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Guidance for joint targeted area inspections on the theme: children living with domestic abuse

The 'deep dive' theme for joint targeted area inspections

This document should be read alongside the framework and inspection guidance for joint targeted area inspections (JTAs).

JTAs include an evaluation of the multi-agency 'front door' for child protection, when children at risk of harm first become known to local services. This is a part of all JTAs. They also include a 'deep dive' investigation. The deep dive is an evaluation of the experiences of children and young people at risk of a specific type (or types) of harm, or the support and care of children looked after and/or care leavers. This part of the JTA will periodically change to investigate different themes.

This document outlines guidance for the deep dive theme: children living with domestic abuse.





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Introduction

1. This guidance is for inspectors from Ofsted, the Care Quality Commission (CQC), Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and fire and rescue services (HMICFRS) and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMI Probation) when conducting a joint targeted area inspection (JTAI) of a local area with a deep dive investigation into how local services responds to children living with domestic abuse. It should be read alongside the framework and guidance for these inspections.¹ We have updated the guidance to incorporate learning from previous inspections of response to domestic abuse.
2. Inspectors will track and sample the experiences of children and young people. Tracking is an in-depth, end-to-end look at the experiences of between five and seven children and young people who are living with domestic abuse. Sampling is a more targeted look at the experiences of a greater number of children, focusing on particular points in these children's lives. Guidance on tracking and sampling is in the inspection framework and guidance.
3. The Adoption and Children Act 2002 extended the definition of harm to include 'impairment suffered from seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another'.² For the purpose of this inspection, the term 'living with domestic abuse' includes:
 - children who are currently living where there are incidents of domestic abuse or where there is risk of incidents of domestic abuse taking place
 - children seeing or hearing domestic abuse outside of their home
 - children witnessing the effects of domestic abuse on others.
4. Inspectors will evaluate the effectiveness of interventions, for victims of domestic abuse and adult perpetrators, in terms of their impact on the welfare and protection of children.
5. This inspection does not specifically focus on the effectiveness of services and practice in relation to young people aged 16 and 17 years old experiencing domestic abuse through peer relationships. However, we will report on this area where there are specific strengths or weaknesses identified.

¹ 'Joint targeted area inspections: framework and guidance'; Ofsted 2016;
www.gov.uk/government/publications/joint-inspection-of-arrangements-and-services-for-children-in-need-of-help-and-protection.

² Section 120 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002;
www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/38/contents.



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Overview Report

6. We published a report on 19 September 2017 'The multi-agency response to domestic abuse: prevent, protect and repair'.³
7. The report follows the second joint targeted area inspection (JTAI) programme, which began in September 2016 and which examined the multi-agency response to children living with domestic abuse. These are the main findings set out in that report:
 - Professionals have made progress in dealing with the immediate challenges presented by the volume of cases of domestic abuse.
 - Domestic abuse is a widespread public health issue that needs a long-term strategy to reduce its prevalence.
 - Too little is being done to prevent domestic abuse and repair the damage that it does.
 - Work with families was often reactionary to individual crises rather than preventative.
 - Keeping children safe over time takes long-term resolutions.
 - Agencies are not always focusing enough on the perpetrator.
 - There is still a lack of clarity about how to navigate the complexities of information sharing.

Scope of the inspection

8. All JTAs are of multi-agency arrangements for:
 - the response to all forms of child abuse, neglect and exploitation at the point of identification
 - the quality and impact of assessment, planning and decision-making in response to notifications and referrals
 - protecting children and young people at risk of a specific type (or types) of harm, or the support and care of children looked after and/or care leavers (evaluated through a deep dive investigation into the experiences of these children)
 - the leadership and management of this work
 - the effectiveness of the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements in relation to this work.

³ 'The multi-agency response to children living with domestic abuse: prevent, protect and repair'; www.gov.uk/government/publications/joint-inspections-of-the-response-to-children-living-with-domestic-abuse-september-2016-to-march-2017



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9. Our evaluation of the initial response and the quality and impact of planning and decision making will mainly focus on children living with domestic abuse.

