

Inspections of residential family centres

The inspection framework, evaluation schedule and grade descriptors

This document outlines the framework for the inspections of residential family centres and outlines the areas that inspectors will evaluate in order to make their judgements from 1 June 2016.

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Introduction

1. Ofsted regulates and inspects all residential family centres in England, which provide local authorities and the courts with detailed assessments of parents' abilities to adequately parent their children. These assessment reports significantly contribute to decisions about whether children remain with their parents or are taken into care. Our inspection framework must therefore ensure that the work of residential family centres is founded on safe care, individualised support and robust parenting assessment practice.
2. This document sets out how we apply the principles and processes of all our inspections, the statutory basis for inspection, how we will make our judgements and a summary of the main features of the inspection process.
3. Inspection acts in a number of ways to drive and support improvement. It:
 - raises expectations by setting the standards of performance and effectiveness expected of residential family centres
 - provides a sharp challenge and the incentive to act where improvement is needed
 - clearly identifies strengths and weaknesses
 - recommends specific priorities for improvement for the residential family centres and, where appropriate, checks on and promotes subsequent progress
 - promotes rigour in the way that residential family centres evaluate their own performance, thereby enhancing their capacity to improve.
4. The framework and the inspection judgements are underpinned by the regulations and the national minimum standards.^{1,2} The inspections are intended not only to test compliance, but also to help raise standards and drive improvement in the sector. This requires a focus on how the residential family centre undertakes effective assessments, the support and guidance it provides to help parents protect their children and to promote their welfare, and the impact the centre has on outcomes for children. Inspectors will evaluate the extent to which the service contributes to delivering these improved outcomes.

¹ The Residential Family Centres Regulations 2002, as amended;
www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2002/3213/contents/made.

² 'Residential family centres: national minimum standards', Department for Education, 2013;
www.gov.uk/government/publications/residential-family-centres-national-minimum-standards.

5. More detailed guidance about the inspection is included in the 'Inspection handbook: residential family centres'.³
6. The framework and guidance are subject to periodic review.

Legal basis for inspection

7. Under the Care Standards Act 2000, Ofsted has powers to regulate and inspect children's social care services, including residential family centres. The Act sets out Ofsted's powers to register, inspect and, where necessary, enforce compliance with the Act and relevant regulation and, defines a residential family centre.
8. The Education and Inspections Act 2006 requires Ofsted to carry out its work in ways that encourage the services it inspects to:
 - improve
 - focus on the experiences of those who use the service
 - be efficient and effective in the use of resources.⁴
9. A residential family centre is any establishment that provides residential services for parents and their children in order to assess the parents' capacity to meet and respond to their children's needs and, to safeguard and promote their children's welfare. The residential family centre can also provide advice, guidance and counselling to the parents. All residential family centres must register with Ofsted before they can operate.
10. When inspecting residential family centres, Ofsted considers knowledge and understanding gained from previous inspections, and to relevant legislation, including:
 - The Care Standards Act 2000
 - The Children Act 1989⁵
 - The Residential Family Centres Regulations 2002 (as amended)
 - Residential family centres: national minimum standards (2013)
 - The Care Standards Act 2000 (Registration)(England) Regulations 2010⁶

³ Inspection handbook: residential family centres (130055), Ofsted, 2016; www.gov.uk/government/publications/inspecting-residential-family-centres-guidance-for-inspectors

⁴ The Education and Inspections Act 2006; www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/40/contents

⁵ The Children Act 1989; www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents.

⁶ The Care Standards Act 2000 (Registration)(England) Regulations 2010; www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/2130/contents/made.

- The Equality Act 2010⁷
- Other relevant statutory guidance issued by the Department of Education (DfE).

Frequency of inspection

11. The frequency of inspections is set out in regulations.⁸ All registered residential family centres must have at least one inspection during each three-year inspection cycle.
12. Newly registered residential family centres will generally be inspected within nine to 12 months from the date of registration.
13. The timing of an inspection will be influenced by an assessment of:
 - the outcomes of previous inspections
 - any current complaints or enforcement action
 - notifications received from a residential family centre
 - other relevant information, including past complaints and allegations.
14. When Ofsted judges a residential family centre to be inadequate for overall experiences of children and parents, the next inspection will take place within 12 months.

Types of inspection

15. The following types of inspection may be carried out by Ofsted in residential family centres.
 - A **full inspection** is carried out at least once during each three-year cycle. This inspection is conducted against the grade criteria as set out below and will result in a set of graded judgements. The inspector will normally be onsite for up to two days. Full inspections are always unannounced.
 - A **monitoring inspection** may be carried out if there is an incident, a complaint or concern. We may also conduct monitoring visits to review any building work, to ensure the design and layout remains suitable to achieving the aims and objectives as set out in the residential family centre's statement of purpose or, where we wish to gather information on a

⁷ The Equality Act 2010; www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents.

