

Conducting children's centres inspections

Guidance for inspecting Sure Start Children's Centres in England under section 3A of the Childcare Act 2006

This guidance is designed to assist inspectors of children's centres in their work. It supplements that provided in the evaluation schedule and indicates the main activities that need to be undertaken from the time the centre is notified that it is to be inspected until the publication of the report. Children's centres can use the guidance to see how inspections will be conducted and may find it helpful when carrying out their self-evaluation.

Age group: 0–5

Published: August 2011

Reference no: 100154



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Introduction

1. The core purpose¹ of children's centres is to improve outcomes for young children and their families, with a particular focus on the most disadvantaged families in order to reduce inequalities in child development and school readiness. This is supported by: improved parenting aspirations, self esteem and parenting skills; as well as improved child and family health and life chances. This core purpose is intended to be achieved by centres through:
 - assessing need across the local community
 - providing access to universal early years services² in the local area including high quality and affordable early years education and childcare
 - providing targeted, evidence-based early interventions for families in greatest need, in the context of integrated services
 - acting as a hub for the local community, building social capital and cohesion
 - sharing expertise with other early years settings to improve quality.
2. The Childcare Act 2006 (as amended by the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009) sets out what inspection must cover. Inspectors assess how well centres know the needs of their community, provide services to meet the community's needs, and help parents, prospective parents and young children access those services. Inspections consider how, through these services, centres improve the well-being of young children, particularly those who are vulnerable because of their background or family circumstances.
3. Inspections must address the centre's contribution to:
 - facilitating access to early childhood services by parents, prospective parents and young children
 - maximising the benefit of those services to parents, prospective parents and young children
 - improving the well-being of young children.

¹ *The core purpose of Sure Start Children's Centres*, DfE, 2010; www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/earlylearningandchildcare/a00191780/core-purpose-of-sure-start-childrens-centres.

² Early years services are: early education and childcare; social services for young children, parents and prospective parents; health services relating to young children, parents and prospective parents; employment support from Jobcentre Plus for parents or prospective parents; the local authority's information, advice and assistance service relating to childcare and other services and facilities relevant to young children and their families.

4. Regulations³ set out the inspection interval. They also require the report to comment on the quality of leadership and management including whether:
 - the financial resources made available to the centre are managed effectively
 - young children, parents and prospective parents in the area served by the children's centre and who would otherwise be unlikely to take advantage of the early childhood services offered through the centre, are identified and encouraged to take advantage of those services
 - the needs of young children, parents and prospective parents who attend or are likely to attend the children's centre are identified, and early childhood services are delivered to meet those needs
 - appropriate policies, procedures and practices for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of young children who attend, or are likely to attend, the children's centre are adopted and implemented.
5. Statutory guidance⁴ sets out local authorities' roles in relation to the distribution of inspection reports and the timing and availability of the action plan that each authority must produce.

The process for inspecting children's centres

Guidance for setting up the inspection

6. This section indicates the main activities that need to be undertaken from the time the inspection is called until the publication of the report. Centres can use the guidance to see how inspections will be conducted and may find it helpful when carrying out their self-evaluation and preparing for inspection.

Before the inspection

Notice period

7. Centres will be given up to three working days' notice of an inspection by phone call from an inspection liaison officer from the relevant inspection service provider. The inspection liaison officer will tell the head of the centre that the lead inspector will make contact by the end of the following working day.

³ The Children's Centres (Inspections) Regulations 2010, OPSI, 2010; www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2010/uksi_20101173_en_1.

⁴ *Sure Start Children's Centres statutory guidance*. DCSF (now DfE), 2010; <https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/AllPublications/Page1/DFE-00020-2011>.

Checks on live complaints

8. At least one working day before notification, an Ofsted administration officer will check the Regulatory Support Application (RSA) database to make sure that there are no open category 1 investigations in respect of any registered early years provision or childcare that will lead to a deferral of the inspection. Where there is an investigation in process, the administration officer will contact the relevant inspection service provider and the Ofsted scheduling team. In conjunction with the scheduling team, the inspection service provider will replace the inspection.

Information on the provider

9. The inspection service provider inspection liaison officer will place on the portal any relevant inspection reports, such as school inspection reports, early years inspection reports, childcare inspection letters and other information held about the centre, including information from local authorities on the strategic planning for their children's centres. This documentation should also include any information received by email from the centre such as the self-evaluation form, action plan and activity programme.

Notification phone call by the administrative officer from the inspection service provider

10. The inspection liaison officer should ask to speak to the centre leader (the person in charge of the whole centre) or, in the absence of the centre leader the person who is in charge in that person's absence. The notification phone call will:
 - confirm the dates of the inspection
 - give the centre the names of the inspectors and contact details for the lead inspector
 - note any times when the centre leader will not be available to have a detailed telephone discussion with the lead inspector
 - confirm the name of the key contact, and their phone number and email address at the centre
 - confirm the name and email address of the local authority lead officer for the children's centre
 - confirm links with any other provision such as a school or registered childcare or another centre
 - inform the centre of how to access related documentation on the Ofsted website

- draw the centre's attention to the leaflet about our inspections available in hard copy via their local authority or on Ofsted's website⁵
- ask for electronic copies of the centre's self-evaluation, activity programme and action plan so that these may be sent to the lead inspector
- let the centre know that the lead inspector will need to see a number of additional documents during a pre-inspection visit to the centre. These will include:
 - the centre's safeguarding policy
 - the centre's staff list and record of recruitment and Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks
 - any evaluations carried out of services or activities, or other evidence of the impact of the work of the centre.

11. Following the notification phone call, the inspection liaison officer should send the following information to the centre by email:

- confirmation of inspection dates
- the names of inspectors
- information about the inspection process
- the link to the inspection framework and guidance documents
- guidance on setting up the inspection programme

The lead inspector should be copied into this email as confirmation that the notification call has been made.

12. The inspection liaison officer should send an email to the named local authority officer with responsibility for children's centres. The email should give the name of the centre, dates of the inspection, the name and contact details of the lead inspector (email and mobile phone number) and include the following statement:

'The local authority is not expected to contribute directly to all children's centre inspections. However, if they wish to do so they can. If they wish to have a discussion or meet with the lead inspector or attend the feedback meeting, they should arrange this through the centre leader.'

⁵ *Inspection of your children's centre* (100021), Ofsted, 2010;
<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/inspection-of-your-childrens-centre>

Initial phone call – lead inspector

13. The lead inspector should make contact with the centre by the end of the working day following the announcement of the inspection. If the centre leader is not available, the lead inspector should ask to speak to the next most senior person at the centre. If the centre is using a telephone answering machine, the lead inspector should leave a message and state the time at which the message was left. Where the telephone remains unanswered, the lead inspector should persevere, keeping a note of the times at which they tried to make contact with the centre.
14. The purpose of the initial phone call is for the lead inspector to:
 - enable introductions to take place and to reiterate the purpose of the inspection
 - confirm the date of the inspection and the names of the inspectors
 - check information about the centre such as whether there are any linked centres, the services offered, the number of sites and distances between them, and any relevant co-located provision such as a school or registered early years provision
 - emphasise the need for the centre to demonstrate the impact of its services on users – how can it evidence that it is making a difference and improving outcomes for vulnerable families (inspectors may wish to refer the centre to the evaluation schedule that sets out the key performance indicators)?
 - provide their email and telephone contact details
 - explain any coordinated inspection arrangements with a maintained school working in partnership with the centre (inspectors will not make reference to any planned inspection of linked early years provision)
 - advise the centre that the outcomes of the most recent inspection of the centre's directly provided, commissioned or sign-posted registered early years or childcare provision will be taken into account
 - answer any questions that the centre has.
15. In explaining the inspection arrangements, the lead inspector should:
 - establish the type of self-evaluation completed by the centre (see paragraphs 18–20) if this has not already been received
 - establish what the governance/accountability/advisory board/parent forum arrangements are in order to establish which stakeholders to meet

- request and agree a deadline for the receipt of any available electronic copies of centre documentation not already received. Please note that centres should not be asked for documents in advance of the inspection other than:
 - the centre’s self-evaluation form
 - a full timetable of centre activities covering the period of the inspection
 - the centre’s action/development plan.

