

Arrangements for the inspection of local authority children's services

Consultation document

This is a consultation document on proposals for the arrangements for local authority children's services inspections. These inspections will focus on the effectiveness of local authority and partners' services for children who may be at risk of harm, including the effectiveness of early identification and early help, and on services for children in care.

The new inspection arrangements will come into effect from May 2012. Ofsted seeks the widest possible range of views from those who have an interest in, or expertise relating to, services for vulnerable children and young people in order to ensure that the inspection arrangements take proper account of the needs and circumstances of all interested parties. Above all, the arrangements must assure the quality of services and the achievement of the best possible outcomes for children in need of protection or care.

The closing date for the consultation is 30 September 2011.

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Introduction

1. Ofsted is committed in its *Strategic Plan 2011–15*¹ to the introduction of new arrangements for the inspection of local authority children's services by May 2012, and to publishing these arrangements by the end of 2011. This consultation seeks your views on proposals for these new arrangements.
2. The final report of Professor Eileen Munro's independent review of child protection in England, *The Munro Review of Child Protection: Final Report; A child-centred system*,² was published in May 2011. The review emphasised the continuing importance of independent inspection in scrutinising the child protection system and in supporting improvement in the protection of children. It made the following two specific recommendations for the new inspection arrangements to be introduced in 2012.
 - The inspection framework should examine the effectiveness of the contributions of all local services, including health, education, police, probation and the justice system to the protection of children (Recommendation 2).
 - The new inspection framework should examine the child's journey from needing to receiving help, explore how the rights, wishes, feelings and experiences of children and young people inform and shape the provision of services, and look at the effectiveness of the help provided to children, young people and their families (Recommendation 3).
3. This consultation document sets out proposals for a universal programme of unannounced inspections of child protection services. This is not a narrow focus. It will give full consideration to the effectiveness of the contributions of all local services – including health, education, police, probation and the justice system – to the protection of children. Furthermore, child protection does not begin at the point at which a referral is made to children's social care. What Professor Munro describes as 'early identification' and 'early help' are firmly within the scope of the inspection of child protection services. These are services concerned with what she describes as 'secondary prevention'. That is 'aiming to respond quickly when low level problems arise in order to prevent them getting worse.'³ This was also a theme of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector's Annual Report in 2010, which emphasised from inspection evidence the interdependence between effective child protection and the quality and range of local preventative services.⁴ The effectiveness of these services, the degree

¹ *Raising standards, improving lives: The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills Strategic Plan 2011–15* (110001), Ofsted, 2011; www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/110001.

² *The Munro Review of Child Protection: Final Report: A child-centred system*, Department for Education, 2011; www.education.gov.uk/munroreview/.

³ *Ibid.*, page 79, paragraph 5.30.

⁴ *Her Majesty's Chief Inspector's Annual Report 2009/10*, Ofsted, 2010; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Annual-Report-2009-10/\(language\)/eng-GB](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Annual-Report-2009-10/(language)/eng-GB), page 169.

to which agencies work together to identify problems and offer effective help early, and the extent to which they successfully safeguard and promote children's welfare without the need for a formal referral to social care, will be key focuses of the inspection arrangements that we propose.

4. Ofsted believes that it is also critically important that inspection does not lose its broader focus on children in care or children who are leaving care. In spite of significant improvements, outcomes for these children continue to lag behind outcomes for their peers in the wider community, and children in care and care leavers remain very vulnerable groups. We propose that the inspection arrangements should also continue to have a significant focus on children in care: their journey; their experience of the help provided and the quality of the services they receive; and the outcomes they achieve.

5. As Professor Munro states:

‘It is important to be clear that inspection does not, and should not, stand by itself. The inspection system is a key component of an overall system of performance improvement – which also includes local authority self-evaluation as its foundation, supported by sector-based peer review and challenge and improvement support – which should operate on an ongoing cycle, elements of which should be conducted annually.’⁵

6. This consultation document sets out our proposals for how inspection should operate from 2012 onwards as a discrete part of that overall system of performance improvement. We are keen to engage with as wide a range of views as possible on how inspection can most effectively add value to and draw value from those other elements of the performance improvement system that Professor Munro describes.
7. The first set of proposals relate to a universal inspection of early intervention and child protection services and outcomes. The second set of proposals relate to a proposed inspection programme of services for children in care in an annual sample of local authorities. This document outlines some underlying principles for how we will conduct inspections under both programmes, with a particular focus on the direct observation of practice and the involvement of children, young people and families in inspection. The third set of proposals concern arrangements for the monitoring and re-inspection of inadequate local authorities and for a programme of thematic or ‘deep dive’ inspections.