⁸ The Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills (Fees and Frequency of Inspections) (Children's Homes etc.) Regulations 2007, as amended; www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2007/694/contents/made.

particular aspect of care or service provision, monitor specific issues or compliance with a notice.

- A **thematic inspection** might be carried out to support our survey work. These gather evidence on a particular theme, issue or aspect of good practice that we are examining with the intention of publishing a report on the findings.

16. We will not conduct a thematic inspection at the same time as a monitoring visit.

17. All inspection reports will be published.⁹

Inspectors

18. Residential family centres are inspected by suitably experienced and qualified social care inspectors and normally by a single inspector.

How we will inspect

19. Inspectors will track the experiences of children and their parents to evaluate the quality of assessment, care, support and guidance and, leadership and management; and the difference this makes to outcomes for children and parents.¹⁰ In all cases, the quality of assessment will be fundamental to the evaluation.

20. To prepare for inspection, inspectors consider the information that Ofsted has about the service. They will use this information to develop lines of enquiry. This includes:

- previous inspection reports
- the centre's statement of purpose
- concerns and complaints received
- notifications of significant events received
- written reports following a monthly visit as required by regulation 23¹¹
- any quality-assurance reports required by regulation¹²

⁹ Regulatory inspection managers can decide not to publish monitoring reports in exceptional circumstances.

¹⁰ In small residential family centres inspectors will usually track all families who are being assessed by the centre. In larger centres they will track a sample of cases.

¹¹ The Residential Family Centre Regulations 2002, as amended;
www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2002/3213/regulation/23/made

¹² The Residential Family Centre Regulations 2002, as amended,
www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2002/3213/contents/made.

- any changes to registration, including change of manager
 - any current or recent enforcement activity
 - the results of the annual online questionnaires completed by service users, staff, commissioners and partner organisations.
21. When inspectors arrive on site at the residential family centre, they will request specific information from the registered manager or person in charge (see Annex A of the 'Inspection handbook: residential family centres').
22. Inspectors will investigate how well the manager and staff:
- understand how to complete an assessment of an individual parent's abilities to care for and safeguard their child or children
 - measure success
 - know that they are making a positive difference to children's and parents' lives
 - understand and act on strengths and areas for improvement in assessment, safeguarding, support, guidance and care.
23. Inspectors will:
- meet with parents and children; with the permission of their parents
 - examine a sample of assessments submitted to the court
 - contact key professionals such as an allocated social worker, children's guardians, Cafcass, local police, health visitor or other relevant health professionals or the local authority child protection service, to hear their views of the assessment undertaken and the quality of care, guidance and support provided by centre¹³
 - interview the registered manager, staff and where appropriate the responsible individual.¹⁴ The inspector is likely to interview the responsible individual when:
 - there are concerns about the quality and effectiveness of monitoring arrangements
 - evidence indicates that the centre is failing to protect children and their parents
 - there are concerns about how the centre is resourced

¹³ Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service.

¹⁴ Where the centre is owned by an organisation this will be the responsible individual. Where the centre is owned by an individual this will be the proprietor. Where the centre is owned by a partnership this will be one of the partners (usually the nominated partner).

- observe staff in their day-to-day work, including how they assess parenting skills, care for families and offer support and guidance
- observe practice in meetings between parents and staff, staff handovers, team meetings and reviews if these are happening at the time of inspection and it is appropriate to do so
- request a range of information (including records of critical incidents which have occurred at the centre, case files, Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) records and completed assessments provided to courts).

Users and partner views and questionnaires

24. In this context, users are the parents and children who attend the centre.
25. Inspectors take account of the extent to which residential family centre providers have asked for and acted on the views of parents and, where appropriate, their children, in reviewing and improving the services provided and the assessments undertaken.¹⁵ Inspectors also consider the views of those users and partners they speak to when gathering evidence on site.
26. We will use online questionnaires to gather the views of parents, staff and other interested parties, such as the health visitors and children's social workers. These online questionnaires are made available for people to respond to at the beginning of each year for approximately three months. The responses inform any residential family centre inspections we undertake in the following financial year and may affect the timing of an inspection if concerns are identified.

Communication and feedback

27. Inspectors will provide regular opportunities for dialogue and feedback to providers and the manager during the inspection. Where inspectors identify any concerns, they will want to discuss these with the provider and manager to ensure that they fully understood the issue and, where appropriate, give the provider an opportunity to direct the inspector to relevant evidence.
28. Inspectors will give oral feedback about draft findings, including strengths and weaknesses in practice, to the registered manager or person in charge at the end of the inspection. Requirements to be set and recommendations to be made will be stated clearly during this feedback.

¹⁵ Many children who attend family centres are not of an age where they can make their views known.