Meeting with relevant staff

10. In addition to the list provided in paragraph 67 of the framework, inspectors will usually talk with, by telephone or in person:
 - the multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC) coordinator
 - professionals who have had contact with victims of domestic abuse and their families. For example, independent domestic violence advisors (IDVAs) and specialist children's workers in a refuge
 - voluntary and community sector representatives who are providing services to children living with domestic abuse in the local area
 - local housing providers
 - designated child protection leads and/or headteachers
 - regional school commissioners' safeguarding leads and the local authority safeguarding leads with responsibility for supporting schools
 - representatives from organisations within the local area who have been brokered by schools or the local authority to provide alternative education provision
11. An education inspector will contact the schools of the children who have been selected for case tracking. The inspector will talk to school staff about their work with the child and their family.

Evaluation criteria

12. When the deep dive investigation is of the response to children living with domestic abuse, inspectors will evaluate the extent to which:
 - professionals⁴ and support staff see incidents of domestic abuse through the eyes of the child. They are well trained, confident and knowledgeable and they understand the impact of domestic abuse. This enables them to identify how to help and protect children and to take action to do so (ESN 23)⁵

⁴ This means social workers, family/social work support workers, police officers and support staff, health professionals and support staff, personnel in the National Probation Service and community rehabilitation company, youth offending team staff, teachers and school staff.

⁵ The evaluation schedule numbers (ESN) are a referencing system to support inspectors when they record their findings in evidence records. ESNs 01–22 are in the main JTAI framework.



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- children who live with domestic abuse experience a child-centred approach from all professionals and the risks to them and their needs are assessed effectively and responded to appropriately (ESN 24)
- risks to children living with domestic abuse are prevented and reduced. The needs of the child, their non-abusive parent and the perpetrator are met at an early stage through timely access to effective help (ESN 25)⁶
- children living with domestic abuse receive the right help and protection because application of appropriate thresholds, effective information sharing and timely intervention take place. (This includes thresholds for early help, children in need, child protection processes, children becoming looked after and MARAC) (ESN 26)
- risk of harm to children is reduced through the identification and assessment of the risks that perpetrators and adult offenders pose. This leads to appropriate and targeted interventions by all professionals (ESN 27)
- children's welfare is promoted and protected through effective and timely identification, assessment and response to the risks to, and needs of, adult victims of domestic abuse. Professionals recognise that the abuse does not necessarily end when people stop living together and may in fact escalate (ESN 28)
- multi-agency risk assessment conferences support the protection of children through timely sharing of information, assessment of risks to children and through developing effective action plans (ESN 29)
- children and their families living with domestic abuse benefit from evidence-based approaches, tools and services that reduce risks and meet their needs (ESN 30)
- the police force investigates cases of domestic abuse in families with children effectively (ESN 31)
- children and their families feel that their views have been heard. This leads to improvements in the help and support that they receive (ESN 32)
- the impact of domestic abuse on children is reduced because they, their families and the perpetrators can access a sufficient range of commissioned local services. For example, community and voluntary services, including therapeutic help that improves children's and adult family members' emotional well-being and safety (ESN 33)
- schools have effective systems to identify children living with domestic abuse. They make timely referrals to early help or children's social care where appropriate and children receive support within the school and/or from external agencies where required (ESN 34)

⁶ This includes the troubled families programme.



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- schools contribute effectively to inter-agency working to improve outcomes for children living with domestic abuse. This includes contributing to a coordinated offer of early help or inter-agency plans for children in need of help and protection (ESN 35)
- leaders and managers⁷ understand the experiences of children living with domestic abuse and the prevalence of this issue in their area. This leads to effective action to meet children's needs and improve the help and support provided to children and their families (ESN 36)
- leaders and managers recognise the challenges in working with domestic abuse and provide appropriate support, training and challenge to practitioners so that effective practice can flourish (ESN 37)
- local safeguarding partners actively monitor, promote, coordinate and evaluate the work of partner agencies to help, protect children at risk of domestic abuse, including working effectively with other multi-agency groups that have responsibility for responding to domestic abuse (ESN 38)⁸

⁷ This includes leaders and managers from the police, health, probation and the local authority.

