must include clear evidence for their professional judgements.

In most instances each inspection judgement section of the report should be no more than six to eight short paragraphs with each usually only two or three sentences long. Reports for settings that have several weaknesses or that are found to be outstanding may require more detailed explanations for the judgements but should still focus on the main issues only. Inspectors should ensure that the reports are long enough to say what needs to be said and no longer.

### 16.1 Content of the SCCIF report

Information about this service	Brief contextual information about the service
Judgements	The judgements made and a single sentence that is standardised according to the overall judgement
Date and judgement of last inspection	The date and overall judgement of the last inspection
Enforcement action since the last inspection (registered providers only)	A brief summary of any enforcement activity we have taken since the last inspection
Recent inspection history	Inspection judgements from recent years
Areas for improvement	Any recommendations and statutory requirements (where relevant)
Inspection judgements	The judgements made and accompanying text
Information about this inspection	What we have looked at and information about the legal basis for the inspection
Service details	Information on the provider running the service

## 16.2 Children's homes reports

We publish children's homes inspection reports on our [reports website](#) in an anonymised form to protect children. Published inspection reports do not contain any of the following:

- the name of the home
- the address of the home
- any information that identifies the location of the home
- any information that identifies an individual child or staff member at the home

Published reports contain:

- the name of the responsible individual
- the name and address of the registered provider (where the provider is an organisation)
- the recent inspection history
- details of any enforcement activity since the last inspection

The reports are only searchable by the provider's unique reference number (URN), by local authority area or by region (for example the north west or the Midlands). The reports are not searchable by postcode.

## 16.3 Child-friendly summary reports

Inspectors complete a child-friendly summary following every full inspection of a children's home. Where children need an adapted form of summary, the report should be sent to the provider with a request for the document to be adapted into a suitable format.

Where it is known that children use individual, alternative systems of communication to verbal communication, or where it is known that children have limited receptive and expressive language skills, we still provide a child-friendly summary. It can be short, include pictures and be set in simple, concrete sentences.

It is anticipated that children's homes staff will translate the child-friendly summary, if necessary, for those children who speak English as an additional language and for those who use alternative systems of communication. The summary can set out an expectation that staff will support children to understand their letter from Ofsted.

## 16.4 Quality assurance

The inspector is responsible for the quality of the report. The inspector will check the completed report carefully before submitting it to their manager for sign-off and publication.

Any proposed change of judgement from the provisional judgement given at verbal feedback during the inspection will be discussed by the appropriate managers within Ofsted. On these rare occasions, the inspector must inform the provider of the revised judgements and provide reasons for the changes before the provider receives the draft report.

Following each inspection, Ofsted will send an evaluation form to the provider. Feedback from providers will be used to improve the quality of inspections.

## **17. Conduct during inspections**

*How inspectors and children's homes should work together.*

### **17.1 Expectations of inspectors**

It is important that inspectors and providers establish and maintain a positive working relationship based on courteous and professional behaviour. We expect our inspectors to uphold the highest professional standards in their work, and to treat everyone they meet during inspections fairly, with respect and with sensitivity.

In meeting this expectation, inspectors will:

- evaluate objectively, be impartial and inspect without fear or favour
- uphold and demonstrate Ofsted values at all times
- evaluate provision in line with frameworks, regulations and standards
- base all evaluations on clear and robust evidence
- declare all actual and perceived conflicts of interest and have no real or perceived connection with the provider that could undermine the objectivity of the inspection
- report honestly and clearly, ensuring that judgements are fair and reliable
- carry out their work with integrity, treating all those they meet with courtesy, respect and sensitivity
- take all reasonable steps to prevent undue anxiety and to minimise stress for those being inspected
- act in the best interests and well-being of service users, prioritising the safeguarding of children at all times
- maintain purposeful and productive communication with those being inspected and inform them of judgements sensitively, but clearly and frankly
- respect the confidentiality of information, particularly about individuals and their work
- respond appropriately to reasonable requests
- take prompt and appropriate action on any safeguarding or health and safety issues

- use their title (such as Her Majesty’s Inspector, Ofsted Inspector or Regulatory Inspector) only in relation to their work for Ofsted.

## 17.2 Expectations of children’s homes

For inspection and regulation to be productive and beneficial, inspectors and children’s homes must establish and maintain a professional working relationship that is based on courtesy and professional behaviour. Inspectors are expected to uphold the code of conduct, but we also expect children’s homes to:

- be courteous and professional, treating inspectors with respect and sensitivity
- apply their own codes of conduct in their dealings with inspectors
- enable inspectors to carry out their visit in an open and honest way
- enable inspectors to evaluate the provision objectively against the inspection evaluation criteria and relevant standards and regulations
- provide evidence – or access to evidence - that will enable the inspector to report honestly, fairly and reliably about their provision
- work with inspectors to minimise disruption, stress and bureaucracy
- ensure the good health and safety of inspectors while on their premises
- maintain purposeful and productive communication with the inspector or the inspection team
- bring any concerns about the inspection to the attention of inspectors promptly and in a suitable manner
- recognise that sometimes inspectors will need to observe practice and talk to staff and users without the presence of a manager or responsible individual

## 18. Concerns or complaints about an inspection

*How to raise a concern or complaint.*

### 18.1 Concerns

Most of Ofsted’s work is carried out smoothly and without incident. If concerns do arise during an inspection, they should be raised with the inspector as soon as possible during the inspection visit.