Making judgements and using the grade descriptors at the inspection

29. The experiences of children and parents are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect.
30. Inspectors will make their judgements on a four-point scale:
 - outstanding
 - good
 - requires improvement
 - inadequate.
31. The inspection framework includes:
 - evaluation criteria to describe the characteristics of good in the judgement of 'the overall experiences of children and parents', taking into account:
 - the quality of assessment
 - how well children and parents are helped and protected
 - the impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers.
 - evaluation criteria for outstanding, requires improvement and inadequate that are derived from good as the minimum benchmark.
32. In all residential family centre inspections, we will examine the extent to which the service fulfils its main purpose and responsibilities in assessing parental capacity to respond to their children's needs and in promoting their welfare and protecting them from harm. The quality and accuracy of these assessments are not only fundamental to the protection of the children, but will significantly affect their futures and those of their families.
33. The judgement about 'how well children and parents are helped and protected' is a **key judgement**. This means that if inspectors judge this area of provision to be inadequate, the overall 'experiences of children and parents' judgement will always be inadequate. Where the judgement is requires improvement, this does not automatically limit the overall judgement to requires improvement. The influence on the overall judgement will depend on the nature and extent of the weaknesses.
34. The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers and quality of assessment are graded on the four-point scale. If inspectors judge these areas to be inadequate, this is likely to lead to an overall 'experiences of children and parents' judgement of inadequate and certainly not a judgement that exceeds requires improvement.

35. Inspectors will use the descriptors of good as the benchmark against which to grade and judge performance. The judgement, however, is not derived from a checklist, instead, it is a professional evaluation of the effectiveness and impact of the centre on the experiences of children and parents. Failure to achieve a single criterion for good will not automatically lead to a judgement of requires improvement. The criteria set out what is expected but do not limit judgements where there is proper account of assessment and the quality of care, support and guidance provided.
36. A judgement of good will be made where the inspector concludes that the evidence overall sits most appropriately with a finding of good. This is what Ofsted describes as 'best fit'.
37. In recognition of the range of residential family centre providers, it is likely that the factors that make one centre good or requires improvement will not be the same for all centres. We recognise that to expect a residential family centre to fulfil all the criteria is overly simplistic. We know that in some centres, because of their particular nature, some criteria will have less relevance than others. Even when all the criteria are relevant, there will always be a degree of professional judgement in weighing and balancing evidence against the evaluation criteria. For example, some centres have individual flats for families' use and others provide bedrooms and communal space which may lead to differences in the numbers of staff and how they are deployed.
38. Providers and managers must be able to explain their practice and decision-making to inspectors, including the reasons why a particular course of action is appropriate in meeting children and parents' needs. A professional dialogue between the inspector and those inspected should always underpin inspection judgements. Professional judgement applies to both inspectors and those inspected.
39. In addition, inspectors will identify areas of outstanding practice and priorities for improvement. For all children and parents, the expectation is that care and practice are sensitive and responsive to age, disability, ethnicity, faith or belief, gender, gender identity, language, race and sexual orientation.

The relationship between the regulations, national minimum standards and the inspection framework

40. Residential family centres must comply with the statutory requirements of regulations. Where they do not, inspectors will clearly identify what they must do in the form of setting 'requirements' or through compliance or enforcement action. The Department for Education also publishes national minimum standards. Where providers do not take account of the national minimum standards, this may indicate a failure to comply with the regulations and is likely to indicate poor practice. This may influence the inspection judgement and may result in 'requirements' being imposed. Where appropriate, we will always make recommendations for improvement.

41. Meeting the requirements must equate to:
- high-quality assessment, care and support
 - good planning
 - a safe and protective environment
 - positive experiences for children and parents.
42. The seriousness of any failure to comply with regulations and the impact on children and their parents will be considered carefully by inspectors to determine how this should influence the judgements and outcome of inspection.

Summary of the evaluation schedule criteria for inspections

43. The judgements for inspections are:
- the overall experiences of children and parents, taking into account:
 - the quality of assessment
 - how well children and parents are helped and protected
 - the impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers.
44. Inspectors will make the following assessments first: the quality of assessment, how well children and parents are helped and protected and, the effectiveness of leaders and managers. This enables them to take these judgements into account in arriving at 'the overall experiences of children and parents' judgement.

The overall experiences of children and parents

45. The 'overall experiences and progress' judgement takes account of: the judgement on help and protection, the judgement on the quality of assessment and the judgement on the effectiveness of leaders and managers, and:
- the quality of individualised support, care and guidance provided and the influence and impact of the centre on the experiences of children and their parents
 - the quality of relationships between staff, children and their parents
 - the support children and their parents are given in relation to their health, education, emotional, social and psychological well-being
 - how individual, effective and realistic assessments are in evaluating parenting strengths and weaknesses
 - how well parents', and where appropriate children's, views are understood and taken into account
 - the quality of children and their parents' experiences on a day-to-day basis.

The inspector will report on each of the areas in paragraph 45 unless there are exceptional reasons not to do so.