⁸ The role of the LSCB or the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements is in line with the Working Together requirements and guidance on the arrangements for transition.

Annex A. Local information to support the inspection

13. Annex A lists the information inspectors request from local agencies where the deep dive theme for the JTAI is children living with domestic abuse. The information is listed in the order that the local agencies are asked to provide it.

Lists of children at risk of domestic abuse

14. **By the end of the day that the area is notified of the inspection** (Tuesday of week one), the director of children’s services (DCS) should provide lists of children identified as a child in need and children who are the subject of a child protection plan, both living in the local authority area and those living outside the area but for whom the local authority is responsible. The list should indicate whether these children are living or have lived with domestic abuse. The lead inspector will use these lists to select the children whose experiences inspectors will track and the local area are asked to jointly evaluate. Where possible, the list should include the fields stated below.

List	Detail required
<p>Children identified as a child in need</p> <p>All those in receipt of services as a child in need at the point of inspection and those who ceased to receive services as a child in need in the three months before inspection.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Child unique ID ■ Gender ■ Ethnicity ■ Date of birth ■ If unborn: expected date of birth ■ Age of child (years) ■ Does the child have a disability? (Y/N) ■ Child in need start date ■ Primary need code ■ Date child was last seen ■ Child in need closure date ■ Reason for closure ■ Allocated team ■ Allocated worker ■ Whether the child is living or has lived with domestic abuse (Y/N)⁹

⁹ This list is the same as list six in Annex A of Ofsted’s single inspection framework for local authorities. The last field is an additional request specific to the joint inspection. The local area should determine how best to provide this additional information.

List	Detail required
<p>Children on a child protection plan All those who are the subject of a child protection plan at the point of inspection and those who ceased to be the subject of a child protection plan in the three months before inspection.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Child unique ID ■ Gender ■ Ethnicity ■ Date of birth ■ If unborn: expected date of birth ■ Age of child (years) ■ Does the child have a disability? (Y/N) ■ Child protection plan start date ■ Initial category of abuse ■ Latest category of abuse ■ Date of the last statutory visit ■ Child seen in accordance with the timescales specified within their plan, by the lead social worker? (Y/N) ■ Was the child seen alone? ■ Child protection plan end date ■ Subject to emergency protection/care/supervision order or protected under police powers in last six months (Y/N) ■ Number of previous child protection plans ■ Allocated team ■ Allocated worker ■ Whether the child is living or has lived with domestic abuse (Y/N)¹⁰

15. By 3pm on day one (Wednesday) the local authority with partner agencies should also provide the following lists, which need to include both child protection and child in need cases:

- 10 cases that the local authority identify where domestic abuse is a current and significant factor and there is multi-agency involvement. The list should include the child's ID number and whether they are a child in need or on a child protection plan.
- 10 cases that the local authority identify where domestic abuse is a current and significant factor and the agencies believe there has been positive engagement between them and the family to improve outcomes for the child. The list should include the child's ID number and whether they are a child in need, on a child protection plan or a child looked after.
- 10 cases where Youth Offending Teams and 6 cases where the National Probation Services or the Community Rehabilitation Company are involved as well as children's services and there are current or significant concerns

¹⁰ This list is the same as list seven in Annex A of Ofsted's single inspection framework for local authorities. The last field is an additional requests specific to the joint inspection. The local area should determine how best to provide this additional information.



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about domestic abuse. The list should include the child's ID number and whether they are a child in need or on a child protection plan and clearly indicate which agencies are involved.