⁵ *The Munro Review of Child Protection: Final Report: A child-centred system*, Department for Education, 2011; www.education.gov.uk/munroreview/, page 47, paragraph 3.26.

What will be different?

8. These proposals build on the existing and embedded strengths of our current inspection programme: full inspections of safeguarding and looked after children's services conducted as a three year programme with the Care Quality Commission; and the programme of unannounced inspections of contact, referral and assessment arrangements. However, they also entail a significant shift in the focus of inspection, and in how inspectors will spend their time.
- All inspections of child protection services will be unannounced.
 - The major source of inspection evidence and the main basis of inspection judgements will be the experiences of individual children and the outcomes they achieve, and an evaluation of the effectiveness and impact of the help provided for them. Case tracking – the detailed examination of the journeys and experiences of individual children – is already a core element of inspection methodology; the majority of inspectors' time in future will be devoted to these activities.
 - As part of case tracking, inspectors will spend time meeting with the children themselves and their families, as well as the front-line professionals and managers concerned, seeking their accounts of their experience and their evaluation of the effectiveness of the help provided.
 - The direct observation of practice will be a central element of the inspection. For example the observation of social work visits and direct work with children and of multi-agency working such as child protection case conferences or a child in care review.
 - Inspectors will spend less time meeting with focus groups of staff with different roles and from different disciplines and more time alongside individual practitioners.
 - Evaluation of the effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Children Board will be a key focus of the child protection inspection.
 - The current range of judgements will be replaced by the following five judgements:
 - overall effectiveness
 - capacity to improve
 - the effectiveness of the help provided to children, their families and carers
 - quality of practice
 - leadership and management.

The child's journey

9. We agree with Professor Munro that inspection should focus on the child's journey from needing to receiving help. We think that this creates an appropriate structure for the inspection of services for children in care as well as for the inspection of child protection. Paragraphs 19–21 and 43 below set out in detail the way in which we propose to consider the child's journey.

Consultation

10. This consultation paper invites your views on our proposals to help us shape the new arrangements which will commence in May 2012. We will complete our current programmes of safeguarding and looked after children inspections by July 2012. There will therefore be some overlap in timelines between the completion of these programmes and the start of the new arrangements.
11. The consultation runs from 27 July to 30 September 2011.

The first set of proposals: universal inspection of child protection

12. In her final report, Professor Munro recommends: that there should be a universal programme of inspection of child protection services; that unannounced inspection should be the norm for such inspections; and that they should have a broader focus than the current unannounced inspections of contact, referral and assessment arrangements.
13. Professor Munro recommends that inspection should focus on the child's experience and outcomes for the child across the whole of the child's journey, not just from the point of referral to children's social care. Her view is that inspection should assess the effectiveness and impact of the help provided, or not provided, as well as the quality of initial identification and assessment.
14. She also recommended in her interim report that:

'Future inspection should have a clear focus on the provision of early help and the effectiveness of multi-agency arrangements in identifying maltreatment, the quality of front-line practice and the competencies of those workers in exercising professional judgement and providing help. Inspection should examine whether the environment in which workers operate fosters the exercise of professional judgement, compliance with guidance and processes given less emphasis. Such an inspection framework should focus more explicitly on indicating how improvements in

services might best be achieved, including highlighting where good practice exists.⁶

15. We consider that the critical areas to inspect are: the effectiveness of multi-agency arrangements for the identification of children at risk of harm and for the provision of early help to resolve those concerns; and the effectiveness of the local authority and partnership system that protects these children if the risk remains or intensifies. This includes:
- those children identified by universal services – such as schools, children’s centres and health services – as children at risk of harm
 - those children being helped by targeted early intervention services
 - those children referred to and assessed by the local authority, including where urgent action has to be taken to protect them
 - those subject to child protection enquiries⁷
 - those who become subject to a child protection plan that sets out the help that will be provided to children and their families to keep them safe and promote their welfare
 - those children who are assessed to no longer need the protection of a child protection plan, but who may have continuing needs for support.