Good

46. A residential family centre is likely to be judged good for overall experiences of children and parents if the following apply.
- Children and parents report that they feel safe at the centre and are protected, as far as possible, from accidents, abuse, neglect, violence and self-harm.
 - Assessments are individualised, they are realistic about what parents can achieve and the support required if their children continue to live with them. There is evidence that professionals and partner agencies consider the quality of assessments to be good.
 - The assessment is undertaken effectively and final assessment reports are well-written, evaluative and succinctly describe parenting strengths and weaknesses. They support good decisions, which protect children and promote their welfare.
 - Staff provide consistently high-quality care, support and guidance that lead to constructive, challenging and progressive experiences for parents and to positive experiences and improved outcomes for children. They are supported to develop skills to build and sustain constructive relationships and resolve conflict positively.
 - Parents are supported to understand the impact of their behaviour on their children.

- Children and parents live in a welcoming and homely physical environment. They are helped to have positive relationships with other families resident at the centre and to develop safe and secure relationships with their children.
- Staff and parents work together to meet children's day-to-day needs for routine, privacy, personal space, nutritious meals and enjoyable mealtimes.
- Children, where possible, and parents are actively engaged in plans made and they understand what is happening to them. They have sound relationships with staff, which are based on honesty and respect.
- Children and parents who are new to the centre are welcomed sensitively with careful and considered planning. Parents have the right information about the centre before admission. When they leave the centre, they generally do so in a planned and sensitive manner. When this is unexpected, the welfare of children remains paramount and staff act at all times with this in mind.
- The diverse and individual needs of children and their parents are central to the services provided by the centre. Care planning, support and guidance are underpinned by effective, high-quality support and where appropriate, specialist services. This includes support for parents' and children's education, health and where relevant, employment.
- The views and wishes of children and parents, whether individually or collectively, significantly influence the running of the centre and the delivery of care, guidance and support.
- If children are to remain in the care of their parents, the centre makes realistic recommendations about the support that will be required once the family leaves the centre. They challenge any deficits they note in the support package a local authority proposes.
- Collaborative working with social workers, family courts and other professionals is well embedded with the operation of the centre.

Requires improvement

47. The experiences of children and parents are likely to require improvement when the residential family centre is not yet producing good assessments or delivering good care, guidance and support. The weaknesses identified need to be addressed to ensure that children and parents have good experiences and that the assessment of parenting skills provides a sound analysis of whether children are safe to remain in their parents' care. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in children's welfare not being safeguarded and promoted.

Inadequate

48. The experiences of children and parents are likely to be inadequate, if there are serious and widespread failures that mean children are not being protected or their welfare is not being promoted or safeguarded. The judgement may also

be made because children and parents' care, support and experiences are poor, because the assessment of parenting capacity lacks rigour or because the operation of the centre does not enable parents to demonstrate their ability to parent.

Outstanding

49. The experiences of children and parents is likely to be judged outstanding, if, the following apply.
- In addition to meeting the requirements of a good judgement, there is evidence that professional practice consistently exceeds the standard of good. There is significant evidence of change and improvement for children and parents because of the actions of the staff working at the centre.
 - Research-informed practice, some of which may be innovative, makes an exceptional difference to the lives and experiences of children and parents. There are examples of practice that are worthy of wider dissemination.
 - Children and parents give consistently positive feedback about the quality of their care, support and guidance in the centre and their relationships with staff.
 - There is evidence that highly effective, well-embedded, mutually challenging and dynamic partnership arrangements bring demonstrable benefits to children and parents. The centre's consistently proactive, creative and innovative engagement with a wide range of partners contributes to high-quality support, assessment, care and protection of children and parents.

Quality of assessment

50. This judgement takes account of:

- the quality of the assessment process including the final court report
- how well parents and their children are engaged in the assessment process.

The inspector will report on each of the areas in paragraph 50 unless there are exceptional reasons not to do so.

Good

51. The quality of assessment is likely to be good, if the following apply.

- The assessments focus on the needs of children, are analytical and evaluative, and outline how the following contribute to the assessment:
 - the family’s history – there is a clear picture of how this affects parents’ capacity to care for their children
 - any risks to children’s safety and welfare
 - the capacity of the parents to protect and promote their children’s welfare and their capacity to change any deficits.
- Parents proactively engage at every stage of the assessment. They receive ongoing and regular feedback. Parents are clear about the assessment process, the elements of their parenting that are being assessed, and the emerging views of the assessors.
- Parents feel able to challenge elements of the assessment process and changes are made as a result, if this is in the interests of their children. Parents’ views of their assessment are clearly recorded.
- Assessments take full account of the placing authority and court requirements. Parents are assessed in accordance with their family placement plan and in a manner consistent with assessment guidance contained within chapter one of ‘Working together to safeguard children’ (2015). Other DfE guidance on assessing parenting skills and capacity are known and inform assessments.¹⁶
- Any use of surveillance systems for assessment is detailed in the care plan and understood by parents. These plans are regularly reviewed and updated in line with changing circumstances.
- The assessment report is evidence based, includes a chronology, gives a clear account of how the assessments were completed and provides a

¹⁶Children on the edge of care: assessing parents’ ability to change’, Department for Education, 2014; www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-on-the-edge-of-care-parents-ability-to-change.

realistic view about parenting skills, a parent's capacity for change and the extent to which they understand the impact of their behaviour on their children.