(Note: if some or all of this documentation is not available electronically, the lead inspector should make arrangements to view them on site during the second preparation day.)

- ask for any (limited) additional documentation to be in the base room for inspectors to access throughout the inspection. This should include any quality improvement plan, evaluations of activities and services, and minutes from the advisory board
- indicate that some safeguarding arrangements will be inspected as soon as possible during either the on-site preparation day or the first day of the inspection (this will include the centre’s safeguarding policy, staff lists and a record of recruitment and CRB checks)
- explain about the interviews and meetings needed to secure the evidence
- explain that the centre leader who has responsibility for the day-to-day leadership and management of the centre may be involved in the ‘end of day 1’ team meeting and in the final team meeting
- explain that the example inspection timetable emailed by the inspection service provider is to give guidance on the interviews and events that a centre and lead inspector may wish to include; the only fixed interview is that with the centre leader at the start of the inspection (ask the centre to ensure that opportunities are timetabled for inspectors to visit any relevant significant partners such as health provision; agree a deadline by which the draft programme should be emailed to the lead inspector; the lead inspector should explain that he/she will ultimately decide which activities they wish to visit)
- agree the arrangements for the on-site pre-inspection visit and explain what will happen and which documents are needed (Please note that this day is for pre-inspection activity only and **must** not be used for observations and meetings. However, it could include: looking at recruitment procedures; the recording of CRB checks; child protection case files; undertaking a tour of the centre and having a discussion with the centre leader about the main inspection trails and the inspection programme.)
- agree other inspection arrangements such as: times of arrival and departure for each day; ‘keeping in touch’ meetings; base room; refreshments; final feedback meeting times; and so on (see draft timings from paragraph 34).

Deferrals

16. Centre leaders may request a deferral of the inspection because the centre will be closed or for other circumstances. The policy for deferrals is available on the Ofsted website.⁶ Normally, if the centre is operating and providing services, an inspection goes ahead even if, for example, the head of centre is absent or building work is taking place.

The planning days

17. The lead inspector should use the children's centre master list to access background information about the children's centre. The list can be accessed online and using a current password, which will be provided to lead inspectors by data acquisition on a regular basis.
18. The lead inspector should analyse the centre's self-evaluation form or other self-evaluation documents, taking account of any other available information about the centre in order to identify the main issues to pursue during the inspection.
19. Centres may not have an electronic self-evaluation form. They may provide their self-evaluation in a number of ways including:
 - the children's centre self-evaluation form
 - an early years self-evaluation form
 - a local authority self-evaluation form
 - any other documents provided as evidence of the centre's self-evaluation.
20. Inspectors should accept whatever self-evaluation a centre makes and should not expect this to be in any particular format. If there is no self-evaluation form, the lead inspector will need to ask the centre to provide information relevant to its self-evaluation during the on-site preparation or at the start of the inspection.
21. Inspectors should check that the draft programme from the centre includes all the essential meetings (see example inspection timetable) and that there is enough time built in to the programme for team discussion and preparation for feedback.

⁶ *Deferral of inspections, information for children's centres* (100152), Ofsted, 2010;
<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/deferral-of-inspections-information-for-childrens-centres>.

Inspection team briefing

22. The lead inspector should draw up the inspection team briefing and send this electronically to the team inspector. The team briefing should include:
- team responsibilities
 - the main inspection trails to pursue (please note that a pre-inspection briefing is not required, nor should one be prepared)
 - any other relevant information, for example timings and contextual information.

On-site visit

23. On the afternoon before the inspection, during the on-site preparation, the lead inspector should undertake the following with the centre leader.
- Discuss the available evidence and the main issues to pursue. The centre has the opportunity to update and clarify the self-evaluation form and to provide any new contextual information. Key points arising from the discussion during the visit should be noted on an evidence form and a bullet point list of key agreed inspection trails should be sent or given to the centre leader.
 - Scope the list of activities and services to identify possible observations/visits. There are a number of activities and services where it would not be appropriate for inspectors to observe, including specific one-to-one sessions such as individual counselling or an ante-natal appointment. In these cases, inspectors may wish to talk to the user before or after their appointment, with their agreement.
 - Finalise the inspection programme.
 - Provide the children's centre leader with guidance on involving senior managers in children's centre inspections.

Team deployment

24. The lead inspector will allocate visits and interviews to him/her self and the team inspector. Both inspectors will gather evidence towards every outcome, although it is likely that the lead inspector will take the lead on leadership and management and safeguarding procedures (see guidance in paragraphs 83–96 on safeguarding requirements for children's centres).
25. Early years team inspectors do not have any pre-inspection preparation time, so it is essential that the briefing and the inspection trails are clear and succinct. It is important to have a meeting with the early years inspector at the start of the inspection to discuss their programme.

Planning the programme – guidance for inspectors and centres

26. Inspectors will need to cover as wide a range of activities as possible during the two inspection days. Prior to the inspection, the centre will have sent a timetable of activities for the week. Inspectors do not have to visit every activity or every site. Based on the pre-inspection analysis, activities and visits should be selected to provide the best range of evidence to make valid inspection judgements and report on all aspects of the evaluation schedule.
27. The centre leader should have opportunities to substantiate the centre's self-evaluation and to demonstrate that self-evaluation is effective. Inspection trails should be shared with the centre leader to give them the opportunity to suggest the best ways of finding the necessary evidence.
28. Inspectors should try to speak to as many family members using the centre as possible. They need to be aware of the potential sensitivity of some activities and sessions on offer and that some users may need support in talking to 'authority' figures. In some cases it is appropriate for centre staff to support family members in discussions with inspectors. The centre should display the poster alerting centre users to the fact that the centre is being inspected in order to encourage as many families as possible to share their views.
29. The lead inspector should make a tour of the centre during the on-site preparation day to gain insight into relationships, site security, quality and use of accommodation. Inspectors will not have time to make a tour of the reach area but, where possible, should visit any site providing healthcare as part of the centre's integrated working.
30. The centre leader should draw up a draft programme and send this to the lead inspector at the time agreed with the lead inspector. The programme can be flexible to accommodate meetings and interviews, but inspectors will decide which activities to visit and may ask for certain time slots to be kept free for this purpose. Apart from the interview with the centre leader at the start of the inspection, and the local authority representative at the start of day two, the centre may arrange other interviews or focus groups on either day. To ensure that meetings are focused and to enable all attendees to participate, centres should limit attendance at each meeting to a maximum of six people.
31. The centre leader or senior manager will be involved in a series of meetings during the inspection, including:
 - the initial meeting at the start of inspection on day one
 - the 'end of day one' team meeting to hear emerging findings
 - the final team meeting on day two when final judgements are made
 - the formal final feedback, which takes place at the end of the inspection on day two. The centre may invite other partners and should invite the local authority representative to this formal feedback.