This provides an opportunity to resolve the matter before the inspection is completed. Any concerns about the factual accuracy of the findings in the report can be raised after the inspection.

If the provider is unable to resolve the matter with the inspector, they should contact the inspector’s RIM for further discussion.

## 18.2 Complaints

If it has not been possible to resolve concerns, a formal complaint can be raised under Ofsted’s complaints procedure ([www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted)).

Complaints can be submitted to Ofsted at any stage during an inspection and should be submitted no more than 10 working days after publication or any report or letter. We do not normally withhold publication of an inspection report or withdraw a published inspection report while we investigate concerns.

Complainants must send their concerns using [Ofsted’s online complaints form](#).

If there are special circumstances that prevent the submission of a complaint online, complaints can be sent in writing to:

Ofsted  
National Complaints Team  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

Email: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)

## 19. Interim inspections

*Information about interim inspections.*

### 19.1 Timeline

The usual timeframe for interim inspections in working days is:

Day	Interim inspection activity
1	Preparation/site visit
2	Site visit/drafting report
3–7	Inspection evidence and report submitted for quality assurance
15	Report sent to the registered provider for any comments on factual accuracy within a maximum of 13 working days of the end of the inspection
20	Provider returns the report within 5 working days with any comments on factual accuracy
30	The final report will be published on the <a href="#">Ofsted reports site</a> within a maximum of 28 working days of the end of the inspection

## 19.2 Grading interim inspection findings

For interim inspections, inspectors make their judgements using a 3-point scale. An interim inspection focuses on the effectiveness of the home and the experiences and progress of children and young people since the most recent full inspection.

Interim inspections focus on the following areas:

- an evaluation of the experiences and progress of children since the last inspection and the difference the home is making:
  - where children have left the home since the last inspection, inspectors must focus on the reasons why the young person has left (well-planned and facilitated move or placement breakdown) and the contribution the manager, key workers and staff have made to the plans for their future
  - where children are newly resident in the home or the service is a short break service, the inspector must assess the quality of the planning and transition work, the knowledge and understanding of the needs of the young person, the arrangements to work directly with children to help them, and the ability of the staff to meet those needs effectively; inspectors will take into account the views of children
- the effectiveness of leaders and managers in monitoring the quality of care and professional practice that children receive, their ability to identify where improvement can and should happen and, where they prioritise areas for development, the effectiveness and impact of their improvements
- an overview of the experiences of children since the last inspection, including significant incidents, notifications, complaints and incidents of restraint; inspectors must assess whether children are protected, how well staff and managers have responded and how well they have used opportunities for learning to improve the experiences for children
- how well the manager and staff have worked in partnership with others to support the progress of, and improve the experiences of children
- the home's response to the requirements and recommendations made at the last inspection

The inspector reports on each of these areas unless there are exceptional reasons not to do so.

Inspectors use their professional judgement to determine whether the home's effectiveness has improved, been sustained or declined since the last inspection.

If the provider has not taken effective and timely steps to appoint an appropriate, permanent manager within a reasonable timeframe and/or the appointed manager has not applied to be registered, then the judgement is likely to be declined in effectiveness.

Where the home has declined in effectiveness, the inspector and a RIM consider whether to hold a case review to determine next steps based on the seriousness and impact of the concerns identified.

### 19.3 Reporting findings at interim inspections

Each interim inspection is followed by a single report that sets out the inspection findings using text and a grade, organised under the headings below.

### 19.4 Report contents

Service information	Brief contextual information about the service
Previous inspection	The last inspection judgement
Enforcement activity since the last inspection	A brief summary of any enforcement activity we have taken since the last inspection
The judgement at the most recent full inspection and the evaluation of effectiveness at this inspection	Improved, sustained or declined
Recent inspection history	Inspection judgements from recent years
Areas for improvement	No grade
Information about this inspection	Information about the legal basis for the inspection
Service information	Brief contextual information about the service
Previous inspection	The last inspection judgement
Enforcement activity since the last inspection	A brief summary of any enforcement activity we have taken since the last inspection
The judgement at the most recent full inspection and the evaluation of effectiveness at this inspection	Improved, sustained or declined
Recent inspection history	Inspection judgements from recent years
Areas for improvement	No grade
Information about this inspection	Information about the legal basis for the inspection

## 20. Monitoring visits

*Information about monitoring visits.*

Monitoring visits are carried out according to the general principles of the SCCIF. Monitoring visits are usually undertaken for any of the following reasons:

- to follow up concerns
- following an inadequate inspection
- to monitor compliance with a notice



## 20.1 Timing and frequency

The decision to carry out a monitoring visit is usually taken at a case review. The frequency of monitoring visits is decided on a case by case basis and may be as frequent as weekly if that is what is needed. Timing and frequency are determined by any dates included in compliance notices and the nature of the concerns.

A compliance notice sets out the actions a provider must take by a certain date to meet the relevant service-specific regulations for children's social care providers. This is agreed and recorded at the case review.

The inspector will tell the provider that they are the subject of monitoring following enforcement action or an inadequate inspection judgement. Monitoring visits are usually unannounced.

## 20.2 Compliance notices

Where we establish a number of actions on a statutory notice, or serve multiple statutory notices with different completion dates, then we schedule follow-up visits for each date or notice to ensure that the provider has met each specified action within the prescribed timescale.