- Parents and, as appropriate, children know the content of the assessment report and their views and feedback are addressed fully.
- Before admission and during assessments, effective liaison with all relevant professionals, including the child's social worker, contributes significantly to high-quality assessments and realistic recommendations about future plans. All professionals working with the family are able to contribute appropriately and effectively to the assessment.
- Staff responsible for completing assessments are suitably trained and qualified social workers; they have a good knowledge and understanding of child development, attachment theory and models of change, and use that knowledge to support their assessments.
- Staff practice follows a clear theoretical model, they are able to reflect on their practice and it results in improvements for children and parents.

Requires improvement

52. The quality of assessment is likely to require improvement when the residential family centre is not yet undertaking assessments effectively or producing assessment reports that are thorough, evidence-based, evaluative and clear. The weaknesses identified need to be addressed to ensure that the assessment of parenting skills provide a sound analysis of whether children are safe to remain in their parents' care. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Inadequate

53. The quality of assessment is likely to be inadequate if there are serious and widespread failures in the assessment process and assessment report that would result in children's welfare not being safeguarded or promoted. This includes whether a parent's capacity for caring for their children is adequately identified and assessed.

Outstanding

54. The quality of assessment is likely to be judged outstanding if, the following apply.
- The residential family centre consistently exceeds the requirements of a good judgement.
 - Professional practice results in the quality of assessments and the assessment reports being consistently and exceptionally high.
 - Feedback from court professionals and partner agencies is consistently positive.

- Leaders and managers continually review the effectiveness of the assessment process and adapt it accordingly, improving the quality of the assessments.

How well children and parents are helped and protected (key judgement)

55. This judgement takes account of:

- how well risks are identified, understood and managed enabling children to remain safe while at the centre and supporting safe decisions about their future care
- how well challenging behaviour is managed by staff and contributes to a feeling of well-being and security for children and their parents
- whether safeguarding arrangements to protect children meet all statutory and other government requirements, promote their welfare and prevent radicalisation and extremism.

The inspector will report on each of the areas in paragraph 55 unless there are exceptional reasons not to do so.

Good

56. A residential family centre is likely to be judged good, if the following apply.

- Children's welfare is paramount. Their safety, needs, development and well-being are clearly evident in every action the centre takes. They are protected from harm and kept safe while living at the residential family centre. There is a robust and proactive response from all those working with children and parents that reduces the risk of harm and promotes children's well-being.
- Assessments and care plans are clear and comprehensive. These clearly identify the risk and impact, or likely risk and impact, of any abuse or neglect and the actions required to keep children safe. These are regularly monitored and reviewed, alongside parents' capacity to protect their children and promote their welfare.
- Staff:
 - plan well all the support, care and guidance they provide. They clearly identify the risk and impact or likely risk and impact of any abuse or neglect and the actions required to keep children safe.
 - identify and respond effectively to the particular vulnerabilities and needs relating to a child or parent's cultural background and personal identity (including disability, age, ethnicity, faith, gender, gender identity, marital status, language, religious belief and sexual orientation). They challenge any discriminatory behaviours and support parents and, where appropriate, children to treat others with respect.

- are active participants in reviews and effectively challenge any perceived shortfalls in support to ensure that children and parents receive the help and protection that they are entitled to and require.
- manage challenging behaviour well and respond appropriately to anti-social behaviour in the interests of all those at the centre.
- Parents are supported to protect the safety and welfare of their children better.
- The impact on any child and parent whose home area is far from the residential family centre is considered and addressed.
- The residential family centre systematically monitors and learns from allegations and the outcomes of child and adult protection investigations. Wider learning is effective, including key messages from serious case reviews and research.
- There are strong, collaborative and proactive relationships with key partner agencies, including the police, local authorities, family courts, education and health agencies, which support and promote the safety of children and parents.
- The residential family centre has strong links with the Local Safeguarding Children Board and the local authority child protection service. There is regular and effective communication regarding key safeguarding issues, such as allegations against staff at the centre or injuries sustained by children.
- There is strong and robust evidence that the centre is minimising any unnecessary risks to the safety of children and young people. Systematic risk assessment and risk management improve the protection of children and parents. Risk assessments are reviewed and updated in response to changes to the resident group.
- Procedures for dealing with allegations or suspicion of harm are compliant with 'Working Together 2015' and provide effective protection and support for the child and/or vulnerable adult.¹⁷
- The centre follows clear procedures, and agreed arrangements with the local police and child and adult protection services that result in investigations being handled in a fair, consistent, timely and effective way and any incidence of an adult or child going missing being handled effectively.
- Proactive and effective working relationships with the police help to support and protect children and parents. Staff protect the parents living there from any unnecessary involvement in the criminal justice system.