Our proposal is that there should be a universal programme of inspections of child protection services (including in its scope the provision and effectiveness of services at all stages in the child’s journey) in individual local authority areas.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposed approach that there should be a universal programme of inspections of child protection services (including in its scope the provision and effectiveness of services at all stages in the child’s journey) in individual local authority areas (as outlined in paragraphs 12–15)?

Do you have any comments or suggestions to make on this proposal?

Making unannounced inspection work

16. We agree with Professor Munro that the inspection of child protection services should be unannounced. Ofsted has considerable experience of effective unannounced inspection through our current programme of inspections of contact, referral and assessment arrangements, and through other inspections of social care provision such as children’s homes. We are aware of the benefits that this brings in reducing the demands on those inspected in terms of

⁶ *The Munro Review of Child Protection: Interim Report: The child’s journey*, Department for Education, 2011; www.education.gov.uk/munroreview/, page 84, paragraph 5.26.

⁷ The Children Act 1989, section 47; www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents.

preparation and also in the opportunity to see services as they function on a day-to-day basis. However, we also recognise the challenges that this can present in terms of impact on staff teams and in involving children and young people in the inspection.

17. We are proposing that the inspection is unannounced, with a small team of inspectors arriving on-site to focus initially on one particular part of the child's journey: the point at which the child is referred to children's social care because they are believed to be at risk of harm. In the first two days, inspectors will evaluate: the timeliness of referrals; the effectiveness of assessment; risk management; the provision of immediate help where required; and the effectiveness of multi-agency work at the point of and immediately following referral. The lead inspector will also spend time with the local authority planning the remainder of the inspection to look at all aspects of the child's journey. This will give local authorities the opportunity to plan for the remainder of the inspection with the inspection team while retaining the benefits of an unannounced inspection.
18. The remainder of the inspection will focus on all other aspects of the child's journey and, at this point, the size of the inspection team will increase to reflect this. The full inspection will be contained within a two-week period.

Our proposal is that the universal programme of child protection inspections will be unannounced and will include, at an early stage, on-site planning time with the local authority to facilitate the full inspection.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposed approach to an unannounced inspection (as outlined in paragraphs 17 and 18)?

Do you have any comments or suggestions to make on this proposal?

The child's journey

19. Inspection will focus on the child's journey from needing to receiving help. However, each individual child's journey is different and will have different end points. For some children, it will end with the provision of effective early help, which means that there is no need for the journey to continue into the formal child protection system. Some will be referred to child protection services; some will become the subject of child protection plans; some will require long-term help to ensure that their welfare is safeguarded and promoted, including the possibility of removal from home and placement with a new family. Some children's journey's take them in and out of the child protection system at different points. For all children, of course, the child protection journey is only part of the ongoing journey towards adulthood.

20. Inspection will focus on the child's journey through intensive and extensive case sampling and case tracking. We will ensure that the sample of cases selected for tracking includes children at all key stages of the journey. An indicative but not comprehensive list includes: children engaged with early intervention and preventative services; children referred to children's social care by universal or preventative services as being at risk of harm; children subject to a child protection plan; and children who have been deemed no longer to be in need of protection.
21. For those children who have entered the formal child protection system, inspectors will evaluate the quality of early help provided or not provided, and whether a different response at an earlier stage would have safeguarded and promoted the child's welfare more effectively and avoided the need for the child to enter the formal child protection system.

We propose to consider the child's journey from early identification and intervention, through referral to children's social care if required and the development and implementation of a child protection plan, to their exit from the child protection system.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposed approach to considering the child's journey (as outlined in paragraphs 19–21)?

Do you have any comments or suggestions to make on this proposal?

The focus of the inspection

22. At every stage of the child's journey, inspectors will evaluate:
 - the quality and timeliness of assessment and risk management
 - the effectiveness and impact of the help given to children and their families
 - the quality and effectiveness of inter-agency working
 - the effectiveness of quality assurance and management oversight of practice and decision-making
 - the experience of particularly vulnerable children, such as privately fostered children and children who live in households where there is domestic abuse, drug misuse and/or adult mental health issues
 - how well the local authority ensures that children's and young people's wishes and feelings inform every aspect of their care.
23. Inspectors will identify and highlight good practice.

24. Attention will also be paid to ensuring that services are accessible to everyone and that there is equality of opportunity and outcomes irrespective of age, disability, ethnicity, gender, marital status and sexual orientation.