32. Centres may schedule evening and early morning activities into the programme if appropriate (see example timetable below). Centres should leave 15 minutes between meetings and ensure that time is built into the programme for inspectors to prepare feedback. The programme should include a visit to the centre or site delivering local health services under children's centre arrangements, and discussions with health professionals working on site.
33. The following is a suggested list of inspection activities and meetings for the programme, together with proposed timings.
- Meeting with centre leader at the start of the visit: one hour
Discussions to include: self-evaluation of effectiveness of centre; needs analysis and relationship to services offered; partnerships; governance arrangements; compliance with safeguarding and other regulatory requirements; safeguarding arrangements; impact of centre on improving outcomes including any agreed targets and areas for development.
 - Meeting with senior leadership team (if wider than the centre manager): 45 minutes
Discussions to include: service self-evaluations; partnerships; performance management and supervision arrangements; safeguarding arrangements; impact of services on improving outcomes including any agreed targets and areas for development.
 - Meeting with front-line workers (to include representatives across the range of services offered, person responsible for outreach work and nursery manager if not included in senior leadership team): 45 minutes
Discussions to include: centre priorities; partnerships; supervision and management arrangements; safeguarding arrangements; training; how parents' views influence services; impact of services on improving outcomes.
 - Meeting with representatives of key partners – in particular health, training and employment, financial advice and guidance – either separately or as a group, depending on partners, their availability and centre's preference (absolute maximum of six attendees at each meeting). These meetings may be conducted by telephone: 30 minutes
The focus is on the impact that partnerships have on outcomes for families and meetings should be arranged with this in mind. Discussions to include: supervision arrangements; shared evaluation; involvement in strategic planning and shaping partnerships; impact of partnerships on improving outcomes.
 - Meeting with relevant person(s) on day one to discuss data available to, or collected by, the centre on: the monitoring and evaluation of services; parent evaluations; evidence of impact on improving outcomes: one hour

- Meeting, at the start of day two, with the lead officer from the local authority and/or the organisation with delegated responsibility for the governance of the centre: one hour

Discussions to include: strategic planning; quality assurance; resource allocation and accountability; support and challenge provided to the centre to help it improve and in relation to compliance with safeguarding and other regulatory requirements. The local authority officers are not expected to contribute to all children’s centre inspections, but they will be informed that they are taking place. If they wish to meet with the lead inspector, or attend the formal feedback meeting, they should arrange this through the centre leader.

- Focus group of parents/family members from across the range of services: 45 minutes on day one or day two

- Observation of range of activities taking place in the centre
Inspectors will choose which and how many activities to visit based on programme provided by centre following initial telephone call. Time slots will be identified but sessions to be visited will not usually be announced beforehand.

34. This is a suggested programme based on two inspectors on site for two days, plus the lead inspector on site for the afternoon of the day preceding the start of the inspection. For rural or dispersed centres there may need to be more time allowed for travel between sites. The programme below is illustrative and should be amended to meet local circumstances.

	Inspector 1	Inspector 2
On-site planning meeting on the afternoon preceding the start of the inspection	Lead inspector arrives in the afternoon; time to be confirmed by lead inspector and agreed with the centre manager. Meeting to include tour of the centre, the available evidence and the main issues to pursue, and to finalise the inspection programme (see detailed guidance in paragraphs 26–33).	
Day one		
8.30–9.00am	Inspectors arrive – initial meeting between inspectors.	
9.00–10.00am	Meeting with centre manager.	Observations, visits to other sites, documentation and meetings.
10.15am–1.00pm	Observations, visits to other sites, documentation and meetings.	

1.00–1.30pm	Team meeting/lunch.	
1.30–2.15pm	Meeting with senior leadership team if necessary.	Meeting with group of front-line staff.
2.30–3.30pm	Meeting on data.	Observations, meetings and documentation visit to other site(s), outreach programmes.
3.45–4.30pm	Review of documentation/observations.	
4.30–5.30pm	Team meeting with senior leader to consider findings, interim judgements and discuss preparations for inspection day two.	
5.45–6.30pm	Observations and meetings which cannot be accommodated during the day – to be agreed with lead inspector.	
Day two		
8.00-8.30am	Visit to breakfast club and/or other early activities.	
8.30-9.30am	Meeting with local authority or governing body representative(s).	Observations, documentation, visit to other site, outreach programmes.
9.45- 10.45am	Observations, documentation, visit to other site, outreach programmes.	Focus group of centre users.
11.00-1.30am/pm	Additional meetings, observations, discussions, documentation.	
1.30-2.00pm	Lunch.	
2.00-4.00pm	Team meeting including centre manager to determine final judgments and recommendations (see separate guidance on the involvement of senior managers).	
4.15-4.45pm	<p>Formal feedback to centre: this meeting may include centre staff, local authority representatives, advisory board representatives and so on at the discretion of the centre manager.</p> <p>Please note that this meeting is to feed back the main findings and recommendations only. Questions may be asked for clarification, but not to challenge the judgements of the inspection team.</p>	

During the inspection

Collecting evidence

35. The evaluation schedule provides guidance to inspectors on the sort of evidence to seek, or that the centre might make available in order to make the judgements. Although centres have to provide or make arrangements for access to early childhood services according to the identified needs of the community, each centre will have different priorities. The bullet points in the evaluation schedule are suggestions and are very useful to support evidence-gathering, but they are not a checklist.
36. Inspectors should note the guidance on data and other information in paragraphs 64–69. All centres should be able to evidence how they monitor relevant key performance indicators.⁷ These key indicators have been included in the evaluation schedule.
37. Much evidence will come from evaluations carried out by the centre. Life stories and case studies of individuals and families can provide powerful evidence of impact, but these need to be supported with evidence of medium or longer term impact on outcomes, for example job prospects or parenting skills, to ensure a robust basis for judgements. Inspectors must judge how many families the centre is influencing, proportionate to the centre's reach.
38. The lead inspector has responsibility for ensuring that judgements about the centre are mutually agreed by the inspection team and that the centre leader has every opportunity to provide further relevant evidence should they wish to do so. Judgements should be made with reference to the grade descriptors in the evaluation schedule, and be supported convincingly by evidence.

Recording evidence

39. Inspectors should use evidence forms to record meetings, observations and the documents they have read. When an evidence form is complete, inspectors should summarise the main findings, with judgements, as bullet points in the 'overall evaluation' box. It is helpful to identify which judgements each bullet point refers to.
40. Evidence forms should be clear and legible. They are the main source of evidence for the inspection and may be scrutinised for retrieval for quality assurance monitoring, and for use as a source of evidence in the event of a complaint. Inspectors should highlight or identify any information that was provided 'in confidence'. Continuation evidence forms should not be used.

⁷ See *Sure Start practice guidance*, DfE, page 12 (this document is now archived but a copy may be obtained by emailing EY-Childcare@ofsted.gov.uk) and *Inspection of children's centres: Evaluation schedule and grade descriptors* (100005), Ofsted, 2010; <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/childrens-centres-evaluation-schedule-and-grade-descriptors>.

Evidence forms should be numbered sequentially; where more than one evidence form is being used in a meeting, they should clearly be numbered 1a, 1b, and so on.

41. As part of the quality assurance of the inspection, the lead inspector should review three to four evidence forms written by the team inspector. This should be carried out towards the end of day one.
42. During team meetings, the lead inspector should distil key evidence and record team judgements into the electronic summary evidence form. This may be entered on a handwritten summary evidence form. At the end of day one, this process serves as a check to identify any further evidence required to make all the judgements. It also serves as the basis for the report at the end of the inspection. Although the written evidence does not necessarily need to be entered electronically, in all cases the final inspection grades must be entered into the electronic evidence form. Any subsequent changes of judgement as a result of quality assurance or moderation must be notified to the inspection service provider to ensure consistency between the electronic evidence form and the report.
43. Evidence forms and the summary evidence form are a vital part of the evidence base and can be subject to Freedom of Information or Judicial Review requests. They must be written with this in mind and must not make reference to anyone by name. The forms should be sent to the inspection service provider within five working days of the end of the inspection. The carbonated copies of the evidence forms, summary evidence form and other documents, will be retained for a period of six months after the inspection, in line with other Ofsted inspection evidence.

Making judgements

44. Inspectors must always use their professional judgement when determining the grades to be awarded. All the evidence should be considered by inspectors before considering the best fit to the grade descriptors in the evaluation schedule. Grade descriptors are suggestive and not prescriptive. It is not always necessary to have features that match every single part of a grade descriptor.
45. When making the judgement on the quality of provision, inspectors should meet the identified needs of local target groups. Where services and activities are not matched to need, even though they are of good quality, this will have an impact on the quality of provision and, possibly, the equality and diversity judgements.
46. When making the overall leadership and management judgement, the judgements on safeguarding and equality and diversity will be significant. Where a judgement of inadequate is awarded for safeguarding or equality and diversity it is unlikely that the leadership and management judgement will be better than satisfactory and it is most likely to be inadequate. The overall

judgement on leadership and management is a significant factor in determining the capacity to improve judgement.

