



Every child matters:

**The Framework for Inspection of
Children's Services:
draft for consultation**

December 2004

INTRODUCTION

1. The Children Act 2004 requires the Chief Inspector of Schools to devise a Framework for Inspection of Children's Services ('the Framework'), setting out principles to be applied by any person or body conducting a relevant assessment, inspection, review, investigation or study.¹

2. The Framework applies to relevant inspections carried out by: the Adult Learning Inspectorate; the Audit Commission; the Commission for Social Care Inspection; the Commission for Healthcare Audit and Inspection, known as the Healthcare Commission; HM Inspectorate of Constabulary; HM Inspectorate of Probation; HM Inspectorate of Prisons; HM Magistrates' Courts Services Inspectorate and its successor, HM Inspectorate of Court Administration; and the Office for Standards in Education.

Purpose of the Framework

3. The Framework sets out principles about the purpose, coverage, conduct, reporting and quality of inspection of children's services. The principles are based on recommendations, applying to inspection generally, made in the report by the Office of Public Services Reform, *Inspecting for Improvement* (2003). The Framework aims to ensure that inspections evaluate and report consistently on the extent to which services improve the well-being of children and young people. It also provides the means of compiling information from inspections for use in [joint area reviews](#) of provision in a children's service authority area.

Application of the Framework

4. The principles apply to inspections of front-line provision, such as early years settings, children's homes and schools, whether this provision is made by the public, private or voluntary sectors. They also apply to joint area reviews and to any separate inspections of local authority and other services that support front-line provision.

5. The principles will apply in different ways in different contexts. The Framework governs the coverage and guides the methods of inspection, but does

¹ Hereafter, the terms 'assessment' and 'inspection' are used interchangeably and encompass 'review', 'investigation' and 'study'.

The Framework covers inspection of services for children and young people aged 0-19 and those (a) over 19 who are receiving services as care leavers under sections 23C to 24D of the Children Act 1989 and (b) those aged over 19 but under 25 with learning difficulties within the meaning of section 13 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000 and receiving services under that Act. Reference to children in the Framework covers young people.

not replace specialist inspection frameworks. These specialist frameworks will continue to be used in inspections of different types of provision, reflecting the statutory requirements under which the commissions and inspectorates work.

PRINCIPLES FOR INSPECTION OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Purpose of inspection

(1) Inspection aims to improve outcomes for children and young people.

It seeks to do this by:

- focusing on the experiences and achievements of children and young people
- evaluating the contributions that services make to the well-being of children and young people, including those at risk of achieving poor outcomes because of special needs or disabilities, disruption of family life or other disadvantage
- encouraging rigorous self-assessment by the services inspected
- evaluating services' capacity, providing an objective evaluation for staff working in them and building their capacity to improve the provision made
- saying what should be done to improve service contributions to outcomes
- informing action taken to pursue improvement.

Coverage of inspection

(2) Inspection evaluates and rates service contributions to five key outcomes for children and young people:

being healthy, so that they are physically healthy; mentally and emotionally healthy; sexually healthy; have healthy lifestyles; and choose not to take illegal drugs;

staying safe, so that they are safe from accidental injury and death; safe from maltreatment, neglect, violence and sexual exploitation; safe from crime and anti-social behaviour in and out of school; and have security and stability and are cared for;

enjoying and achieving, so that they are ready for school; attend and enjoy school; achieve educational standards at primary school; achieve personal and social development and enjoy recreation; and achieve educational standards at secondary school;

making a positive contribution, so that they: engage in decision-making, support the community and environment; engage in law-abiding and positive behaviour in and out of school; develop positive relationships and choose not to bully and discriminate; develop self-confidence and successfully deal with significant changes and challenges; and develop enterprising behaviour;

achieving economic well-being, so that they: engage in further education, employment or training on leaving school; are ready for employment; live in decent homes and communities; have access to transport and material goods; and live in households free from low-income.

Contributions of services to these outcomes will be assessed against definitions set out on pages 7 - 9.

(3) Inspection assesses the quality and management of services for children and young people.