We propose to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of services throughout the child's journey by looking at cross-cutting themes.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposed approach to evaluating the effectiveness and impact of services at each stage of the child's journey using the cross-cutting themes (as outlined in paragraphs 22–24)?

Do you have any comments or suggestions to make on this proposal?

The contribution of all services to protecting children

25. Professor Munro recommends that inspection should have a strong multi-agency focus with more joint inspection activity between different inspectorates. She recommends that:

'The inspection framework should examine the effectiveness of the contributions of all local services, including health, education, police, probation and the justice system to the protection of children.'⁸

26. Professor Munro also says that:

'Should it prove the case that a truly multi-inspectorate model is not possible in any future reforms, it may be that the next best solution would be for Ofsted to conduct a local authority-based inspection of children's services which looks at the input of other agencies into the child protection system from the perspective of the child.'⁹

27. Child-centred inspection must absolutely focus on the whole system impacting on the child, and the way in which all agencies (including universal services) work and work together to help the child. Inspectors will evaluate the effectiveness of multi-agency working through examining the experiences of children, case tracking, and observation of multi-agency meetings, and through evaluating the effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Children Board. Ofsted will continue to explore with our partner inspectorates their potential contribution and how we can best share expertise and knowledge from all sources to support and inform direct inspection activity.

⁸ *The Munro Review of Child Protection: Final Report: A child-centred system*, Department for Education, 2011; www.education.gov.uk/munroreview/, page 11.

⁹ *Ibid.*, page 46, paragraph 3.23.

We propose that inspectors will evaluate the effectiveness of multi-agency working through examining the experiences of children, case tracking, and observation of multi-agency meetings, and through evaluating the effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Children Board.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposed approach to evaluating the contribution of all agencies to the protection of children (as outlined in paragraphs 25–27)?

Do you have any comments or suggestions to make on this proposal?

Inspection judgements

28. We will make clear inspection judgements about the quality, effectiveness and impact of the local authority child protection services. We will continue to use the current four-point judgement scale: outstanding, good, satisfactory and inadequate.
29. We will make a judgement on the local authority's capacity to improve their child protection services. We think that this provides an important evaluation for the local authority, the general public and the Department for Education (DfE) of how likely the local authority is to be able to make the changes needed to improve their services. In making this judgement, we will consider the robustness of the local authority's own self-evaluation, its track record of improvement, and its ability to critically evaluate its practice, identify weaknesses and take appropriate action to improve.
30. We will evaluate the effectiveness of the help provided to children and their families as outlined in the section 'The focus of inspection' (paragraphs 22–24). In making this judgement, we will consider evidence of the effectiveness of help provided at all stages of the child's journey.
31. We will make a judgement about the quality of practice. In making this judgement we will consider the quality of direct work, of assessment and care planning, and of practitioners' decision-making at all stages of the child's journey.
32. We will make a judgement on the effectiveness of leadership and management within the local authority and wider partnership. In making this judgement we will consider:
 - how local authorities ensure that children's and young people's views impact on the development of the service as a whole
 - the impact and effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Children Board
 - the effectiveness of partnership arrangements

- the effectiveness of performance management
- how effectively the local authority learns and implements learning.

33. In summary, therefore, we are proposing that we will make judgements on:

- overall effectiveness of the service
- capacity to improve
- the effectiveness of the help provided to children, their families and carers
- the quality of practice
- leadership and management.

To what extent do you agree or disagree that these are appropriate judgements to make when inspecting local authority and partnership child protection services (as outlined in paragraphs 28–33)?

Do you have any comments or suggestions to make on this proposal?

Proportionality

34. In discussing aspects of proportionality in her interim report, Professor Munro concluded:

‘Even greater proportionality might be achieved by adopting a risk-based approach to the programming of inspection, but this could be operationally difficult due to the limitations of child protection data as an effective indicator of performance. It will be important therefore, that inspection of child protection services continues to be universal, even for those local areas considered to be higher performing...a service that has previously performed well might not continue to do so over an extended period of time.’¹⁰

35. We consider that it is important, in consulting on new arrangements for inspection, to seek wider views on this. We would welcome views on whether it would be appropriate to vary the length of time between inspections depending on performance. For example, once a baseline is established, it might be that:

- local authorities judged to be providing inadequate child protection services will be re-inspected within 18 months to two years
- local authorities judged to be providing satisfactory child protection services will be re-inspected within three years

¹⁰ *The Munro Review of Child Protection: Interim Report: The child’s journey*, Department for Education, 2011; www.education.gov.uk/munroreview/, page 84, paragraph 5.24.