47. If the overall effectiveness is judged to be inadequate, the lead inspector should telephone the Quality Assurance helpdesk for advice if needed pending a possible judgement of inadequate.

Inspection team meetings and feedback to the centre

48. The team should meet briefly at the start of the inspection to share the pre-inspection findings, and at lunchtime on day one to share initial findings, corroborate evidence and ensure that both inspectors are aware of any developments. The centre leader should be invited to join this meeting.
49. The team should meet with the centre leader or senior manager for a more extended period at the end of day one to share emerging findings and at the end of day two to finalise judgements and identify areas for improvement.
50. During the 'end of day one' team meeting, it is helpful to the team and the centre for inspectors to identify key strengths that have emerged and are unlikely to change. Inspectors should also identify areas where they feel there may be some room for improvement or potential areas of excellence to follow up the next day. Inspectors should make sure that anything that might be judged inadequate is raised during this meeting. The lead inspector should discuss with the centre leader whether any additional meetings or evidence might be helpful to resolve some of the issues. It must be emphasised that final judgements are not made until the final team meeting on day two.
51. At the end of day two, the team must meet to consider the evidence available and make its final judgements with the centre leader or senior manager present. Final judgement grades should be recorded and key points for formal feedback should be identified as the meeting progresses. Lead inspectors should record their notes from feedback and any response from the centre leader on an evidence form.
52. The audience for formal feedback at the end of day two is at the invitation of the centre leader and may include senior staff and key partners. Those responsible for governance, such as a third party organisation commissioned by the local authority, and the local authority named officer should always receive an invitation even if they choose not to attend. It is helpful to give the main judgements, for example 'outcomes are good', and then highlight the key strengths and weaknesses across all five outcomes rather than by individual outcome. This helps tell the story for the centre and explains the judgements.

Summary of procedures when considering an inadequate judgement

53. Inspectors should make sure that if there is any aspect that might be judged inadequate, this is raised with the centre leader at the end of day one.
54. Inspectors should refer to the flow chart (page 9) and summary judgement section (pages 39–40) of the evaluation schedule to review the significance of judgements on each other and on overall effectiveness.
55. If, by the end of day one, the centre is giving cause for significant concern, the lead inspector should forewarn the centre leader of the possibility that the centre's overall effectiveness may be judged inadequate. It must be emphasised that final judgements are not made until the final team meeting towards the end of the inspection.
56. If the overall effectiveness is judged to be inadequate, the lead inspector should telephone the quality assurance helpdesk for advice on 0300 123 4234.

Formal final feedback

57. During the formal final feedback, the lead inspector must ensure that the centre leader is clear:
 - about the grades awarded for each judgement set out in the evaluation schedule and recorded in the summary evidence form; these are all of the grades on the record of judgements, not just the 'major' or 'headline' grades
 - that, although unlikely, the grades may be subject to change because of quality assurance checks
 - that the main points provided orally in the feedback will be referred to in the text of the report
 - about the recommendations for improvement
 - about the requirement for the local authority to produce, publish and monitor an action plan in relation to the recommendations⁸ (Ofsted does not expect to receive a copy of the action plan until the pre-inspection evidence requested at the next inspection.)
 - about the procedures leading to the publication of the report; the report will be subject to the inspection service provider quality assurance processes and unless the centre is judged as inadequate (see paragraphs 62–63), will be sent to the centre for a factual accuracy check on day 10, and published on Ofsted's website on day 15

⁸ Lead inspectors may wish to refer the centre to the *Sure Start Children's Centres statutory guidance*, DCSF (now DfE), 2010; <https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/DFE-00020-2011>.

- that the centre will receive a copy of the report to check for factual accuracy
- about the complaints procedure.

After the inspection

Writing the report

58. Lead inspectors should take note of the guidance on the report template, which sets out what should be included in each section and whether there is a particular style of presentation required for each section. Where issues might be relevant to more than one judgement, it is not necessary to repeat them, unless directed by the report template. Inspectors will also need to write a summary of the report specifically for parents. This should be written in plain English, be no longer than two sides of A4 and added as an appendix.

Submitting the report and the evidence base

59. The lead inspector must make sure the report is complete and submitted with the electronic summary evidence form by 9.00am on the morning of the second working day after the inspection, by uploading the documents to the inspection service provider's portal. They should contain, as a minimum, the numerical grades awarded for each judgement.
60. All evidence forms should be sent to the inspection service provider within five working days after the end of the inspection. Inspection evidence should be kept for a period of six months and then destroyed.
61. The report will be subject to the inspection service provider quality assurance processes and, unless the centre is judged as inadequate, will be sent to the centre for a factual accuracy check on day 10 and published on Ofsted's website on day 15.

Inadequate judgement

62. Where the inspection judgement is inadequate, the inspection report and the evidence base will have a full review by the Ofsted Quality Assurance team. They will be sent to the centre for a factual accuracy check on day 20 and published on Ofsted's website on day 25.
63. Where the overall effectiveness of a centre is inadequate, it will have another full inspection within 12 months. The quality of the action plan produced by the local authority and the progress made with implementing it will contribute to the judgements made at the next inspection.

Additional guidance on making judgements

Using data and 'soft' information as evidence for inspection judgements

64. Centres will have a range of data and other soft information such as case studies that they will use to support their self-evaluation and present as evidence to inspectors on their impact on outcomes for families in their reach area.
65. The key data expectations are contained in Annex B of the *Planning and Performance Management Guidance* and repeated in the *Practice Guidance*.⁹ These are indicated in the evaluation schedule as key performance indicators. For reference these are:

Outcomes	Key performance indicators
Learning and development	Percentage of children who achieve a total of at least 78 points across the Foundation Stage Profile (FSP) with at least six points scored in each of the personal, social and emotional development (PSED) and communication, language and literacy (CLL) scales.
Health	Percentage of children in reception year who are obese. Percentage of mothers initiating breastfeeding.
Child poverty	Percentage of children aged 0–4 living in households dependent on workless benefits.
Teenage mothers	Percentage of teenage mothers aged 16–19 in education, employment or training.

⁹ See *Sure Start planning and performance management guidance*, Annex B and *Sure Start practice guidance*, page 12. (These documents are now archived but electronic copies may be obtained by emailing EY-Childcare@ofsted.gov.uk.)

<p>Access for the most excluded groups</p>	<p>Percentage of members of the following groups in the children's centre reach area with whom the children's centre establishes contact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ teenage mothers and pregnant teenagers ■ lone parents ■ children in workless households ■ children in minority ethnic groups ■ disabled children and children of disabled parents ■ other groups that are priority vulnerable groups in the children's centre area.
<p>Parental satisfaction</p>	<p>Percentage of parents in the children's centre area satisfied with services.</p>

66. Each centre will have different datasets and information according to how they have assessed the needs of the reach area and made decisions about the services and interventions they provide. In general, all centres should be able to provide:

- data on the make up of the reach area, including the target groups
- a needs analysis of the families in the reach area
- data on how they have engaged with parents to shape services and activities
- agreed targets and service level agreements with the local authority and key partners relating to activities, services and participation rates
- evidence on how participation and contact rates have improved over time, particularly in relation to target groups
- evidence of how services and activities have been adjusted in relation to consultation with parents
- data in relation to the key performance indicators provided by the local authority at reach area level.

67. There is very little validated data other than the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile data and inspectors must use their own professional judgement to assess: how well the centre knows its community; whether it is meeting or exceeding its agreed targets (or even if it has such agreed targets with the local

authority); and whether such targets appear realistic given the staffing and other resource levels available at the centre.

68. All centres should have a clear statement available about what data they collect and why. They should be able to explain the relevance of the data they collect, be able to show how it is used and how it is influencing outcomes. This may include data made available from the local authority and data that centres collect for their own purposes. In particular, all centres should have participation and contact data. They should know what percentage of children in their reach area participate in children's centre activities, or have received an outreach visit, and with what result. They should also be able to know the numbers of participants in particular groups, such as disabled children, even where there is no effective baseline data to give an accurate percentage.
69. Case studies – especially when grouped together – provide useful supplementary information and these are enhanced by inspectors' discussions with user groups. Inspectors should be cautious about relying too heavily on such soft information without underpinning data to demonstrate robust impact on outcomes for families. Most centres will have many families that like the centre and what it does, but this does not necessarily mean it is as effective as it can be in improving outcomes.