We aim to complete follow-up visits the day after the required completion date for each notice or, at the very latest, within 5 working days of that date. In some instances, we may timetable the monitoring visit so that we can assess compliance with more than one notice.

We may decide, in exceptional circumstances, not to carry out a follow-up visit to check that the provider has met a specific requirement in a notice. In these cases, we will accept written confirmation that the provider has taken the required action, if the written confirmation is accompanied by documentary evidence such as a photograph or a copy of a required procedure.

We make a note on the inspection database of the reasons why it was not necessary to visit, for example where a fire officer has conducted a visit and given written confirmation of action taken, copied to Ofsted.

Monitoring visits are also likely to be agreed as part of the plan for the provider once the notice of proposal to cancel has been issued.

Other circumstances where we might undertake monitoring visits include those where a 'restriction of accommodation' notice is in place or where we have suspended a provider from continuing to operate.

Following the monitoring visit, we will send a report detailing the outcome of the visit. This report will be published on our [reports website](#) alongside the children's home inspection reports.

## 20.3 Preparing for the monitoring visit

When preparing for a monitoring visit, inspectors take into account:

- the last inspection report
- requirement(s) set out in the last inspection report
- requirement(s) set out in any compliance notice
- letters from previous monitoring inspections
- any notifications received since the last inspection
- any action plan provided by the setting
- any other information recorded on the inspection database, such as information from other agencies or complaints
- any enforcement action that should be monitored (for example, restriction of accommodation)

## 20.4 How inspectors carry out monitoring visits

Where the monitoring visit is either conducted following an inadequate judgement or to monitor compliance notices or to determine whether requirements have been completed, it should:

- determine the impact of any completed requirements on the welfare and outcomes for children, young people and other service users
- identify whether any additional concerns exist
- determine the capacity of the registered manager to sustain the changes required
- consider any further action that may need to be taken
- review the evidence in order to determine whether a new inspection judgement can be made (only relevant for monitoring visits following an inadequate judgement)

Where the monitoring visit is to monitor other concerns or issues, it should:

- determine whether the effectiveness of the setting has declined or improved
- determine the impact of any improvement or decline in practice on the welfare and outcomes for children and young people
- set out any further action that may need to be taken

The inspector must notify either the registered provider or registered manager when they arrive on site.

The inspector should judge how effective the improvement is and how, by tackling the requirements or issues, the setting has improved the experiences and progress of children, young people and other service users.

To demonstrate the necessary improvement, providers and managers need to show that their actions have had a significant impact in achieving clear and sustainable progress. Good intentions and an aspirational outlook or a recent change of manager following a period of poor leadership do not in themselves give enough proof of the ability of the provider to sustain improvement.

If it becomes clear that there are further issues of concern or that in tackling the actions from the last inspection the provider has let other aspects slip so that children and/or vulnerable adults are at risk of harm or are not making sufficient progress, then the inspector should decide what further action needs to be taken. This includes new requirements and/or recommendations and compliance notices or other enforcement action such as restriction of accommodation or imposing of conditions.

If the inspector is concerned or unsure about any aspect of the visit, they can contact their RIM or a social care compliance inspector.

If the inspector thinks that an offence may have been committed, they should contact a social care compliance inspector or RIM immediately to discuss whether the monitoring visit should continue and to take advice.

If during the course of the visit the inspector thinks that an offence has been committed, they have the power to caution the registered provider or registered manager. An inspector can only caution the provider or the registered manager.

If an inspector believes that an offence has been committed and that it is necessary to secure the evidence during the visit, they should contact their RIM, another manager or social care compliance inspector for advice, before administering the caution and carrying out the interview.

However, the preferred way of interviewing under caution is to withdraw and conduct the interview at a later date under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 ([www.gov.uk/guidance/police-and-criminal-evidence-act-1984-pace-codes-of-practice](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/police-and-criminal-evidence-act-1984-pace-codes-of-practice)).

## **20.5 How inspectors gather evidence in a monitoring visit**

The key questions inspectors investigate are:

- How effective is the action taken by the provider to meet the requirements set at the last inspection?
- How effective is the action the provider has taken to improve the experiences and progress of children and young people?

Evidence should be recorded in the inspection database. The evidence should reflect the areas for improvement that were identified in the inspection report. This section should include evidence of the most significant strengths and weaknesses and any new areas of improvement or breaches of requirement that need to be taken forward. The inspector must decide whether the setting has let other aspects slip so there is now cause for concern in different areas.

Inspectors must decide whether the provider demonstrates their capacity to sustain any improvements they have made. Inspectors should also decide whether the improvements are having a marked and sustained impact on all areas of weakness.

## 20.6 Feedback at the end of the monitoring visit

The inspector provides verbal feedback to the provider at the end of the visit. The inspector must:

- be clear about the evidence base that the judgement of improvement or continued concern is based
- make clear any new issue(s) to take forward
- ensure that the provider is clear about the outcome of the visit and what the next step will be, especially if a new issue has arisen or improvement is inadequate
- be clear with the provider when the next steps will be confirmed if the inspector requires further advice
- explain that the outcome of a monitoring visit is published in the form of a report on the [Ofsted reports site](#) alongside the last report
- make clear that the text of the report may differ slightly from the oral feedback, but that the substance of the issues will not change
- ensure that the provider understands that the overall judgement of inadequate has not changed (where relevant), although progress and improvements may have been made
- be clear if a new inspection judgement has been made, why this is the case and what the new judgement is or why no change to the judgement has been made (only relevant for monitoring visits following an inadequate judgement)

After any monitoring visit following an inadequate judgement, the inspector must contact the director of children's services of the placing authorities (where relevant) to advise them:

- whether there has been a change of judgement and what that new judgement is and the nature and effectiveness of any improvements or
- that there has been no change of judgement and either the original concerns remain or new ones have emerged.