Judgements of the quality and management of services will include the effectiveness of the steps taken to:

- plan for improved outcomes by identifying the needs, views and concerns of children and young people and establishing ways of meeting them
- work co-operatively with partners to share information and provide services
- develop, train and support staff to equip them to deliver services
- eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote equal opportunities
- make sufficient high-quality provision that gives value for money
- review the effectiveness of services.

Conduct and reporting of inspection

(4) Inspection is proportionate to risk and tailored to needs and circumstances.

Inspection will:

- take account of performance data and other existing information
- concentrate inspection where it will have the most impact
- be tailored to need, taking account of statutory cycles and reporting requirements
- use fieldwork only where there is no alternative way of gathering the evidence needed, or where it is needed to validate the picture painted by performance data and other information.

- (5) Inspectors aim to keep disruption to the organisations inspected and their service users to a minimum.**

They seek to do this by:

- setting information requirements and other demands at a modest level
- making use as far as possible of the existing documentation and systems of the organisations inspected, including their self-assessments
- bringing together existing data to inform evaluation
- sharing information between inspectors, subject to statutory restrictions and agreed protocols on confidentiality and other requirements
- organising inspection visits and reporting them efficiently.

- (6) Inspectors report openly, clearly and fairly on the basis of secure evidence.**

Inspectors aim to secure the co-operation and confidence of those being inspected and contribute actively to the improvement of services. They seek to do this by:

- making the purpose and the process of inspection clear
- using teams with appropriate experience, relevant skills and shared understanding
- making judgements on the basis of consistent use of criteria
- engaging with service managers and other staff and keeping them informed of emerging issues
- gathering evidence systematically and evaluating it impartially
- communicating findings about strengths and weaknesses in a clear, fair and well-argued way
- playing a constructive part in the process of improvement and accountability.

- (7) Inspectors take account of the views of children and young people and of their parents and carers and seek to involve them in inspections in other ways.**

Inspectors want to make sure that the views of children and young people, and of their parents and carers, about the services they receive, or wish to receive, are sought and considered. They will gather the views of children

and young people themselves and will assess the extent to which services themselves consult and make use of the findings of consultation.

In gathering the views of children and young people, inspectors will:

- provide them with information about the inspection
- take into account children and young people's level of understanding and take their differing views equally seriously
- use a range of ways of securing children and young people's views that are appropriate to their age and, where practicable, meet their preferences for ways of communicating their views
- ensure that children and young people feel safe during the process and enable them to raise individual concerns, and respond to or refer these as appropriate
- consider their views in reaching judgements about the availability, quality and impact of provision, setting these views in the context of other evidence
- make sure that their views are reflected in the findings of the inspection and that reports are fed back to children and young people in an appropriate form.

Quality of inspection

- (8) Inspectors evaluate the process and benefits of inspection and seek continually to improve its quality.**

Evaluation of the **process** of inspection will be based on the extent to which:

- the arrangements for the inspection, including the basis for judgements, are clear and encourage productive engagement on the part of those inspected
- the process of the inspection is efficient and does not place undue burdens on those involved
- the views of children and young people, and of their parents and carers, are incorporated in the inspection
- inspectors demonstrate integrity, objectivity and courtesy as they undertake their work
- reports make relevant, well-founded and clear judgements understood by service staff, users and other stakeholders

- complaints about inspections are handled fairly and promptly.

Evaluation of the **benefits** of inspection will be based on the extent to which it contributes to:

- improvements in services for children and young people, and/or in their cost-effectiveness
- services working together more effectively
- outcomes for children and young people in the area improving overall and in their consistency across different groups, including those groups at risk of achieving poor outcomes
- the development of national policy and action taken to implement it.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

6. The statements below illustrate what a local network of public services can do, in conjunction with families and other agencies, to promote the well-being of children and young people. The statements link the key aims in the government's *Every child matters: Change for Children* programme with the activities that contribute most directly to them.

7. Not all the contributions to outcomes are relevant to each type of service inspected. However, most services make a contribution to more than one of the outcomes. Judgements will be made only in an inspection where it is appropriate and practical to do so. Illustrations of evidence for judgements will be published separately.