Considering the effectiveness of partnerships with key agencies

Health services

70. Statutory guidance requires health services to consider delivering services through children's centres.¹⁰ The effectiveness of the partnership with midwives, health visitors and other health professionals will contribute to a number of judgements such as the outcome relating to being healthy; the quality of provision; partnership working; and other aspects of leadership and management.
71. With regards to health services, inspectors need to consider:
- the extent to which they are fully integrated with other family support services
 - how accessible they are
 - whether they are targeted at identified needs
 - the support they give to improving the physical and emotional health and well-being of children and their families
 - how they are shaped and delivered on the basis of evaluations of the impact of provision on outcomes, including regular feedback from service users

¹⁰ *Sure Start Children's Centres statutory guidance*, DCSF (now DfE), 2010; <https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/DFE-00020-2011>.

- whether information about children's health and well-being is shared effectively and appropriately
- evidence of sustained improvement against relevant national and local targets
- users' views about whether services meet their needs and have a positive impact on their lives
- the contribution that they make to the Early Support Programme and the inclusion of children from disadvantaged and excluded groups.

72. Where health services are not well integrated or targeted, inspectors need to consider whether a judgement of inadequate is appropriate for leadership and management and the consequent impact on other grades.

Partnerships with Jobcentre Plus and learning and skills providers

73. Inspectors need to consider the impact of adult services more widely as well as input from Jobcentre Plus as part of the centre's work in reducing workless households. The use of and quality of the adult services available to parents and prospective parents will contribute to a number of judgements such as the outcome relating to social and economic well-being; the quality of provision; partnership working; and other aspects of leadership and management.

74. Inspectors should judge the quality and impact of Jobcentre Plus and adult services work against any service level agreement in place at centre or local authority level. This should set out the extent to which Jobcentre Plus and other providers are engaged at centre level. The range of additional services available to parents and prospective parents may include:

- initial advice and guidance
- further education or training
- services for drug users
- debt advice and support including support and advice about benefits.

75. Part of the services offered to parents may include referral to education or training provided by learning and skills providers. Parents may be taking part in learning or training in one or more of the following:

- discrete provision commissioned by the children's centre to address an identified need amongst parents such as literacy, language or numeracy skills
- discrete provision provided by another organisation, such as local family learning provision (usually part of the Adult and Community Learning provision from the local authority. Many family learning providers deliver their services in children's centres or schools. Family learning covers a wide curriculum and may include skills to use with children such as making story

sacks or sessions on helping children with the Early Years Foundation Stage and national curriculum.)

- general provision at a local college, adult and community learning provider or training provider.

76. Where there are arrangements with learning and skills providers to deliver adult services on site or elsewhere, inspectors should consider:

- the commissioning arrangements for adult learning and support
- how effectively the centre monitors the success or otherwise of commissioned adult services; commissioned provision should be subject to a clear service level agreement that is monitored as part of the centre's quality assurance or performance monitoring processes
- the centre's knowledge about the outcomes of inspection of learning and skills providers
- evidence of evaluation of the quality of the provision through parents views or observations of sessions where these are commissioned by and/or held in the children's centre
- sessions on where parents are referred to, including:
 - the numbers of parents attending the session and how many continue to the end of the programme (retention)
 - how many parents who start the session successfully complete the programme (success rates)
 - how many parents then move onto further programmes or employment (progression rates).¹¹

Considering the impact of judgements about registered early years provision

77. Where relevant, findings from the inspection of the registered early years and/or childcare provision either directly managed by, commissioned by, or working in partnership with a service level agreement with the children's centre will contribute to the centre's inspection judgements.

78. Where the children's centre inspection is not coordinated with that of childcare or early years provision, inspectors should take account of findings from the last inspection of the early years or childcare setting. This will provide information that will contribute to: the outcome judgement for enjoying and achieving; the quality of provision where the centre directly provides the early years provision; the judgement on partnerships where services are commissioned or provided under a service level agreement; and the capacity to improve judgement

¹¹ *Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills from September 2009* (090105), Ofsted, 2010; www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/090105.

regarding progress against any actions or recommendations from previous inspections of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

79. Where judgements about the early years provision are significantly different from those of the centre, this will impact on the children's centre judgements in the following ways.
- On leadership and management, it will impact on the quality of provision and outcomes for children, in particular enjoying and achieving, where the centre directly provides the early years provision.
 - On the partnerships judgement and that for leadership and management, where a centre directly commissions another provider for its childcare and early education.
80. There is more information about how judgements in early years impact on the centre's inspection judgements in the section on coordinated inspections (paragraphs 117–124) and in Annex C.

Using early years assessments and data

81. Inspectors should ask the centre how it knows whether the children using its activities and services are gaining the necessary personal, social and learning skills to be well prepared for school. Centres should be able to demonstrate the difference it has made to the development of children who have benefited from the provision it offers. This may be through early years assessment data and any other local data.
82. Shared assessments from registered early years provision and schools can provide useful evidence for outcomes, especially enjoying and achieving. It is not for inspectors to collect and analyse this information. Instead, inspectors should expect the centre to have followed through children's progress with the schools and early years providers with whom it works in partnership.

Making the safeguarding judgement

83. Guidance for centres on safeguarding, child protection procedures, recruitment, vetting and recording is set out in a number of places. Centres should use the *Sure Start Children's Centres: Statutory Guidance* document pages 32–33¹² supplemented by earlier guidance given in *Surestart Children's Centres: Practice Guidance* pages 15–16.¹³

¹² *Sure Start Children's Centres statutory guidance*, DCSF (now DfE), 2010;

<https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/DFE-00020-2011>.

¹³ *Sure Start Children's Centres practice guidance*. (This guidance is now archived but centres should still have access to its content.)

84. In addition, if a centre directly delivers early years provision it must, until further notice, meet the requirements set out within the *Statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage* pages 22 and 30¹⁴ in respect of the part of the centre that delivers the Early Years Foundation Stage. If a centre is also a maintained nursery school, it must follow the guidance in *Safeguarding children and safer recruitment in education*.¹⁵
85. Statutory guidance requires local authorities to ensure that centres in their area follow the Local Safeguarding Children Board local guidance and procedures, and have clear child protection policies and procedures that are reviewed annually and implemented and followed by all staff. This must include:
- ensuring unvetted people in children’s centres cannot have unsupervised access to children other than their own
 - having appropriate procedures in place for handling allegations of abuse against staff in the children’s centre, including if the allegation is against the children’s centre manager
 - making arrangements for all staff working with children to have approved basic child protection training that equips them to recognise and respond to child welfare concerns
 - have appropriate communication support in place to enable children, for example those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, to communicate any concerns or worries relating to their safety or welfare.
86. It also requires local authorities to ensure that centres carry out effective recruitment and vetting checks on the staff they employ including checking qualifications and obtaining references and enhanced CRB disclosures, and that appropriate records are kept. They must also ensure that there are arrangements in place where third parties work in a children’s centre, but are not directly employed by the centre so that written agreements clarify responsibilities for undertaking checks and storing records. Please note that a general letter from partners to say that all their staff have appropriate checks is sufficient, which should be held in the same place as all other relevant evidence.
87. Local authorities must also ensure each centre has in place a named person responsible for leading on safeguarding. Their role is to ensure that every member of staff is competent in their knowledge of child protection and knows how to act if faced with child protection issues including the reporting and

¹⁴ *Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage*, DfE, 2011; <http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/earlylearningandchildcare/delivery/Providers/a0068102/early-years-foundation-stage-eyfs>.