## 20.7 Monitoring report

Ofsted will publish all monitoring reports on its [reports website](#), although RIMs can decide not to publish monitoring reports in exceptional circumstances.

The summary of the reports should outline the significant developments and evidence of progress that has occurred since the last visit. The summary must clearly explain the action the provider has taken to address the requirements and the impact of any improvement, or not, on the care, experiences and progress of children, young people and any other service users.

The report must:

- set out the reason for the visit (if the visit is to follow up enforcement activity then the letter should clearly set this out, for example, 'This home is subject to a restriction of accommodation order. There are concerns that... In order to evaluate the progress the home has made in addressing these concerns a monitoring visit was undertaken on...'; where this relates to compliance notices, there should be a short summary of the number of notices and an overview of the areas for concern)
- evaluate where progress has been made and where progress has not been made
- clearly state the impact of continued concerns on children and young people, alongside any action that Ofsted will be taking to notify placing local authorities and/or to protect children
- set out clearly where and what further action is needed
- set out why a new judgement has been made or the reasons why the judgement will not be changed (if appropriate)

Inspectors must use clear language to indicate the level of concern; for example, 'this visit has raised serious concerns about care and practice in the [setting]'. Inspectors can clearly state that the provider is likely to be subject to further enforcement action where this is the case. The details of intended action cannot be included as this may prejudice any action we are likely to take and be seen to impede the provider's right of appeal, where relevant.

## 20.8 Review and factual accuracy check of the report

Monitoring toolkits will be reviewed by the RIMs before they are sent to the provider or published. This is to ensure that they accurately reflect the improvement made or support any further enforcement action we may wish to take.

The provider has an opportunity to check the factual accuracy of a monitoring report.

Monitoring reports should usually be published within 28 working days of the visit.

## 21. Checks on responsible individuals

*The responsible individual must meet the requirements of regulation.*

The Children's homes (England) regulations 2015 ([www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2015/541/contents/made](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2015/541/contents/made)) require children's homes to have a responsible individual.

A provider must demonstrate to Ofsted that the responsible individual it appoints is able to meet the requirements of regulation. Our inspectors scrutinise the steps providers have taken to determine that a responsible individual who has been appointed to a registered establishment or agency is fit to supervise the management of an establishment or agency.

This scrutiny applies in situations where:

- the identity of a responsible individual changes
- a person acting as responsible individual becomes responsible for the management of another registered establishment or agency that they did not supervise on 31 March 2014

For further information, see 'Changes to children's social care services that are registered and/or inspected by Ofsted' (Annex A).

## 22. Inspections where no children are living in the home

*What happens if there are no children living in the home at the time of inspection.*

If there are no children present at the first inspection after registration, an interim inspection is carried out. This focuses on whether the service continues to meet registration requirements. However, no judgement is given. The interim inspection report must be used and the following statement made in the report:

The home has not provided [accommodation] to [children and young people] since its registration on [insert date of registration]. This inspection focuses on whether the children's home meets its statutory requirements in order to maintain its registration and is ready to accept placements. [Inspector to include any relevant text]

In these instances, Ofsted does not make a judgement about effectiveness. If the requirements of registration are not met, the inspector can raise requirements or recommendations.

Where a home has no children in placement at the time of the inspection but has accommodated since the last inspection and intends to admit children within the next 3 months, the inspector, in consultation with their manager, determines what the most appropriate type of inspection is. This is usually a full inspection. The inspection

focuses on whether the registration requirements continue to be met, including appropriate management arrangements so that the home is suitable to accommodate children. The inspection also takes into account any changes the provider has made to improve the quality of the care provided.

If children have been accommodated since the last inspection, it may be possible to use information about their placements as evidence about the experiences and progress of children. Inspection activity can include talking to children who have recently left and the professionals who have worked with them.

Where a home does not have children living there, does not intend to take placements and plans to remain closed for some time, no inspection is undertaken and therefore no judgement is made. A condition that the home notifies Ofsted if it intends to accept a placement is imposed by sending a notice of proposal to the provider and then a notice of decision. The condition must be worded as follows:

[The home] must inform the Chief Inspector of their intention to accommodate children at the home at least 3 months before any child is accommodated.

The condition set out above must be in place in order for the home to be exempt from inspection.

Ofsted will not inspect the home for as long as the condition is in place. When the home wants to accept placements again, the condition should be removed following a visit to the provider to ensure the provider and premises remain fit for registration. Where the condition is removed between 1 April and 30 September in any year, Ofsted will carry out one inspection (usually a full inspection) before 31 March of the following year. Where the condition is removed between 1 October and 31 March, Ofsted will not inspect until the following inspection year (starting 1 April).

Where closed homes re-open, Ofsted will carry out two inspections in the following inspection year (the first of which should usually take place before the end of June of that year) – unless the home received or receives a full inspection in the inspection year it re-opened where it is judged outstanding or good. Here, only one inspection is required in the following inspection year.