- local authorities judged to be providing good or outstanding child protection services will be re-inspected within five years
- inspections will be brought forward if there are sufficient reasons for concern (for example, issues arising from serious incidents or serious case reviews; identification of concerns through peer review or sector-led evaluation; data suggesting deterioration in performance).

36. Within any such programme, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) would reserve the right to inspect at any time, should she/he consider it necessary.

We are considering introducing greater proportionality to universal inspection by varying the period between inspections, taking into account the outcomes of previous inspection activity and other available data and information.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with a proportionate approach to inspections of child protection (as outlined in paragraphs 34 and 35)?

Do you have any comments or suggestions to make on this proposal?

The second set of proposals: children in care

37. We believe that it is essential that inspection retains a significant focus on services and outcomes for children in care. However, we are unlikely to be able to resource a further universal cycle of inspections of services for children in care.
38. We propose to inspect a sample of local authorities each year. We anticipate that we will inspect between 20 and 25 local authorities annually. The sample will include different types of local authority, for example county councils, unitary authorities and metropolitan boroughs, across a spread of rural and urban areas. We propose that these inspections should take place with a short notice period, and that a team of inspectors will be on site for one week. The short notice period is proposed to ensure that inspectors are able to meet with children and young people.
39. In deciding which local authorities will be inspected in a given year, we will take account of:
- the outcome of inspections of looked after children's services between 2009 and 2012
 - the outcome of a child protection inspection
 - information arising from the inspection of children's homes and of independent and local authority fostering or adoption services

- information received through whistle-blowing
- any concerns identified through performance data.

40. In our current public consultations about how we inspect adoption and fostering services, we are seeking views on whether we should inspect local authority fostering and local authority adoption services at the same time. Current regulations require each of these services to be inspected once in a given three-year period. They cannot therefore be fully integrated into a programme of children in care inspections, unless that is a universal programme on a three-year cycle. However, where possible, we will consider whether the inspection of local authority adoption and fostering services could be simultaneous with a wider inspection of services for children in care when the local authority is selected as part of the annual sample, taking care to avoid duplication and overlap of activity. We want to ensure that we make the best use of our available inspection resources in a coordinated and streamlined way, reducing where possible the demands on local authorities.

We propose to inspect services and outcomes for children in care in a sample of 20 to 25 local authorities each year.

To what extent do you agree or disagree that we should inspect a sample of 20 to 25 local authority services for children in care each year (as outlined in paragraphs 38–40)?

Do you have any comments or suggestions to make on this proposal?

The child's journey

41. We think that the concept of 'the child's journey' applies as strongly to children who enter or who may enter the care system as it does to children who enter or who may enter the child protection system. As with the inspection of child protection, the inspection of services for children in care will focus on the child's journey through case sampling and case tracking. The sample of cases selected for tracking will include children at all key stages of the journey. An indicative but not comprehensive list includes: children on the edge of care; children engaged with the court system; children at the point of admission to care, whether through voluntary arrangements or through court action, and whether through planned admission or in an emergency; children journeying through care (evaluating the care planning and reviewing arrangements that support that journey and the attention given to early permanency planning); young people preparing to leave care; and young people who have left care.

The focus of the inspection

42. Our inspections will focus on the outcomes achieved by and delivered for children and young people, and the effectiveness of the local authority and its partners in narrowing the gap in outcomes between children in care and their peers.
43. At every stage of the child's journey, inspectors will evaluate:
- the quality and timeliness of care planning
 - the effectiveness and impact of the help given to children and their families
 - the quality and effectiveness of inter-agency working
 - the effectiveness of quality assurance and management oversight of practice and decision-making
 - arrangements and support for children placed out of the local authority's area
 - the quality and effectiveness of direct work with children and young people
 - the impact and effectiveness of corporate parenting
 - how well the local authority ensures that children's and young people's wishes and feelings inform every aspect of their care.
44. Inspectors will identify and highlight good practice.