¹⁵ *Safeguarding children and safer recruitment in education*, DFES (now DfE), 2006; <https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationdetail/page1/DFES-04217-2006>.

recording of such issues. The named lead person for safeguarding in the children's centre is required to:

- liaise with local statutory children's services agencies as appropriate and must also attend a child protection training course
- receive training in inter-agency procedures that enables them to work in partnership with other agencies, and gives them the knowledge and skills needed to fulfil their responsibilities; then undertake refresher training at two-yearly intervals after that to keep their knowledge and skills up to date
- ensure that child protection procedures are included in the induction training of new staff
- make sure that parents are aware that children's centre staff have a duty to share child protection issues with other professionals and agencies.

Keeping appropriate records

88. The children's centre statutory guidance refers to the keeping of appropriate records but does not specify what these are. However the children's centre practice guidance refers to the detailed guidance in *Safeguarding children and safer recruitment in education* as giving the underpinning detail for the keeping of appropriate records. This means that where the centre directly employs staff, they should follow similar procedures in recruitment, the checks they carry out and the records they keep to those set out in *Safer recruitment*. This refers to the single central record and what it must hold.
89. There is no absolute requirement for centres to keep a 'single central record' unless they are also a school, but they will need to keep the same or very similar information as the record. At the very least this would be the date and number of the CRB check, including the check against the Independent Safeguarding Authority list (this would form part of the CRB check) or List 99/POCA for those checks carried out before the single list in January 2010; and any additional checks done because the employee was previously working abroad.
90. If the centre directly manages registered early years provision, for this part of the provision the centre should follow the CRB checking procedures as set out in the *Statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage*.¹⁶ This record does not need to be a single central record, providing that the centre has the information, although it is good practice to hold the information together in one place.
91. If a centre directly provides maintained nursery education it must, in addition to the requirements set out in the *Statutory framework for the Early Years*

¹⁶ *Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage*, DfE, 2011; https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/eyfs_res_stat_frmwrk.pdf.

Foundation Stage, follow the guidance within *Safeguarding children and safer recruitment in education*¹⁷ for those directly employed in that part of the centre. The main difference is the requirement to hold information in a single central record; and for that record to hold more information.

92. It is not sufficient for the records held about staff checks to be available within the local authority, school or other organisation directly managing the children's centre. The centre leader should be able to access the record of checked staff who have regular unsupervised contact with children or vulnerable adults.
93. Where third parties work in the centre, but are not directly employed by Sure Start Children's Centres, there should be a letter or other written agreement in place clarifying the responsibilities for undertaking checks and storing records. Normally the third party provider is obliged to check their own staff and keep records, and confirm with the centre that this has been done. A letter from the relevant body confirming that all their staff have had the appropriate checks is sufficient. It does not have to name each individual but the centre must ensure it checks the identification of each visitor.
94. Where no such agreement is in place, the centre must treat them as unvetted and not allow unsupervised contact with children. This is particularly the case with Jobcentre Plus employees who are not likely to have enhanced CRB checks.

Please note that there is no expectation that individuals will carry their CRB disclosure forms with them. Centres should not make this a requirement of access to the centre for any professionals. The centre leader needs to be assured through their own processes, or through written agreements with other agencies, that all those working in the centre have had the appropriate checks.¹⁸ If an inspector is asked for their CRB disclosure form, they should explain to the centre that they may confirm inspectors' authenticity by phoning the National Business Unit on 0300 123 1231. In line with other organisations, Ofsted does not expect inspectors to carry their CRB disclosures with them.

Training requirements

95. The training requirements for safeguarding are as follows.
 - All staff who work with children need to have basic child protection training that equips them to recognise and respond to child welfare concerns. The depth and detail of training needed by different groups will vary according to the nature of their role and the extent of their involvement with children.

¹⁷ *Safeguarding children and safer recruitment in education*, DFES (now DfE), 2006; <https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationdetail/page1/DFES-04217-2006>.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, paragraphs 4.76 and 4.81.

- Staff with designated lead responsibility for child protection should have training in inter-agency procedures that enables them to work in partnership with other agencies, and gives them the knowledge and skills needed to fulfil their responsibilities. They should also undertake refresher training at two-yearly intervals after that to keep their knowledge and skills up to date.

Duty to refer to the Independent Safeguarding Authority

96. Inspectors must also check at each inspection whether the provider:
- is aware of their duty to refer people who they believe are unsuitable to work with children to the Independent Safeguarding Authority
 - has disciplined, dismissed or is currently investigating any member of staff or assistant in relation to safeguarding children, or had such a person leave their employment before the end of an investigation
 - if so, whether they referred that person to the Protection of Children Act (POCA) list prior to November 2009 and to the Independent Safeguarding Authority since that date.

Sustainable development

97. Inspectors should report on sustainable development where appropriate within the framework using the range of inspection evidence already being collected.¹⁹ Inspectors should consider how centres promote sustainable development through their core services, how they reflect it in their values and ways of thinking and behaving, and in the way they engage with the local community and their partners. Judgements, or evaluative statements, about sustainable development across outcomes and provision should inform judgements about leadership and management, the judgement on capacity to improve and the centre's overall effectiveness. Examples of where inspectors might include judgements about sustainable development are included below.

Outcomes for young children and their families

98. The well-being of children is important to their long-term future and is a cornerstone of sustainable development thinking. Improved outcomes for children and their parents reflecting sustainable development include:
- improved child health through increased breast feeding, healthy eating and increased active play and healthy behaviours adopted by parents, including cessation of smoking
 - children and families gaining the appropriate knowledge, skills, understanding and values to participate in decisions about the way they do

¹⁹ Ofsted's Sustainable Development Policy:
http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/search/apachesolr_search/ofsted%20sustainable%20development%20policy.

things individually and collectively, and the contribution they make to improving the quality of life in the community and globally

- children and their families developing and adopting socially responsible behaviour and personal accountability for their actions in relation to prosperity, fairness and environmental care.

Quality of provision

99. Centres should encourage users, through both universal and targeted services, to develop more healthy habits and socially responsible behaviour. These might include:

- programmes to tackle obesity, smoking and drug cessation
- programmes to encourage healthy lifestyles such as healthy eating, physical exercise, ante and post-natal care
- provision of healthy fresh food from local sources, with reduction of food wastage
- environmentally friendly buildings with efficient use of resources
- a focus on outdoor play and the benefits of fresh air
- increased economic prosperity through training for adults and return to work programmes
- a focus on everyone's role to provide a child-friendly community with reductions in bullying, crime and anti-social behaviour and accidents.

Leadership and management

100. Leadership and management are key to improved sustainability. The areas in which leaders and managers can incorporate good sustainable development principles into their practice are:

- food and drink
- energy and energy consumption
- water use and quality
- travel and traffic
- purchasing and waste
- buildings and grounds
- inclusion and participation
- community cohesion
- local well-being
- the wider global dimension.

101. Inspectors may find evidence of sustainable development in:

- the quality of partnership working with health and other community partners such as local colleges or the police in demonstrating improved health outcomes, better economic well-being and safer communities
- the two strands of the judgement on equality and diversity, in particular how effective centres are at narrowing the gap for those children and families who find it harder to access services, the centre's role in promoting the inclusion of all and community cohesion
- the effective and efficient use of resources, including how centre leaders set standards for things such as energy efficiency, recycling waste products and care for the buildings and grounds in which the centre is situated.

Re-inspection of children's centres judged as inadequate

102. Ofsted has no additional powers in relation to children's centres judged as inadequate. Instead we have agreed to carry out a further inspection within 12 months of the inadequate judgement.

103. The action plan produced by the local authority in relation to the findings of the previous inspection will form an important part of the evidence for the inspection. The Childcare Act 2006 requires a local authority to secure that a 'written statement' (action plan) is produced in relation to an Ofsted inspection. This does not have to be done by the local authority, but they are responsible for securing that the duty is fulfilled.²⁰

104. When carrying out a subsequent inspection of a children's centre, inspectors must check that:

- there is an action plan and this was produced within the two-month timescale set out in the statutory guidance
- the action plan assigns actions to specific people or organisations (these may include the local authority or a person or body other than the local authority managing the children's centre)
- it sets a timescale in which action is taken with an end date
- the actions are appropriate and effective in securing the necessary improvement identified at the previous inspection
- the local authority monitors performance with the action plan as part of its performance monitoring role
- the action plan is accessible to parents and other users in that it is written in clear and easy to understand language

²⁰ *Sure Start Children's Centres Statutory Guidance*, DCSF (now DfE), 2010; <https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/DFE-00020-2011>, pages 28 and 29.