16. If there are particular contextual issues faced by the local area in relation to domestic abuse, the DCS can advise the lead inspector of this when they provide these lists. The lead inspector will take this into account when selecting the children whose experiences inspectors will track and sample.
17. **By midday on day one** (Wednesday), the lead inspector selects 20 children living with domestic abuse from the lists of children in need and those on a child protection plan and asks the local authority to provide additional information on these 20. **By mid-afternoon of day two** (Thursday), the local authority should provide the following information on each of the 20 children:
 - is the child or young person known to the youth offending team? (Y/N)
 - is the National Probation Service working with a parent or any adult living in the same household as the child or who has a close connection to the child or young person? (Y/N)
 - is the community rehabilitation company working with a parent or any adult living in the same household as the child or who has a close connection to the child or young person? (Y/N)
 - is there a current police investigation or are there criminal proceedings? (Y/N)
 - are there any court orders in place for adult family members? (Y/N)
 - are they a looked after child or young person? (Y/N)
 - if looked after by another local authority, which authority?
 - the postcode where the child is living.
18. The local authority to indicate which of the above applies to each case.
19. **By mid-day on day three (Friday)**, the lead inspector will select between five and seven children whose experiences the local partnership should evaluate jointly. By 10am on day three, the lead inspector may request a phone call with the local authority to confirm that the selection of cases include multi-agency involvement and current or recent work to address concerns about children living with domestic abuse. The lead inspector may ask the local authority to review the cases on the electronic recording system to ensure this.
20. Inspectors will focus their evaluation on the experiences of the specific children identified. Although family context will be taken into consideration, the experiences of any brothers or sisters will not be evaluated in detail.

21. Inspectors will focus on practice over the six months before the inspection, but will take into account the child’s experiences prior to this point. The local agencies should provide key documents associated with these children by the end of day five (Tuesday of week two), and the single agency evaluations and the joint evaluations **by the end of day seven** (Thursday of week two). See the section ‘Key case file documents’ below for further information.

Child-level lists and details of planned multi-agency meetings

22. **By the end of day two** (Thursday), the local authority should provide the lead inspector with details of multi-agency meetings taking place during the fieldwork week relating to children living with domestic abuse, including:
- initial child protection conferences
 - review child protection conferences
 - children looked after reviews
 - strategy discussions
 - any other planning or review meeting (for example, MARAC meetings).
23. The local authority should also provide the lists of child-level data shown in the table below. Inspectors will use these lists to develop lines of enquiry and identify children whose experiences they will sample while in the local area. These lists are of all children in each category known to the local authority, not just those living with domestic abuse.¹¹

List	Detail required
<p>Contacts</p> <p>All those who have been the subject of a contact in the three months before inspection.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Child unique ID ■ Gender ■ Ethnicity ■ Date of birth ■ If unborn: expected date of birth ■ Age of child (years) ■ Date of contact ■ Contact source

¹¹ The content of these lists is the same as the equivalent lists requested for an inspection of the local authority as part of Ofsted’s single inspection framework.

List	Detail required
<p>Early help</p> <p>All those who have been the subject of an early help assessment, a common assessment or a targeted intervention in the six months before inspection.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Child unique ID ■ Gender ■ Ethnicity ■ Date of birth ■ If unborn: expected date of birth ■ Age of child (years) ■ Assessment completion date ■ Organisation completing assessment
<p>Referrals</p> <p>All those who have been the subject of a referral in the three months before inspection.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Child unique ID ■ Gender ■ Ethnicity ■ Date of birth ■ If unborn: expected date of birth ■ Age of child (years) ■ Date of the most recent referral ■ Referral source ■ Referral – no further action? (Y/N) ■ Number of referrals in last 12 months ■ Allocated team ■ Allocated worker
<p>Assessments</p> <p>All those who have been the subject of a statutory assessment in accordance with section 17 or section 47 of the Children Act 1989 in the six months before inspection.</p> <p>This includes assessments that have started but are not yet completed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Child unique ID ■ Gender ■ Ethnicity ■ Date of birth ■ If unborn: expected date of birth ■ Age of child (Years) ■ Does the child have a disability? (Y/N) ■ assessment start date ■ Child seen during assessment (Y/N) ■ assessment date of authorisation ■ Allocated team ■ Allocated worker