¹⁷ 'Working together to protect children', Department for Education, 2015;
www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2.

- Staff and any volunteers are carefully selected and vetted, preventing unsuitable people from being recruited and having the opportunity to harm children or vulnerable adults.
- The physical environment is safe and appropriately secure, taking full account of the needs and characteristics of the children and parents using the centre. It has sufficient space and facilities for the families it assesses, which promotes effective assessment and positive group living experiences.
- Arrangements for managing and administering medication are safe and effective.
- Children and parents are helped to build relationships with staff which in particular enables them to hear difficult messages. They are helped to understand how to talk about what is difficult and they know who they can turn to and how to complain. They have access to, and are actively encouraged, to involve an advocate and the person undertaking the monthly regulation 25 visit on behalf of the provider. Children and parents understand what has happened because of their complaint. Their complaints are treated seriously and result in a clear response. Urgent action is taken and practice and/or services improve accordingly.

Requires improvement

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

Inadequate

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

Outstanding

59. The help and protection offered to children and parents is likely to be outstanding, if the following apply.
- The centre consistently exceeds the requirements of a good judgement in the help and protection of children and parents.
 - Staff are highly experienced, skilled, and find creative ways to help and protect children and, where appropriate, parents.
 - Research-based practice, some of which may be innovative, continues to develop from a strong and confident base; leading to demonstrable improvements to the lives of children and parents.
 - Professionals consistently report that the help and protection children and parents receive is of an exceptionally high standard.

- The centre continually re-evaluates whether its links to specialist support and protection agencies are appropriate to the needs of the changing population of children and parents who come to the centre.

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

60. This judgement takes account of:

- how well leaders and managers prioritise the needs of children and their parents
- whether leaders and managers provide the right supportive environment for staff through effective supervision and appraisal and high-quality induction and training programmes, tailored to the specific needs of the children and their parents
- how well leaders and managers know and understand the strengths and weaknesses of the centre, prevent shortfalls and identify weaknesses and take decisive and effective action
- whether the centre is achieving its aims and objectives as set out in its statement of purpose
- the quality of professional relationships between the centre and all key parties to ensure the best possible all-round support to children and their parents, leading to effective assessments
- whether leaders and managers actively challenge when the responses from other services are not effective
- the extent to which leaders and managers actively promote equality and diversity, and tackle bullying and discrimination.

The inspector will report on each of the areas in paragraph 60 unless there are exceptional reasons not to do so.

Good

61. The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers is likely to be judged good, if the following apply.

- The residential family centre is effectively and efficiently managed by a permanent, suitably experienced and qualified registered manager.
- The centre is properly staffed and resourced to meet the needs of the children and parents being accommodated. The staff team is stable, suitably vetted, qualified and competent to deliver high-quality services to children and parents. Staff are effectively deployed to meet the individual needs of children and parents.
- Leaders and managers actively and regularly monitor the quality of all aspects of the services they provide (at least annually). They use learning from practice and feedback to improve their assessment of parenting skills and, the experiences of children and parents: for example direct testimony from children, parents, professionals and other stakeholders in contact with the centre. They learn from complaints, staff feedback, placement successes and breakdowns, and any serious events. They identify strengths and areas

for improvements, have clear development plans that are implemented and they take action to continually improve their services. Robust action is taken to address all issues of concern arising at the centre, including any complaints from children and parents or local residents. Provider investigations are undertaken when necessary and the requirements from the previous inspection report are met in full.

- Leaders and managers work proactively and positively with other agencies and professionals. They seek to build effective working relationships with them all.
- Managers and staff receive regular and effective supervision that is focused on children and parents' experiences, needs, and feedback. Supervision offers opportunities for staff to reflect on their practice and to identify their professional developmental needs. It is recorded. There is effective support and challenge through team and management meetings to ensure that the professional development of staff and leaders results in the right environment for good practice to thrive. The emotional impact of the work on staff is recognised and managed well by leaders and managers.
- Staff training and development activities are effective. They focus on ensuring that staff can meet the specific needs of the children and parents who are accommodated at the centre. The training and development activities are evaluated to ensure that they lead to effective practice. Leaders, managers and staff are up to date with current practice in their specialist area. Induction programmes are robust and help new staff to acquire the skills and knowledge they will need to work with children and parents.
- Leaders and managers make appropriate decisions about families who come to the centre to be assessed. They give priority to the safety and stability of the group environment; they assess how any new admissions may impact on those already at the centre.
- The statement of purpose is kept under review and clearly sets out the ethos and objectives of the centre. The leaders and managers ensure that the environment remains fit for purpose and is maintained to a high standard. Any damage or wear and tear is quickly repaired. There is evidence that the registered provider is financially viable and so can deliver high-quality services to children and parents.
- Case records reflect the day-to-day lives of children and parents and the work that is undertaken with them. They reflect the needs of the assessment being undertaken, their achievements and difficulties. The style and clarity of the records support the evidence for the assessment report. The records are available to children and parents when they wish to see or contribute to them.
- Volunteers who work for the centre are trained, supervised and supported to undertake their roles appropriately and to provide a high-quality service that enhances the experiences of children and parents.