- it is (or was) clearly displayed in the centre (and whether it is displayed or copies are held in other venues such as Family Information Services) throughout the time that it is (or was) being implemented
- if the end date is reached, that the local authority has confirmed it is satisfied that all action is complete.

105. Inspectors must use their professional judgement to assess the effectiveness of the action plan and the speed and impact of progress made with the actions in it in tackling the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. If there is insufficient evidence of significant improvement and impact on users, this will be reflected in the inspection grades for leadership and management and the centre's capacity for sustained improvement. In particular, inspectors need to focus on whether the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection are being tackled swiftly enough.

Coordinated and parallel inspections

106. Coordinated and parallel inspections may occur when children's centres:

- directly provide early childhood services or activities linked to these that are subject to another inspection by Ofsted, such as registered early years provision or childcare provision
- commission or hold formal agreements with other early childhood services inspected by Ofsted, such as schools or early years provision registered to a private, voluntary or independent provider
- are co-located with other provision inspected by Ofsted.

107. We intend to carry out inspections at the same time wherever it is practical and possible to do so. A number of reasons may prevent us from doing this including the following.

- The fast-changing pattern of children's centre development means we are not always informed in advance about any services that would allow coordinated or parallel inspections to take place.
- The centre has not yet reached three years after its designation when the inspection of a school or registered early years or childcare provision is due and cannot be postponed.
- Previous judgements made about the centre or another service within it or linked to it means that one of the inspections is due before the other, for example because one of the inspections resulted in a judgement of inadequate and requires additional monitoring inspections, or has been judged outstanding and further inspection is not required.

108. Coordinated inspections are carried out where there is a direct link between the judgements for the children's centre and other early childhood services inspected by Ofsted. The judgements of one may impact on the other and so lead inspectors or the inspection team will need to share emerging findings with each other to make sure that links are made and that feedback takes account of judgements about the other services. Two separate reports are produced but the centre report will need to make a brief reference to the findings of the other. The possible links between judgements are set out in Annex C.
109. Parallel inspections are carried out where centres are co-located with other services inspected by Ofsted but there is no formal link or service level agreement between them, other than arrangements about leasing premises. The inspections happen at the same time to minimise the time Ofsted is on site but links between judgements made about the centre and the other provision are minimal. There may be some links, for example where the services share premises, but generally the judgements of one do not impact on the other.

Common types of coordinated inspection

110. Inspections of schools and registered early years or childcare provision may be coordinated with a children's centre where it:
- directly provides the Early Years Foundation Stage or childcare through provision registered on the Early Years or Childcare Register either on site or in a different location
 - has a service level or other formal agreement with private, voluntary or independent provision on the Early Years or Childcare Registers either on site or in a different location
 - is managed by a school governing body
 - has close links with a school or schools because its reach area matches or is part of the school's catchment area. It may have some shared governance or management, for example school governors or the school headteacher may be part of the centre's governance arrangements. Normally inspections will only be coordinated where a centre is also co-located with the school.
111. The extent to which judgements about other provision impact on those for the children's centre will depend on a number of factors. These include the extent to which:
- governance and management are shared between the two or more institutions (this may range from a school governing body having overall responsibility for a centre; school governors forming part of a committee governing the centre; separate governance arrangements but agreements in place about how services are shared or accessed)

- each provision has shared users with the other. Some examples include:
 - inspection of registered early years and childcare provision by a private, independent or voluntary provider commissioned by the centre where the inspection needs to establish the numbers using the provision that live in the centre reach area and the children in need using the provision referred by the centre. The judgements about the Early Years Foundation Stage will have an impact on a number of centre judgements according to the number of children from the reach area using the provision
 - a maintained nursery school situated within a children’s centre that may take all its pupils from the centre’s reach area and offer places only to those children found to be most in need by the centre. The judgements about the school’s delivery of the Early Years Foundation Stage will have a significant impact on a number of centre judgements including outcomes for enjoying and achieving
 - a centre managed by a secondary or primary school governing body that has very few shared users. Some parents with pupils at the school and younger children may use the centre and its services; or there may be some children in the reception class at school who are or have been centre users. The extent to which judgements about the school impact on those of the centre may be minimal, particularly where the school catchment area and the centre reach area are not the same.

112. Judgements about other provision will impact on those made about the children’s centre where:

- the school and/or any registered early years provision in the private, voluntary and independent sector provides the Early Years Foundation Stage for some children using the centre
- the centre directly provides the Early Years Foundation Stage for some children who become pupils of the school
- the centre provides a crèche service for parents of pupils to attend a school’s extended services
- the centre provides wrap-around care for pupils of the school who are in the early years age group
- registered childcare in the private, voluntary and independent sector provides crèches or wrap-around care for children whose parents are accessing early childhood services from, or through, the centre
- the centre provides extended services for pupils or their parents as part of its integrated work with young children and their families
- the centre provides or commissions adult community learning or work-based learning from elsewhere, including providing support into employment for parents through Jobcentre Plus, adult information, advice and guidance (nextstep), adult community learning or work-based learning

- inspections of other provision inspected by Ofsted may also impact on judgements about children's centres where these took place before the inspection of the centre. When considering how relevant these judgements are to those of the children's centre, inspectors will need to consider:
 - the length of time that has passed between the inspection of other provision and that of the centre
 - the extent to which the centre can influence any improvements made arising from recommendations made at that inspection
 - the extent to which the centre controls any partnership or service level agreement with that provision.

The process for coordinated inspections

113. The process for coordinated inspections is set out in Annex D, and is governed by the different notice periods for each inspection type. This is currently under review.

Annex A. Terminology

Children's centre: a place, or a group of places, managed by or on behalf of, or under arrangements made with, an English local authority, with a view to securing that early childhood services in their area are made available in an integrated manner, through which each of the early childhood services is made available, and at which activities for young children are provided. They are defined in law as Sure Start Children's Centres but are referred to throughout this document as children's centres.

Early childhood services include: early years provision; the social services functions of the local authority in relation to young children, parents and prospective parents; health services relating to young children, parents or prospective parents; provision of assistance to parents and prospective parents for training and employment; and information and assistance for parents and prospective parents.

Families includes: parents and children, and prospective parents and carers including wider family members.

Inspections of childcare and/or early education: inspections of the Early Years Foundation Stage or requirements of the Childcare Register provided directly by a centre or by schools and settings working in partnership with the centre. It does not refer to all inspections of childcare and early years in the reach area of the centre.

Parents: include fathers, mothers, carers and other adults with responsibility for looking after a child, and prospective parents.

Reach area (may be abbreviated to 'area'): a designated geographical area within the local community which is the centre's catchment area.

Target groups: refer to the most excluded groups as identified in the performance management section *Sure Start Children's Centres practice guidance*. They include:

- teenage mothers and pregnant teenagers
- lone parents
- children in workless households
- children in minority ethnic groups
- disabled children and children of disabled parents
- other groups which are priority vulnerable groups in the children's centre area

Wider community: refers to those in the area who may not use the services offered, especially those who are hard to engage or isolated.

Annex B. Useful websites and information

Information on individual centres

Ofsted has built up a database of children's centres including where these link to other provision. Inspectors can access this online and using a current password, which will be provided to lead inspectors by data acquisition on a regular basis.

Publications

Government publications

Between 2004 and 2010, the government produced a great deal of guidance linked to the starting up of children's centres, which includes useful information for inspectors and centres. Although this guidance is now archived, inspectors should be familiar with the *Sure Start Children's Centres Practice Guidance*. An electronic copy of this guidance may be obtained by emailing EY-Childcare@ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspectors should also be familiar with the *Sure Start Children's Centres Statutory Guidance* available at <https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/DFE-00020-2011>.