List	Detail required
<p>Section 47</p> <p>All those who have been the subject of a section 47 enquiry in the six months before inspection</p> <p>This includes enquiries that are ongoing and an initial child protection conference (ICPC) decision has not yet been made.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Child unique ID ■ Gender ■ Ethnicity ■ Date of birth ■ If unborn: expected date of birth ■ Age of child (years) ■ Does the child have a disability? (Y/N) ■ Section 47 enquiry start date ■ Number of section 47 enquiries in the last 12 months ■ Initial child protection conference not required (Y/N) ■ Date of initial child protection conference ■ Did the initial child protection conference result in a child protection plan? (Y/N) ■ Number of ICPCs in the last 12 months ■ Allocated team ■ Allocated worker

Key case file documents

24. **By the end of day five** (Tuesday week two), the local agencies should provide electronic copies of the following key documents for each of the children whose experiences they have been asked to evaluate (where recent examples exist):
- initial referral/contact/notification (where applicable)
 - most recent assessment, including a common or early help assessment
 - strategy or other multi-agency discussion or equivalent
 - section 47 investigation documentation/ICPC minutes
 - most recent plan for the child and/or review of the plan
 - latest return home interview and any subsequent risk assessments (where appropriate)
 - the most recent pre-sentence report relating to the child or any relevant adult (where applicable)
 - details of any specialist services involved with the family
 - a chronology of significant events in the six months prior to the inspection. Significant events may include:
 - incidents of domestic abuse
 - relevant information from multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARAC)



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- any contact the child or relevant adults had with the police – as either a victim or suspect – such as reported incidents, crimes and investigations, and reports of the child being missing or absent (including police notifications to social care)
 - any occasion when the child or relevant adults have attended urgent care units
 - episodes of the child missing from home, care or education
 - information on events earlier than the six months before inspection, where this is necessary to understand the context of the child's experience.
25. The CQC will request documents about the children whose experiences inspectors will track. However, as the specific health agencies involved will vary, the CQC will determine which agencies to request information from following inspectors' review of the evaluations undertaken by the local partnership. The CQC will make this request on the Friday of week two.
26. The local agencies should provide their joint evaluations and where possible individual agency evaluations of children's experiences electronically **by the end of day seven** (Thursday of week two). Access to a secure online site will have been arranged to receive the case file documents and evaluations. If printed copies of the documents related to the children whose experiences the partnership has evaluated are needed, inspectors will request for these to be made available for when they arrive on site.

Other information to support the inspection

27. **By the end of day five** (Tuesday of week two), the local agencies should provide the information outlined below to help inspectors understand the work of agencies within the area. The local agencies should not provide everything they hold on each subject. They should provide the area's **best and most recent examples that relate to the scope of this inspection**. Some examples may relate to more than one of the areas listed below. They should provide this information electronically.

The local authority

- 1.1** – organisational structures showing lines of reporting and accountability
- 1.2** – management information reports for those children within the scope of the inspection, at both a local and agency level
- 1.3** – assessment and threshold criteria for helping families and protecting the identified children



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1.4 – sample practice audits, including multi-agency audits, over the six months prior to the inspection relating to the focus of the inspection, and associated improvement/action plans

1.5 – details of any services in the area that have been commissioned from the community or voluntary sector for children living with domestic abuse

1.6 – terms of reference for the multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) or local equivalent

1.7 – needs analysis, strategies and action plans relating to domestic abuse, including the prevalence of domestic abuse, any success criteria and any analysis of impact.

1.8 – minutes from forums relating to children living with domestic abuse (such as the community safety partnership).

1.9 – the early help offer for children living with domestic abuse.

Multi-agency safeguarding arrangements

2.1 – organisational structures showing lines of reporting and accountability

2.2 – minutes of meetings of the local safeguarding partners from the 12 months before the inspection (including executive board meetings where applicable)

2.3 – sub-group minutes as relevant to the scope of the inspection (as requested by the lead inspector).

