Ofsted and CQC approach to inspections, assessments, and related activity during local government reorganisation

Local government reorganisation is a significant opportunity that will affect public services. Bringing children's services and adult social care together with housing, planning and homelessness functions under one roof enables local authorities to take a more joined-up view of local needs and respond more effectively.

We recognise that against this backdrop it is important to provide clarity on how inspections, assessments, and other related activity will be undertaken during local government reorganisation, to support local authorities to maintain strong service delivery whilst maintaining effective oversight of local authorities' delivery.

This statement sets out the shared principles that will guide Ofsted and CQC's approach during local government reorganisation. This includes Ofsted's Inspecting Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) framework, Ofsted and CQC's Area SEND inspection framework (ASEND), and CQC's assessment framework for local authority assurance. We have sought to align approaches across children's services and adult social care to support coherent oversight and avoid placing conflicting demands on local authorities during transition.

More detailed information on the specific arrangements for how inspection, assessments and other related activities will work in advance, and following, Vesting Day, will be developed and shared later this year, once Government decisions on proposals for local government reorganisation have been confirmed. This will also take account of findings from Ofsted's summer 2026 consultation on the future children's social care inspections, which includes proposals to change the timescale between inspections carried out under the ILACS framework.

Wider context

Local government reorganisation is taking place alongside wider system reforms to children's social care, SEND and integrated care boards. Together, these changes are reshaping local systems to deliver more efficient, sustainable, high-quality services with better outcomes for people, alongside strengthening accountability and improving integration between services.

The scale of transformation facing local authorities is significant, requiring substantial leadership and capacity across local authorities to turn these reforms into a reality, and we need to work together to support delivery. In that context, Ofsted and CQC have agreed with Government the following shared principles.

Shared principles

1. **Oversight of services continues to be important during periods of change**

    - Local authorities' statutory responsibilities continue throughout the reorganisation process, and local authorities are expected to continue meeting the needs of children and vulnerable adults during periods of change.

    - Inspections, assessments, and other related activity will continue throughout transition and following vesting day to provide ongoing oversight. This oversight supports safe, high-quality services and helps to maintain confidence that local areas are meeting people's needs alongside managing change.

2. **Inspections, assessments, and other related activity during reorganisation should be proportionate**

    - Ofsted and CQC will consider how to use the flexibility available within their frameworks to ensure that oversight remains proportionate during transition. This may include timing inspections, assessments, and related activity around key transition points.

    - Where possible, Ofsted and CQC will coordinate their activity during local government reorganisation to avoid placing unnecessary pressure on local authorities during transition.

3. **Flexibility in arrangements for inspection, assessment and other related activity should be balanced against risk and tailored to local circumstances**

    - There will be no blanket deferral of inspections or assessments for local authorities undergoing local government reorganisation or for new unitaries created through reorganisation.

- Any flexibility in the timing or nature of inspections and assessments during local government reorganisation will be informed by an assessment of risk and tailored to the circumstances of each local authority.
- Factors that Ofsted and CQC may consider when determining the level of risk and whether any adjustments are appropriate include:
    - Current service performance, including whether a local authority is under intervention or on an improvement journey;
    - Data and intelligence about a local authority's services;
    - Any required deadlines for completing the cycle for a particular programme of inspection, assessment, or related activity.