Inspectors may wish to read about the core purpose of children's centres available at <http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/earlylearningandchildcare/a00191780/core-purpose-of-sure-start-childrens-centres> and the government's vision for children's centres set out in the document *Supporting Families in the Foundation Years*, available at <http://www.education.gov.uk/a00192398/supporting-families-in-the-foundation-years>.

Ofsted publications

Inspection of children's centres: Evaluation schedule and grade descriptors
www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/10005.

The framework for children's centre inspections
www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/100006.

Inspection of your children's centre
<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/inspection-of-your-childrens-centre>

Frequently asked questions and answers <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/childrens-centres-inspections-briefing-for-local-authorities-february-2010>

Survey reports

How well are they doing? The impact of children's centres and extended schools (070021), Ofsted, 2008;

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/how-well-are-they-doing>.

The impact of integrated services on children and their families in Sure Start Children's Centres (080253), Ofsted, 2009;

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/impact-of-integrated-services-children-and-their-families-sure-start-childrens-centres>

Annex C. Coordinated inspections – impact of judgements about other provision on judgements about the centre

Children's centre judgement	Impact
Outcomes for families	<p>Judgements about children's progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage in a linked school or registered early years provision are likely to impact on the judgement for enjoying and achieving. However, as the outcome for enjoying and achieving also applies to other activities directly provided or commissioned by the centre, including those for adults, inspectors will need to consider the extent to which the judgement about children's progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage limits that for enjoying and achieving. This will depend in part on the numbers of children using the centre that receive their Early Years Foundation Stage provision at a linked school or registered provision. Enjoying and achieving is unlikely to be outstanding if children, who are also centre users, only make satisfactory progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage.</p> <p>Judgements from other inspections carried out by Ofsted may impact on other outcomes, such as health or economic well-being, but only where significant strengths or weaknesses are apparent and the links with users of the children's centre are strong. For example, pupils in the adjoining primary school may not feel safe in school but this should not impact on the staying safe outcome for the centre, even where governance is shared, if children and their families who use the centre are safe.</p> <p>Outcomes from participation in provision by Jobcentre Plus or an adult training provision may be reflected in the outcomes for the children's centre.</p>
How good is the provision?	<p>Judgements from other Ofsted inspections will have the greatest impact on the judgements about provision, mainly where the centre directly provides or commissions such services. For example, the quality of any childcare offered during classes or courses for parents will impact on the judgement about the quality of care, guidance and support. The quality of early years provision for children will also impact on the judgement for learning and development, particularly where the centre provides or commissions the provision of the Early Years Foundation Stage and this is not good enough.</p>

<p>Leadership and management</p>	<p>The extent to which leadership and management judgements from another Ofsted inspection impact on that for the leadership and management of the centre depends on the governance of the different institutions and the extent to which there are shared users. A children's centre may be managed by a school governing body but it is perfectly possible for the school to be managed very well and the centre's management to be poor, even where the individuals concerned are the same. This may be because: either leadership or management or both are stretched too thin; there is a lack of understanding about the children's centre role; there is a lack of influence with other partners in delivering integrated services; and/or the number of users that are common to both institutions is very low. Inspectors need to be clear about the reasons why judgements are different where governance is the same.</p> <p>Areas where inspectors need to consider the impact of judgements about other provision on the centre's leadership and management are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ the centre's understanding of governance and accountability arrangements including links with any partners through which it delivers early childhood services ■ evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets where centres directly provide or commission early years provision to include the steps taken to ensure it is of good quality; and how other provision contributes to the centre's evaluation through sharing outcomes about their own provision ■ value for money – whether the centre is using its resources effectively through the partnerships it has in place to meet users' needs ■ equality and diversity and safeguarding where a centre has shared policies and procedures with co-located provision ■ partnerships – the extent to which partnership working is ensuring cohesive delivery of early childhood services and improving outcomes for the centre users.
<p>Capacity for sustained improvement</p>	<p>Inspectors need to consider the extent to which the centre can influence any improvements made arising from recommendations made at a previous inspection of any linked provision. For example where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ a centre directly provides registered early years provision, in which case progress with the actions or recommendations made at a previous inspection of the registered provision will influence the judgement about capacity to improve <p>or</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ where centres have little control over partners, for example where they have strong links with a school but do not share governance, they may be unable to influence school decisions or to work constructively with the school to bring about any improvement.

Overall effectiveness	<p>The overall effectiveness of the children's centre may be limited by judgements made in other institutions or inspections carried out at the same time where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ the quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage and/or registered early years and childcare provision made as part of the centre's offer is significantly worse than other services and activities it provides or links to■ leaders and managers have not sufficiently established partnerships and working arrangements with other key services.
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Annex D. Timelines for coordinated inspections

<p>Inspection remit: Children's centre only (no other services inspected by Ofsted at same time as the centre inspection).</p> <p>Tariff: 5 days lead inspector(LI); 2 days early years inspector(EYI).</p> <p>Notice period: 3 days.</p>											
Day -3	Day -2	Day -1	On site	On site	Day +1	Days +2-3	Days+ 4-9	Day +10	Day +15	Day +20	Day +25
Notification of CC inspection and request for SEF, timetable of activities. Provide name of LI and date and time for initial telephone call. Send link to inspection documents and guidance on setting up the programme.	LI preparation day. Early in day, initial phone call. Arrange time for more detailed call and/or arrangements for on-site preparation on day 3.	Prep day, afternoon on site if agreed with centre manager.	LI and EYI on-site inspection.	LI and EYI on-site inspection. Gives feedback.	LI writes report.	Quality Assurance read.	LI prepares final draft; factual accuracy check by centre – 1 day to return; finalise report.	Report sent to local authority and centre where judgement is satisfactory or better.	Report published on Ofsted website where judgement is satisfactory or better.	Report sent to local authority and centre where judgement is inadequate.	Report published where judgement is inadequate.

Inspection remit: Registered provision on Early Years and Childcare Registers, childcare provided directly by centre. Tariff: 1 day EYI (preferably same EYI as for children's centre inspection). Notice period: No notice.											
Day -3	Day -2	Day -1	On site	On site	Day +1	Days +2-3	Days +4-9	Day +10	Day +15	Day +20	Day +25
Unannounced inspection of Early Years Register provision to include any Childcare Register provision.	Draft report prepared and sent to children's centre LI for use in preparation.		EYI checks any provision only registered on the Childcare Register for compliance with requirements and prepares letter for issue.			Quality Assurance read for early years report and letter/report sent to Ofsted as part of early years data exchange.		Report issued to centre with children's centre report.	Letter/report published on Ofsted website.		

Inspection remit: Registered provision on Early Years and Childcare Registers, childcare not provided directly by centre. Tariff: 1 day EYI (preferably same EYI as for children's centre inspection) Notice period: No notice											
Day -3	Day -2	Day -1	On site	On site	Day +1	Days +2-3	Days +4-9	Day +10	Day +15	Day +20	Day +25
Unannounced inspection of Early Years Register provision to include any Childcare Register provision.	Draft report prepared and sent to children's centre LI to use in preparation.	Report follows early years Quality Assurance, data exchange and publication procedures.					Report sent to registered provider on inspection +10 days.	Report published on inspection +15 days.			

Inspection remit: Maintained nursery, primary or secondary school s5.

Tariff: 1 or 2 inspectors for 2 days depending on size of school.

Notice period: 2 days.

Day -3	Day -2	Day -1	On site	On site	Day +1	Days +2-3	Days +4-9	Day +10	Day +15	Day +20	Day +25
Notification of inspection.	s5 LI preparation day. May wish to have call with children's centre LI to discuss any shared emerging issues.	Day 1 inspection. Children's centre LI attends s5 interim feedback and meets with s5 LI to discuss any emerging shared issues.	Day 2 inspection. Children's centre LI attends feedback.	s5 LI writes report and copies to children's centre LI. Children's centre LI takes account of any issues from s5 feedback to come to final children's centre judgements.	s5 Quality Assurance process.		Report sent to school for checking +10 days.	Report published on website +15 days.			