The police force

3.1 – organisational structures showing lines of reporting and accountability

3.2 – risk assessments for adult victims and children living with domestic abuse

3.3 – information about learning and development on vulnerability, domestic abuse and child protection

3.4 – child protection referral document

3.5 – strategy, policies and guidance relating to domestic abuse

3.6 – domestic abuse action plan and self-assessments

3.7 – any audits and action plan(s) relating to adult victims and children living with domestic abuse



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3.8 – performance management information relating to domestic abuse, including on children living with domestic abuse, and available data about outcomes for the victims and/or children living with domestic abuse

3.9 – minutes of multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARAC)

The National Probation Service and community rehabilitation company/companies

4.1 – organisational structures showing lines of reporting and accountability

4.2 – policy/procedures about child protection and domestic abuse

4.3 – policy/procedures for the management of risk of harm to others

4.4 – record of staff trained in child protection (with dates training completed)

4.5 – information about the presence of approved premises in the area

Youth offending team

5.1 – organisational structures showing lines of reporting and accountability

5.2 – policy/procedures with regard to child protection and domestic abuse

5.3 – policy/procedures for the management of risk of harm to others

5.4 – record of staff trained in child protection (with dates training completed)

Health partners

6.1 – organisational structures showing lines of reporting and accountability including details of local health commissioning and/or provider representation at MARAC

6.2 – Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and provider services with details of who is providing commissioned services, including health visiting, school nursing, adult substance misuse, adult mental health, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services and urgent care units.

6.3 – CCG and provider services annual reports on safeguarding and child protection, including for children looked after

6.4 – provider policies relating to children living with domestic abuse including local primary care policies

6.5 – any commissioner or provider audits and action plans relating to children living with domestic abuse



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Consent to meet with children, young people, parents and carers

28. The lead inspector will ask the local agencies to arrange opportunities for inspectors to talk directly with the children whose experiences they will track. The local agency should record consent from children and parents or carers. Where consent is not given or a discussion is not possible, the local agency seeking that consent should inform the lead inspector of the reasons. Arrangements to talk with these children, parents or carers, or the reasons why these discussions cannot take place, should be confirmed by local agencies in writing as soon as possible and by the end of week two.



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Annex B. Tool for tracking children’s experiences

The inspection team uses the tracking tool to ensure that they are consistently recording evaluations of evidence from tracking individual children and young people’s experiences. The questions reflect the experiences of children and young people at each key stage of intervention.

Inspector	
Inspectorate	
Case number	
Age of child/young person	
Does the child have any individual needs relating to their circumstances? (for example, their ethnicity or a disability)	

Evaluation by the local area

Does the joint evaluation by the local partnership accurately evaluate the experiences of the child? (where an evaluation has taken place)	
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Inspector’s evaluation

	Evaluative summary of child/young person’s experience
Was referral for action timely for the child? ESN 01, 03, 04, 23 ¹²	
Is risk identified, understood and prioritised? Does the child appear to be safe? ESN 08, 09, 24	
Has decision-making matched the priority risks and needs? ESN 06, 09, 24, 25, 27, 28	
Where an assessment has been completed, are risks, needs and strengths clear? ESN 05, 24, 25, 27, 28	

¹² ESN numbers 01–22 are in the separate ‘Framework and inspection guidance for joint targeted area inspections’, Ofsted, 2016; www.gov.uk/government/publications/joint-inspections-of-arrangements-and-services-for-children-in-need-of-help-and-protection.



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	Evaluative summary of child/young person's experience
Is there a plan? Is it sufficient to address risk and need? Is it making a difference? ESN 06, 28, 30	
Has the child been involved/engaged at all stages? Have family/carers been involved at all stages? ESN 10	
Have individual needs and circumstances been taken into account? ESN 09, 23, 24, 25, 27, 28	
Do the agencies work together effectively to protect the child? ESN 07, 26, 29	



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