We propose to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of services for children in care throughout the child's journey by looking at these cross-cutting themes.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposed approach to evaluating the effectiveness and impact of services at each stage of the child's journey using the cross-cutting themes (as outlined in paragraphs 42–44)?

Do you have comments or suggestions to make on this proposal?

Inspection judgements

45. We will make clear inspection judgements about the quality, effectiveness and impact of the local authority children in care services. We will continue to use the current four-point judgement scale: outstanding, good, satisfactory and inadequate.
46. We will make a judgement on the local authority's capacity to improve outcomes and services for children in care.

47. We will make a judgement about the outcomes achieved by children and young people in care. In making this judgement, we will consider in particular the educational achievement of young people, their health and emotional wellbeing, and outcomes for young people leaving care, for example, in relation to education, employment, training, and stability of accommodation. We will evaluate the effectiveness of the local authority and its partners in narrowing the gap in outcomes between children in care and their peers.
48. We will make a judgement about the quality of practice. In making this judgement we will consider the quality of direct work, of assessment and care planning, and of practitioners' decision-making at all stages of the child's journey. Inspection will have a particular focus on the effectiveness of care planning and the early identification of children who need alternative permanent care, ensuring the stability and appropriateness of placement and the extent to which these achieve improved outcomes for children in care.
49. We will make a judgement on the effectiveness of leadership and management within the local authority and wider partnership. In making this judgement, we will consider:
 - how local authorities ensure that children's and young people's views impact on the development of the service as a whole
 - the impact and effectiveness of corporate parenting
 - the effectiveness of partnership arrangements
 - the effectiveness of performance management
 - how effectively the local authority learns and implements learning.
50. We are proposing therefore to make judgements on:
 - overall effectiveness of the service
 - capacity to improve
 - the outcomes for children and young people in care
 - the quality of practice
 - leadership and management.

To what extent do you agree or disagree that these are appropriate judgements to make when inspecting local authority and partnership services for children in care (as outlined in paragraph 45–50)?

Do you have any comments or suggestions to make on this proposal?

How we will inspect child protection and children in care services

51. All inspection teams will include an HMI who is qualified and experienced in social care and the inspection of social care, and an HMI who is qualified and experienced in education. We will continue to explore the scope for other inspectorates to contribute to inspection teams, and to build on our existing programme of secondment of current practitioners to those teams.
52. We propose that both the inspections of child protection services, and of services for children in care, should focus on: the direct observation of practice; the detailed scrutiny and discussion of a significant sample of cases reflecting all stages of the child's journey; and the contribution of all agencies at all stages of the child's journey.
53. Inspectors will, with appropriate sensitivity and consent, spend time observing the help that social workers provide for children and families, looking at case files alongside social workers and managers, accompanying social workers on visits, shadowing other key staff, for example a child protection conference chair or independent reviewing officer, and observing multi-agency meetings such as strategy meetings, initial child protection conferences, children's reviews and any resource panel meetings.
54. We will seek the views of children, young people and their families where appropriate and possibly through direct contact during the inspection. We will always meet with Children in Care Councils during an inspection of services for children in care. We are also exploring how we can maximise opportunities for children, young people and their families to express their views through online or postal surveys.

We propose that to evaluate the effectiveness of services, Ofsted will spend the majority of the time on inspection tracking individual cases, directly observing practice, shadowing staff and observing key multi-agency meetings, and seeking the views of children and families.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposed approach to inspection (as outlined in paragraphs 51–54)?

Do you have any comments or suggestions to make on this proposal?

The third set of proposals: other inspection arrangements

Monitoring inspections

55. Where we find that services for either child protection or children in care are inadequate, we will normally undertake a further full inspection within 18 months.
56. Within a year of the first inspection, we will consider undertaking a focused monitoring inspection that will evaluate the progress that has been made in addressing the areas for development that were identified at that inspection. These inspections will make judgements about the progress that has been made. They will not change the overall judgements made at the full inspection. We propose that reports of monitoring inspections will be published. These inspections are likely to be announced in most instances. They will normally be undertaken either with the agreement of the local authority or at the request of the DfE.

We propose that the arrangements for the inspection of local authority children's services will include inspections to monitor progress in local authorities that have been judged to be inadequate for either child protection or children in care services.

To what extent do you agree or disagree that Ofsted should develop a programme of inspections to monitor progress in local authorities that have been judged to be inadequate for either child protection or children in care services (as outlined in paragraphs 55 and 56)?