## **23. Homes where there is no registered manager**

*What must happen where there is no registered manager.*

The Care Standards Act 2000 ([www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/14/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/14/contents)) requires any person who carries on or manages a children's home to be registered with Ofsted. It is a criminal offence to operate or manage a children's home without registering with Ofsted (Section 11 of the Care Standards Act 2000).

If a children's home does not have a manager in post, has a new registered manager or has a manager that is not yet registered, inspectors should consider whether an

interim inspection is required in addition to the full inspection during that inspection year if the home was judged outstanding or good at its last full inspection.

If there is no manager in charge of the home, the inspector should raise a requirement under regulation 27 of the Children's homes (England) regulations 2015 ([www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2015/541/contents/made](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2015/541/contents/made)). Regulations 48 and 49 require the responsible individual to notify Ofsted if the manager is to be absent for 28 days or more or if they leave.

Any failure to either notify Ofsted of the absence or change of a manager or a failure to put in place satisfactory management arrangements will be taken into account when planning and undertaking inspections. For more information, see: 'Changes to children's social care services that are registered and/or inspected by Ofsted' ([www.gov.uk/government/publications/changes-to-childrens-social-care-services-that-are-registered-andor-inspected-by-ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/changes-to-childrens-social-care-services-that-are-registered-andor-inspected-by-ofsted)).

Actions to be taken may include, but are not limited to, bringing the date of the inspection forward and using this information to inform our judgement about the leadership and management of the children's home. If a provider fails to notify Ofsted of a change of manager, this may also influence our assessment of their fitness to manage. For more information about what regulatory action Ofsted can take, please refer to Ofsted's Social care compliance handbook ([www.gov.uk/government/publications/social-care-compliance-handbook-from-september-2014](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/social-care-compliance-handbook-from-september-2014)).

## 24. Inspecting different types of homes

*How inspections take account of the different types of children's homes.*

Each home is unique and, while all providers have to meet the requirements of regulations and take into account the 'Guide' ([www.gov.uk/government/publications/childrens-homes-regulations-including-quality-standards-guide](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/childrens-homes-regulations-including-quality-standards-guide)), there will be different ways that these are shown in different homes and for different groups of children and young people. Inspectors should use their pre-inspection planning time and the set-up meeting at the beginning of the inspection to understand the ethos and the approach or model of care used in a particular home.

Inspectors need to take the purpose of the home into account because this will influence:

- the specific needs of the children who come to live in the home and how these needs are made
- the physical environment
- the nature and extent of children's progress
- the type of experiences that children can expect to have



- the training and development needs for staff
- how, as inspectors, they are able to understand the views and/or experiences of children
- the key stakeholders that they may try to contact

Some schools and children’s homes adopt a particular way of working or subscribe to a particular model of practice. It is not expected that inspectors have a detailed knowledge of all the theoretical models or approaches to residential care. However, it is important that they take the home’s approach into account and take opportunities to familiarise themselves with the principles of it wherever possible.

Where a home applies specific social work models, inspectors may ask staff if they have received training in these and to explain how the application of the models benefits children. Inspectors should not make judgements about the approach itself but should evaluate its impact on the children’s experiences and progress. If an inspector has any concerns about the efficacy or authenticity of a particular approach, they should seek advice from their manager.

## 24.1 Homes accommodating disabled children

When evaluating how well disabled children are helped and protected, inspectors should pay particular attention to how well staff understand the particular vulnerabilities of disabled children to abuse and neglect by taking account of:

- the effectiveness and impact of safeguarding training for all staff, including nursing staff where relevant, and how this has specifically raised awareness and understanding of the protection needs of disabled children
- whether children’s intimate care needs are met sensitively and their rights to privacy are respected
- the quality and effectiveness of the work to help disabled children keep themselves safe and, wherever possible, to develop an understanding of managing personal boundaries and developing appropriate relationships
- how staff respond to triggers or changes in behaviour for each child or unusual patterns of bruising or injury, including for those children with limited or no verbal communication, that may indicate that they may be at risk or have been subject to abuse
- how records of behaviour management and restraint confirm that staff use identified individual strategies that consider children’s communication, physical and learning needs to divert and minimise incidents and physical intervention
- whether staff administer pro re nata (PRN) or ‘as required’ medication appropriately and retain clear records of its administration
- whether children have access to advocates or independent visitors who spend enough time interacting with and observing children and staff to gather

children's views, wishes and feelings in order to reach a judgement about their safety and welfare

## 24.2 Short break services for disabled children

Inspectors should take the following into account:

- There is likely to be a greater emphasis on experiences for children than on progress, although the service should still focus on working with others to support progress where it can. The impact of the service on children's progress is likely to be influenced by the frequency and length of the short-break stays. Children should be supported to enjoy experiences that may not be available to them otherwise
- The quality of introductions to the service and the level of engagement with the family and with other professionals to provide consistent and safe care and minimise disruption in children's lives are critical
- Parents/carers are likely to hold the central role in relation to many aspects of the care of the child. Therefore, inspectors should place particular emphasis on evaluating the quality of these relationships and how they support the best possible experience for children
- Particular importance should be placed on the planning of stays; how decisions are made about the groups of children who visit together; how friendships are supported; and the experiences that children are offered and how these add to their lives