BEING HEALTHY

Outcomes:

Children and young people are: physically healthy; mentally and emotionally healthy; sexually healthy; have healthy lifestyles; and choose not to take illegal drugs.

Activities contributing to the outcomes:

- o parents are helped to ensure their children are as physically and emotionally healthy as possible
- o healthy lifestyles are promoted for children and young people
- o children and young people live in a healthy environment
- o children and young people's health needs are identified and assessed at an early stage
- o children and young people's physical health is supported
- o children and young people's mental health is supported.

STAYING SAFE

Outcomes:

Children and young people are: safe from accidental injury and death; safe from maltreatment, neglect, violence and sexual exploitation; safe from crime and anti-social behaviour in and out of school; and have security and stability and are cared for.

Activities contributing to the outcomes:

- o children and young people and their carers are informed about key risks and how to deal with them
- o steps are taken to provide children and young people with a safe environment
- o steps are taken to minimise the incidence of child abuse and neglect
- o child protection arrangements meet the requirements of *Working Together to Safeguard Children*.

ENJOYING AND ACHIEVING

Outcomes:

Children and young people are: ready for school; attend and enjoy school; achieve educational standards at primary school; achieve personal and social development and enjoy recreation; and achieve educational standards at secondary school.

Activities contributing to the outcomes:

- o parents and carers are supported in helping children and young people to enjoy and achieve
- o early years provision prepares children for school and helps them meet early learning goals
- o children and young people attend and enjoy school
- o children and young people are supported in developing personally and academically
- o action is taken to ensure that settings provide good quality education
- o the needs of children unable to attend school are met
- o children and young people's recreational needs are met.

MAKING A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION

Outcomes:

Children and young people: engage in decision-making, support the community and environment; engage in law-abiding and positive behaviour in and out of school; develop positive relationships and choose not to bully and discriminate; develop self-confidence and successfully deal with significant changes and challenges; and develop enterprising behaviour.

Activities contributing to the outcomes:

- o children and young people and their carers are helped to develop socially
- o children and young people are helped to manage changes and respond to challenges in their lives
- o children and young people are encouraged to contribute to decision making and to support the community
- o action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour.

ACHIEVING ECONOMIC WELL-BEING

Outcomes:

Children and young people: engage in further education, employment or training on leaving school; are ready for employment; live in decent homes and communities; have access to transport and material goods; and live in households free from low-income.

Activities contributing to the outcomes:

- o day care is available to meet the needs of parents in work or seeking work
- o young people are prepared for working life
- o action is taken to ensure that 14-19 education is planned in a co-ordinated way
- o action is taken to ensure that settings provide good quality education
- o community regeneration initiatives address the needs of children and young people and their families
- o families and young people have access to decent homes.

USING THE FRAMEWORK

8. To meet the requirements of the Framework, the commissions and inspectorates undertake to:

- fulfil the principles of the Framework in relation to relevant inspections, having regard to the different circumstances in which inspections take place and the different statutory duties and powers on which they are based
- cover service contributions to the five key outcomes in their relevant inspections, where it is appropriate and practical to do so
- adopt, where relevant, common protocols to govern inspection practice

- share information about planned inspections in order to maximise the coherence of coverage and minimise burdens on the organisations inspected
- provide analysis of the findings of inspections in order to inform joint area reviews.

9. The Children Act provides that the Framework may include principles relating to the organisation of the results of any relevant assessment. In carrying out their separate assessments and inspections, the commissions and inspectorates will use their preferred ways of classifying and communicating judgements to the audiences concerned. In communicating the findings of assessments and inspections for the purpose of compiling information for joint area reviews, they will use a four-point classification scale: **outstanding; good; satisfactory; inadequate**.

10. The Chief Inspector of Schools will keep the Framework and its application under review to ensure that it is fulfilling the intentions of the Children Act. In doing so, the Chief Inspector will consult with the heads of commissions and inspectorates about the extent to which application of the Framework is proving practical and beneficial and seek their assessment of any changes which may be necessary.

11. The Chief Inspector of Schools may at any time revise the Framework, consulting in accordance with the provisions of the Children Act and seeking the consent of the Secretary of State before publishing a revision.