- All significant events relating to the protection of children and parents are notified by the provider or manager to the appropriate authorities. Necessary action is taken following the incident to ensure that the child or adult's needs are met and that they are safe and protected.
- Leaders and managers regularly review and act on any known risks to children and parents, taking advice and guidance from local partners and agencies.

Requires improvement

62. The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers are likely to require improvement, if the characteristics of good leadership and management are not yet in place. Where there are weaknesses in practice, leaders and managers have identified issues and have plans in place to address them or they have remedied them.

Inadequate

63. The judgement on the impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers will be inadequate if:
- there has been no registered manager for more than 26 weeks
and/or
 - the assessment, experiences, care or protection of children and parents are inadequate and leaders and managers have not been able to demonstrate sufficient understanding of those failures or the action they have taken; they do not know the strengths and weaknesses of the centre and have not been effective in prioritising, challenging and making improvements
 - the centre fails to work effectively in partnership with others in the best interests of children and parents.

Outstanding

64. The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers are likely to be judged outstanding, if, in addition to meeting the requirements of a good judgement, there is evidence that leaders and managers are inspirational, confident, ambitious for children and parents, and influential in changing the lives of those they are assessing, supporting and caring for. They create a culture of high aspiration and positivity and, have high expectations of their staff to change the lives of the children and parents they are responsible for. The leaders and managers know their strengths and weaknesses well and can provide evidence of improvement over a sustained period. They lead by example, innovate and generate creative ideas to sustain the highest quality services. Professional relationships between the centre and partner agencies ensure the best possible assessment, care experiences and futures for children and parents. Providers work with those who commission their services to identify what the future needs of their service might be.

Our approach to residential family centres judged to be inadequate

65. Any inspection judgement of inadequate for the overall experiences of children and parents will lead to an urgent case review.
66. The case review will consider whether statutory enforcement action is required in relation to the centre and, where there is a registered manager, the registered manager. The 'Social care compliance handbook' contains detailed information about the enforcement options available and the arrangements for following up enforcement activity.¹⁸
67. The timing and nature of subsequent inspection and monitoring visits following a judgement of inadequate will be determined on a case-by-case basis and depend on any improvement made. Where concerns are serious, we are likely to return to conduct a monitoring visit to check that the manager and provider have taken sufficient steps to safeguard and protect the welfare of children and parents living at the centre. Any monitoring visit will result in a published report.¹⁹
68. An inspection visit will take place sooner if any further significant concerns arise during the period, or if an earlier inspection is necessary to make statutory requirements to safeguard and protect the welfare of children and parents.
69. Any inadequacy is serious and requires immediate action to be taken. However, in some cases, the inadequacy may arise from fire risks, health and safety hazards or other environmental factors. While serious and high risk for children and parents, these can be quickly rectified in many instances. Inspectors will always seek to understand how and why such serious inadequacy has occurred.
70. Where the concerns are serious, but likely to be rectified relatively quickly, we may in specific circumstances be satisfied at the monitoring visit that the situation has been made safe for children and parents. We will seek assurance that leaders and managers can act appropriately in respect of their responsibilities. All requirements that have been made will have had to be made in full. In these instances, the inspector may determine that an improved inspection judgement can be awarded.

¹⁸ Social care compliance handbook (140136) Ofsted, 2016;
www.gov.uk/government/publications/social-care-compliance-handbook-from-september-2014

¹⁹ Regulatory inspection managers can decide not to publish monitoring reports in exceptional circumstances.

Reporting findings at inspections

71. Each inspection is followed by a report that sets out the inspection findings, using text and grades, organised under the headings below.
72. All inspection reports include the name and address of the registered provider and the name of the responsible individual where the registered provider is an organisation.

Report contents

Service information	Brief contextual information about the service
Previous inspection	The last inspection judgement and its date
Enforcement activity since the last inspection	A brief summary of any enforcement activity we have undertaken since the last inspection
Inspection judgements	Grades for all judgements
A summary of the findings	A summary of the report
Areas for improvement	No grade
Information about the residential family centre	Summary of information about how the service is provided
Overall experiences of children and parents	Grade
Quality of assessment	Grade
How well children and parents are helped and protected	Grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Grade
Information about this inspection	Information about the legal basis for the inspection

73. The inspection report is sent to the provider for a factual accuracy check usually within 10 working days of the end of the inspection.
74. The registered provider or representatives must return the inspection report with any comments on factual accuracy within five working days. The final report is published on the Ofsted website usually within 25 working days of the end of the inspection (irrespective of appeals or complaints).