Do you have any comments or suggestions to make on this proposal?

57. Professor Munro suggests in her interim report that there might be a system, alongside a new broader set of unannounced inspections, of targeted 'deep dive' inspections.¹¹ We welcome this proposal but it would be difficult to continually develop the bespoke frameworks that would be required. We currently undertake a programme of thematic survey inspections, mainly through on-site visits, across all aspects of our work, including social care. These provide best practice guidance to the sector or an analysis of issues of current importance. We are proposing that our approach to 'deep dive' inspections should be to strengthen this thematic survey programme based on issues identified through inspection, current areas of public interest and issues identified by government. These thematic survey inspections will be subject to a short notice period.

¹¹ Ibid., page 84, paragraph 5.27.

We propose to carry out inspections of selected areas in greater depth by strengthening our current survey programme through short-notice thematic inspections.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposal that Ofsted should strengthen its current survey programme through short-notice thematic inspections (as outlined in paragraph 57)?

Do you have any comments or suggestions to make on this proposal?

Summary of the main proposals

58. From 2012, we propose that:

- there should be a universal programme of inspections of child protection services (including in its scope the provision and effectiveness of services at all stages in the child's journey) in individual local authority areas
- child protection inspections will be unannounced and will include, at an early stage, on-site planning time with the local authority to facilitate the full inspection
- we will look at the effectiveness of multi-agency working through examining the experiences of children, case tracking, and observation of multi-agency meetings and an evaluation of the effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Children Board
- greater proportionality could be introduced to universal inspection by varying the period between inspections
- we will inspect a sample of 20 to 25 local authority services for children in care each year
- we will make the following judgements in the child protection inspections: overall effectiveness of the service; capacity to improve; the effectiveness of the help provided to children, their families and carers; the quality of practice; and leadership and management
- when inspecting services for children in care we will make the following judgements: overall effectiveness of the service; capacity to improve; outcomes for children and young people in care; the quality of practice; and leadership and management
- the majority of the time on inspection will be spent tracking individual cases, directly observing practice, shadowing staff and observing key multi-agency meetings, and seeking the views of children and families

- we will monitor progress in local authorities that have been judged to be inadequate for either child protection or children in care services
- we will carry out inspections of selected areas in greater depth by strengthening our current survey programme through short-notice thematic inspections.

The consultation process

59. We welcome your responses to the consultation questionnaire below and your views on any aspect of the arrangements for the inspection of local authorities. Please use the comments sections provided to raise additional points not covered by our questions. The consultation remains open until 30 September 2011.
60. During the consultation, we want to engage as widely as possible with all interested parties to hear their views. We will make sure this includes meeting with young people who currently receive or have received services from children's social care.

What happens next?

61. We will publish the arrangements for the inspection of local authority children's services, taking full account of the responses to this consultation. We plan to publish a report on the responses to this consultation with the final inspection arrangements in December 2012.

Sending back your questionnaire

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

Online electronic questionnaire

Visit our website to complete and submit an electronic version of the questionnaire:

www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/110059.

Print and post

This document can be printed and completed by hand. When you have completed the questionnaire, please post it to:

Ofsted
Children's Services Assessment Development Team
Floor 7
Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE.

Download and email

This document can be downloaded and completed on your own computer. When you have completed the questionnaire, email it to: newLAinspection@ofsted.gov.uk. Please put 'Inspection of local authority children's services' in the subject line.

Questionnaire for the arrangements for the inspection of local authority children's services consultation

Confidentiality

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

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

Are you responding on behalf of an organisation?

Yes please complete Section 1

No please complete Section 2

Section 1

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

Organisation:

Section 2

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

I am a:

Young person	<input type="checkbox"/>	Parent/carer	<input type="checkbox"/>
Charity	<input type="checkbox"/>	Elected representative	<input type="checkbox"/>
Foster parent/carer	<input type="checkbox"/>	Independent provider	<input type="checkbox"/>
Local authority Chief Executive	<input type="checkbox"/>	Local authority Director of Children's Services	<input type="checkbox"/>
Local Safeguarding Children Board Chair	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ofsted employee	<input type="checkbox"/>
Practitioner in health	<input type="checkbox"/>	Practitioner in education	<input type="checkbox"/>
Practitioner in social care	<input type="checkbox"/>	Senior manager in health	<input type="checkbox"/>
Senior manager in education	<input type="checkbox"/>	Senior manager in social care	<input type="checkbox"/>
Umbrella group	<input type="checkbox"/>	Voluntary sector organisation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please tell us)			

Q1. To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposed approach that there should be a universal programme of inspections of child protection services (including in its scope the provision and effectiveness of services at all stages in the child’s journey) in individual local authority areas (as outlined in paragraphs 12–15)?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No answer
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Do you have any comments or suggestions to make on this proposal?