## 24.3 Residential special schools also registered as children's homes

Inspectors should take the following into account:

- Larger group-care settings may look and feel different to a family home. Inspectors should evaluate how the organisation of the home meets the needs of the children who live there. Children living in these homes may live within larger groups, spread across a number of sites or houses. For some children, being able to socialise in large groups is an important element of their experience and learning. However, this may not be the desired experience for all children. Inspectors should evaluate how the organisation can meet the needs of all children living there
- The building and private and communal areas may need to be adapted to meet the needs of individual children. Inspectors need to take time to understand this and ask for explanations where they are unsure. Equally, inspectors should, when necessary, challenge 'custom and practice' to determine that services continually adapt and evolve to meet the needs of children
- Parents/carers may hold the central role in relation to many aspects of the care of the children. Children will be living in the residential special school (RSS) for different amounts of time. This is likely to influence the role that the RSS has in the child's life. Inspectors should take this into account

- While attendance at school is much less likely to be an issue, how the home manages transitions from home to school and consistency of care between home and school are very significant and must be considered
- Educational curriculums may be developed to support children over a 24-hour period. Inspectors need to understand how opportunities for learning are used to help children progress and feel safe. Structure may be more important for some children. Inspectors need to question and challenge the structure that they see so that they can evaluate how practice is in the best interests of children
- Residential special schools offer a 24-hour environment and can be situated away from communities. This means that external scrutiny and links with the local community are important in supporting children's experiences and safeguarding their welfare
- Particular attention must be given to the arrangements for children to complain, to tell someone they are being bullied and for them to contact their families or a trusted adult away from the school

#### **24.4 Assessment homes/refuges**

Where a home is a refuge or provides short-term assessment placements, inspectors should focus especially on how well children are welcomed into the home, how they are helped to feel safe and how they are helped to move on to the next stage of their lives.

#### **24.5 Where health professionals provide services on site**

Inspectors should take the following into account:

- Nursing and health professionals should be registered with the relevant professional body, such as the Nursing and Midwifery Council. They should be able to demonstrate to Ofsted that this is the case. Nurses are required to undertake specific safeguarding training to comply with their own code of practice. While inspectors are not expected to know the detail of individual codes of practice for health professionals, it is reasonable to ask for evidence of how these requirements are met
- Nurses should receive regular reflective supervision from a suitably qualified professional in line with professional registration. Inspectors should examine how nurses' practice is subject to monitoring, supervision and external professional scrutiny to promote and safeguard the welfare of children. This includes looking at the systems in place for external scrutiny following an injury, particularly if the injury was sustained as a result of a physical restraint, a possible non-accidental injury, or an injury from another child
- The working hours of nursing and medical staff and the procedures for administration of drugs should meet the individual needs and routines of children

- Inspectors should consider the quality of the arrangements for the secondary dispensing of drugs by medical staff, the management of changes of prescribed drugs, the systems in place to audit the drugs held on site and the procedures in place in the event of mal-administration of medication.

## 25. Incomplete inspections

*What should happen if an inspection can't be finished.*

On rare occasions, a very significant or serious incident may occur such as a death of a child or a child committing a very serious offence, after an inspection has been carried out but before the inspection report has been published. On these occasions, inspectors and managers should follow 'Gathering additional evidence to secure an incomplete inspection – Ofsted protocol'

([www.gov.uk/government/publications/gathering-additional-evidence-to-secure-an-incomplete-inspection-ofsted-related-protocol](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gathering-additional-evidence-to-secure-an-incomplete-inspection-ofsted-related-protocol)).

This protocol sets out the arrangements for inspections that are deemed to be incomplete because there is a need to gather additional evidence in order to secure the inspection evidence base where the report has not been published. Further action to complete the inspection and revise and report the findings may be required.

## 26. Positive environments where children can flourish

*Guidance for inspectors about physical intervention and restrictions of liberty.*

Inspectors should use 'Positive environments where children can flourish' ([www.gov.uk/government/publications/positive-environments-where-children-can-flourish](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/positive-environments-where-children-can-flourish)) to evaluate how providers, managers and carers create a positive environment for children to live and learn in and where staff interact positively with children. This guidance applies to all social care inspections and to the inspection of schools.

This guidance is not a summary of the law or guidance on the area of physical intervention and restriction of liberty. This is about an approach to inspection.

Where social care regulatory inspectors are undertaking inspections alongside education inspectors, they must familiarise themselves with the relevant Ofsted frameworks and inspector guidance, and also the non-statutory DfE guidance for governing bodies, headteachers and school staff clarifying the use of force in schools:

- Common inspection framework: education, skills and early years from September 2015 (Ofsted) ([www.gov.uk/government/publications/common-inspection-framework-education-skills-and-early-years-from-september-2015](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/common-inspection-framework-education-skills-and-early-years-from-september-2015))
- Non-association independent school inspection handbook from September 2015 (Ofsted) ([www.gov.uk/government/publications/non-association-independent-school-inspection-handbook-from-september-2015](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/non-association-independent-school-inspection-handbook-from-september-2015))

- 'Use of reasonable force in schools' (DfE, 2013) ([www.gov.uk/government/publications/use-of-reasonable-force-in-schools](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/use-of-reasonable-force-in-schools))

## 27. Homes that accommodate young adults

*Information about inspecting homes that accommodate young adults.*

The Care Standards Act 2000 ([www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/14/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/14/contents)) requires a children's home to provide care and accommodation 'wholly or mainly' for children. This does not prevent a home from accommodating a young adult or adults, as long as it accommodates more children than adults. A child is defined as a person aged 17 or under.