Confidentiality

75. We take all appropriate steps to ensure that information given to inspectors remains confidential, as required by law. Although evidence gathered during inspections is not subject to disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, any personal data it contains may still be disclosed to relevant individuals under the Data Protection Act 1998. We may also be required to disclose the evidence to other bodies (for example, to the registered person or to provide assistance to another public authority).

76. Where we consider that any information provided indicates the likelihood of harm to a child or young person, we will pass the necessary information to the local authority children's services for action.

Quality assurance

77. Quality assurance is the action that we take to ensure that an inspection is of the quality needed and expected by users, and Ofsted. We will ensure that inspectors are suitably experienced in the areas that they are inspecting and that the quality assurance managers are suitably experienced and skilled to undertake this type of work.
78. The inspector is responsible for ensuring that all the evidence gathered is robust, reliable and secure.
79. We ask the manager of the residential family centre to complete a short evaluation form following each inspection, which is used to improve the quality of inspections.
80. For national consistency, some inspections include a manager whose role is to quality assure the inspection process. During these visits, the visiting inspector speaks to the inspector, managers and other staff and, where possible, service users. The manager always seeks the views of staff at the residential family centre about the conduct of the inspection and samples the way that evidence is being gathered and used.
81. All inspection reports are subject to quality assurance processes. These may result in changes to provisional judgements. Where the quality assurance process results in a change to the provisional judgement, the inspector will contact the registered manager, explaining the reasons for the change, before the inspection report is sent to them.

Conduct during the inspection

82. Inspectors must uphold the highest professional standards in their work, and ensure that everyone they encounter during inspections is treated fairly and with respect. The code of conduct requires inspectors to:
- evaluate objectively, be impartial and inspect without fear or favour
 - evaluate provisions in line with frameworks, regulations and national standards
 - base all evaluations on clear and robust evidence
 - have no connection with the provider that could undermine their objectivity
 - report honestly and clearly, ensuring that judgements are fair and reliable
 - carry out their work with integrity, treating all those they meet with courtesy, respect and sensitivity

- endeavour to minimise the stress on those involved in the inspection
- act in the best interests and well-being of service users
- maintain purposeful and productive dialogue with those being inspected, and communicate judgements clearly and frankly
- respect the confidentiality of information, particularly about individuals and their work
- respond appropriately to reasonable requests
- take prompt and appropriate action on any safeguarding or health and safety issues.

Expectations of providers

83. For inspection and regulation to be productive and beneficial, inspectors and providers must establish and maintain a professional working environment based on courteous and professional behaviour. Inspectors are expected to uphold the code of conduct, but we also expect providers to:
- be courteous and professional
 - apply their own codes of conduct in their dealings with inspectors
 - allow inspectors to conduct their visit in an open and honest way
 - allow inspectors to evaluate the provision objectively against the regulations, standards and evaluation schedule
 - provide evidence that will enable the inspector to report honestly, fairly and reliably about their provision
 - work with inspectors to minimise disruption, stress and bureaucracy
 - ensure the health and safety of inspectors while on their premises
 - maintain a purposeful dialogue with the inspector or the inspection team
 - draw any concerns about the inspection to the attention of inspectors promptly and in an appropriate manner
 - respect that inspectors need to observe practice and talk to staff and users without the presence of a manager or registered person.

Complaints

84. The great majority of our work is carried out smoothly and without incident. If concerns do arise during an inspection, these should be raised with the lead inspector as soon as possible during the inspection visit. This provides an opportunity to resolve the matter before the inspection is completed. Providers can contact the inspector's line manager (Regulatory Inspection Manager) after an inspection if they have been unable to resolve matters with the individual inspector. Any concerns about the factual accuracy of the findings in the report can be raised after the inspection.

85. If it has not been possible to resolve concerns through these means, a formal complaint can be raised under our complaints procedure:
www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted/about/complaints-procedure.
86. Complaints can be submitted to us at any stage during an inspection and should be submitted no later than 10 working days after publication of any report or letter. We do not normally withhold publication of an inspection report or withdraw a published inspection report while we investigate complaints.
87. Complainants must send their concerns using the online complaints form:
www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted/about/complaints-procedure. If there are special circumstances that prevent the submission of a complaint online, complaints can be sent in writing to:

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

Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

More information

88. We hope that you find this document useful in helping you to prepare for your inspection. If you have any queries about your inspection, please discuss them with your inspector when they contact you.
89. If you have any other general queries about the inspections of residential family centres, please contact socialcare@ofsted.gov.uk.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

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