Q2. To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposed approach to an unannounced inspection that includes, at an early stage, on-site planning time with the local authority to facilitate the full inspection (as outlined in paragraphs 17 and 18)?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No answer
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Do you have any comments or suggestions to make on this proposal?

Q3. To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposed approach to considering the child’s journey from early identification and intervention, through referral to children’s social care if required and the development and implementation of a child protection plan, to their exit from the child protection system (as outlined in paragraphs 19–21)?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No answer
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Do you have any comments or suggestions to make on this proposal?

Q4. To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposed approach to evaluating the effectiveness and impact of services at each stage of the child’s journey using the cross-cutting themes (as outlined in paragraphs 22–24)?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No answer
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Do you have any comments or suggestions to make on this proposal?

Q5. To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposed approach to evaluating the contribution of all agencies to the protection of children (as outlined in paragraphs 25–27)?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No answer
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Do you have any comments or suggestions to make on this proposal?

Q6. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the judgements outlined in paragraphs 28–33 are appropriate judgements to make when inspecting local authority and partnership child protection services?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No answer
Overall effectiveness of the service	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Capacity to improve	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Effectiveness of the help provided to children, their families and carers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Quality of practice	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Leadership and management.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Do you have any comments or suggestions to make on this proposal?

Q7. To what extent do you agree or disagree with a proportionate approach to inspections of child protection (as outlined in paragraphs 34 and 35)?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No answer
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Do you have any comments or suggestions to make on this proposal?

The second set of proposals: children in care

Q8. To what extent do you agree or disagree that we should inspect a sample of 20 to 25 local authority services for children in care each year (as outlined in paragraphs 37–39)?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No answer
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Do you have any comments or suggestions to make on this proposal?

Q9. To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposed approach to evaluating the effectiveness and impact of services at each stage of the child’s journey using the cross-cutting themes (as outlined in paragraphs 42–44)?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No answer
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Do you have any comments or suggestions to make on this proposal?

Q10. To what extent do you agree or disagree that these are appropriate judgements to make when inspecting local authority and partnership services for children in care, (as outlined in paragraph 45–50)?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No answer
Overall effectiveness of the service	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Capacity to improve	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Outcomes for children and young people in care	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Quality of practice	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Leadership and management.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Do you have any comments or suggestions to make on this proposal?

Q11. To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposed approach to inspection (as outlined in paragraphs 51–54)?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No answer
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Do you have any comments or suggestions to make on this proposal?

The third set of proposals: other inspection arrangements

Q12. To what extent do you agree or disagree that Ofsted should develop a programme of inspections to monitor progress in local authorities that have been judged to be inadequate for either child protection or children in care services (as outlined in paragraphs 55 and 56)?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No answer
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Do you have comments or suggestions to make on this proposal?

Q13. To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposal that Ofsted should strengthen its current survey programme through short-notice thematic inspections (as outlined in paragraph 57)?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No answer
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Do you have any comments or suggestions to make on this proposal?

Q14. What did you think of this consultation?

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

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

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

How did you hear about this consultation?

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

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

Thank you for taking part in our consultation.

Additional questions about you

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

Please tick the appropriate box.

1. Gender

Female	<input type="checkbox"/>	Male	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Are you living as the same gender as you were born in?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
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2. Age

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

(a) How would you describe your national group?

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

(b) How would you describe your ethnic group?

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

4. Sexual orientation

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

None	<input type="checkbox"/>	Christian (including Church of England, Catholic, Protestant and all other Christian denominations)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Buddhist	<input type="checkbox"/>	Hindu	<input type="checkbox"/>
Jewish	<input type="checkbox"/>	Muslim	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sikh	<input type="checkbox"/>	Any other, please state:	<input type="checkbox"/>

6. Disability

Do you consider yourself to be disabled?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
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