Children living at a children's home are often vulnerable and/or disabled. Therefore, it is not always right for them to leave the children's home by their 18th birthday. It may be in their best interests to stay at the children's home. The reasons for this may include where:

- the young person's moving-on placement has fallen through and the placing authority is seeking alternative arrangements
- the young person is in education and wishes to finish their course
- the young person wishes to remain with siblings who are also accommodated at the home
- there is agreement, including the young person's, that they are not yet ready to leave and a focused plan is in place to achieve this

Ofsted's duty to inspect children's homes, provided by section 31(3)(a) of the Care Standards Act 2000, remains in place even if the home only accommodates young adults at the time of the inspection. This does not apply to a volunteer, a member of staff or other person living at the children's home.

The Children's homes (England) regulations 2015 ([www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2015/541/contents/made](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2015/541/contents/made)) apply to children and young adults living at the home.

Inspectors can discuss the operation of the children's home with any young adult residing at the home.

Inspectors should, wherever possible and appropriate, ask a young adult's permission to view their records, unless their mental capacity means that informed consent is not possible.

Children's homes are not required to carry out a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check on young adult residents. However, homes must identify any potential impact on the children also living in the home.

Ofsted may take action or impose conditions to address any impact that young adults accommodated at a home are having on children living in the home.

Homes should have in place appropriate transition plans for every young adult living there to ensure that their move from the home is planned and that their stay in the children's home is appropriate.

### **27.1 Guidelines for judging whether a home is meeting the 'wholly or mainly' policy**

We apply the 'wholly or mainly' policy over a reasonable period of time, rather than on any given day. This is to take into account children's homes' individual circumstances and the needs and best interests of children and young adults.

In the majority of circumstances, we determine whether a home is 'wholly or mainly' for children over a 12-month period. This means that, for the majority of time in any 12-month period, a home must accommodate more children than young adults, even if at times it does not. We will accept any 12-month period for this definition. It is not restricted to calendar or academic years.

In some cases, we may extend this 12-month period to an 18-month period (after a young person has turned 18) when this covers a young person leaving school. This is to recognise that disabled young adults are entitled to receive secondary education up to the end of the June following their 19th birthday.

We expect all providers (regardless of whether they are using the flexibility in the 'wholly or mainly' policy or not) to identify the risk and impact of every young adult living at the home on any children at the home. We expect providers to take action to minimise the risks and the negative impact on children.

Every young person in the home must have a regularly updated and reviewed moving-on plan and care plan, including a transition plan if the young person will require support from adult social care. This is to ensure that homes use the 'wholly or mainly' policy in the best interests of young people and not as a way of circumventing the law or allowing young people to stay beyond a reasonable period of time.

### **27.2 Inspecting and enforcing the 'wholly or mainly' policy**

Inspectors check whether homes are complying with the 'wholly or mainly' policy. They should clarify the home's intentions, such as whether it wishes to remain as a children's home or change to an adult care home.

If we believe that providers are not complying with the 'wholly or mainly' policy, we will consider what action to take. This may include taking enforcement action against the home for failing to comply with its statement of purpose or for failing to run the establishment as a children's home. We may also impose bespoke conditions on its registration if our concern relates to the impact of young adults on children at the home.

## 28. Safeguarding and child protection concerns

*What an inspector must do if they have immediate concerns about a child protection issue.*

If serious issues of concern arise during the inspection, such as a failure to follow child protection procedures or if a child is discovered to be at immediate risk of harm, the responsible individual (where relevant) or the person in charge must be notified as soon as possible. If that may compromise a child or adult's safety, the inspector must ensure that the appropriate authorities are notified immediately.

Inspectors should always follow Ofsted's 'Safeguarding children and young people and vulnerable adults policy' ([www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted-safeguarding-policy](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted-safeguarding-policy)).

Inspectors should contact their manager or regional social care compliance inspector if they need advice. The inspector ensures that the referral is made to the relevant local authority children's services and the child's allocated social worker and/or the relevant local authority adults' services and, where appropriate, the vulnerable adult's allocated social worker. Further guidance can be found in 'Safeguarding concerns: guidance for inspectors' ([www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-concerns-guidance-for-inspectors](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-concerns-guidance-for-inspectors)). If the concerns relate to allegations against staff, they are referred to the designated officer.

Inspectors must ensure that concerns about the safety and welfare of a child are communicated immediately to the director of children's services for the responsible placing local authority, where this is relevant. A record that this has been done must be kept. The regional senior HMI should follow up the action that has been taken by the local authority.

### 28.1 The 'Prevent' duty

Extremism is unlikely to be a routine line of enquiry during SCCIF inspections. Inspectors should, however, be alert to signs of risks of extremism, such as literature, posters, videos or DVDs, or regular visitors to the setting where the purpose of their visit is not clear. Initial enquiries about the possibility of extremism must be directed to the manager or person in charge.

Inspectors should note the detail of any relevant concerns or referrals made by the responsible individual and how effective the multi-agency response has been. The Department for Education has published advice for schools and childcare providers on the 'Prevent' duty ([www.gov.uk/government/publications/protecting-children-from-radicalisation-the-prevent-duty](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/protecting-children-from-radicalisation-the-prevent-duty)), and inspectors should note where this applies to the type of setting inspected.

Inspectors can contact their regulatory inspection manager (RIM), who may seek specialist advice. If inspectors are unable to contact their RIM and remain concerned,

they should follow Ofsted's 'Safeguarding children and young people and vulnerable adults policy' ([www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted-safeguarding-policy](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted-safeguarding-policy)).

## **28.2 Female genital mutilation: the duty to notify police**

Since 31 October 2015, when section 74 of the Serious Crime Act 2015 ([www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/9/section/74/enacted](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/9/section/74/enacted)) inserted new section 5B into the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 ([www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2003/31](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2003/31)), specified regulated professionals (including social workers) must report to the police any cases of female genital mutilation in girls under 18 that they come across in their work.

The duty applies where the professional either:

- is informed by the girl that an act of female genital mutilation has been carried out on her
- observes physical signs that appear to show an act of female genital mutilation has carried out and has no reason to believe that the act was necessary for the girl's physical or mental health or for purposes connected with labour or birth

If a child or young person discloses information regarding female genital mutilation to an inspector, the inspector should follow Ofsted's 'Guidance for inspectors: what to do if a child or young person discloses a safeguarding concern' ([www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-concerns-guidance-for-inspectors](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-concerns-guidance-for-inspectors)).

## **28.3 Reporting concerns about the administration and management of controlled drugs**

If inspectors come across concerns or incidents about the safe management of controlled drugs during their normal inspection duties, or receive information through any other source, an outline of the concern and action taken should be referred to the social care policy team using its central email address of [socialcare@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:socialcare@ofsted.gov.uk).

This action is in addition to any regulatory action or recommendations made as a result of the concern. Referrals should be made even where no requirements or recommendations are to be made. The social care policy team will collate all such referrals and share these with the Controlled Drugs National Group.

Detailed information about controlled drugs (examples include morphine, pethidine, methadone and Ritalin) is available from the Care Quality Commission ([www.cqc.org.uk/content/law-and-guidance-managing-controlled-drugs](http://www.cqc.org.uk/content/law-and-guidance-managing-controlled-drugs)).



## **29. Qualifications of registered managers and staff in children's homes**

### **29.1 Registered manager qualifications**

Regulation 28 of the Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 requires a registered manager to obtain the Level 5 Diploma in Leadership and Management for Residential Care or an equivalent qualification.

If the manager was managing a home on 1 April 2014 they should have gained the qualification by 1 April 2017. Any manager starting to manage a home after 1 April 2014 has three years to gain it.

Regulation 28 does allow for the date to gain the qualification to be deferred if a manager has a break in managing a home or if they have worked part-time.

If a registered manager does not hold the level 5 qualification or equivalent and was managing any children's home prior to April 2014, they are in breach of regulation 28 if they did not have a reason for a deferral. Inspectors should raise a requirement. This means that the judgement for the effectiveness of leaders and managers cannot be outstanding.

If the manager was appointed after April 2014, they have three years in which to complete the qualification. The inspector should check that the manager is undertaking the qualification and their estimated completion date. If they are not registered to undertake the qualification, or will not complete it by the relevant date (without good reason), inspectors should raise a requirement. This means that the judgement for the effectiveness of leaders and managers cannot be outstanding.

If the registered manager holds a qualification they regard as equivalent, they should explain to the inspector how their qualification meets the competencies in the level 5 diploma and any additional training they have completed to fill any gaps. If they cannot explain this satisfactorily then inspectors should raise a requirement. This means that the judgement for the effectiveness of leaders and managers cannot be outstanding.

### **29.2 Staff qualifications**

Regulation 32 of the Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 require children's home staff to have the appropriate experience, qualifications and skills for the work they will perform. For staff in a care role, the regulation requires them to obtain the Level 3 Diploma for Residential Childcare or an equivalent qualification.

If the staff member was working in a care role in a home on 1 April 2014 they should have gained the qualification by 1 April 2016. Any staff starting to work in a care role after 1 April 2014 has two years to gain it.

Regulation 32 does allow for the date to gain the qualification to be deferred if the staff member has a break in working in a home or if they have worked part-time.

Inspectors should take the following into account:

- the attitude and knowledge of the registered person in relation to staff training and development
- the impact of lack of qualification/training on practice and in particular the quality of care provided to those living in the children's home
- the rationale and individual circumstances taken into account for staff who have been granted a deferral of the time period required to attain the qualification, and arrangements for review of that deferral.

Where none (or very few) of the staff in a home are qualified, and there is no prospect that the remaining staff will achieve the qualification within six months or by the relevant date, the judgement for the effectiveness of leaders and managers is likely to be inadequate, and certainly no more than requires improvement. Only in exceptional circumstances can the home be judged good for the effectiveness of leaders and managers and inspectors must clearly explain these circumstances in the report.

## **30. Use of personal data**

*Information about how we handle personal data.*

As part of our inspection activities under the SCCIF we may gather personal data that is necessary to help us evaluate children's social care services.

Our [personal information charter](#) sets out the standards you can expect from Ofsted when we collect, hold or use personal information, and that we will follow all applicable data protection legislation in how we treat personal information. Our [privacy notice for social care](#) sets out in more detail what data we collect and our powers to do so, what we do with it, how long we keep it for and people's rights under data protection legislation.



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