

Inspection of adoption support agencies

Consultation document

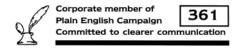
This is a consultation document on proposals for a revised framework for the inspection of adoption support agencies. Ofsted seeks the widest possible range of views from those who have an interest in, or expertise relating to, adoption to ensure that the inspection framework takes proper account of the needs and circumstances of all interested parties. Above all, the framework must assure the quality of services for all those receiving adoption support and promote their continuing improvement. There is also a version of this consultation document for children and young people.

The closing date for the consultation is 3 April 2012.

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Introduction

About Ofsted

- 1. 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.
- 2. We inspect adoption support agencies to test compliance with the relevant regulations, taking the national minimum standards (NMS) into account. Inspection is focused on outcomes for service users.

Background to the consultation

- 3. On 1 April 2011, new NMS for adoption were published and implemented to replace the adoption support agency standards. The judgement areas we currently use do not take the full range of provision into account and need to be updated.
- 4. The current cycle of inspection of adoption support agencies is due to end on 31 March 2012.
- 5. Therefore, we are reviewing our framework for the inspection of adoption support agencies. This consultation seeks your views on our proposals for the revised framework. Your views will help to refine and develop the inspection framework.
- 6. The aim of this review is to ensure that inspection: supports improvement in the lives of people receiving an adoption support service; is centred on the needs of service users; and promotes the most efficient and cost-effective use of resources. We plan to reduce the length of notice given before the inspection, to reduce the number of judgements, to improve efficiency and to reduce the demands on agencies in preparing for the inspection.
- 7. Our proposals aim to focus the inspection on what makes the greatest contribution to improving outcomes. We believe that service users' experiences, outcomes and progress must be central to the way that inspections are conducted, while recognising the sensitivities and vulnerabilities of adoptions.

Proposals for inspecting adoption support agencies

8. Under current statutory requirements, every adoption support agency will have one inspection in each three-year inspection cycle, of which appropriate notice will be given. Inspectors use the evaluation schedule to make a set of graded judgements, applying the grades outstanding, good, satisfactory and inadequate.



- 9. Adoption support agencies range from large national organisations to single practitioner agencies. They differ considerably and offer a wide variety of services. Agencies may: work with adults only; trace birth records; help adopted people and birth relatives if they want to meet; support prospective adopters; support adoptive families; prepare children for adoption and help them to understand their background; and provide counselling and family support. Some agencies may provide all these services while some specialise in only one or two areas, but all agencies must be registered with and inspected by Ofsted.
- 10. The variety of provision and providers means that the inspection focus may be different from one provider to another, which has implications for the design and application of inspection criteria. Through this consultation, we are seeking your views on the proposed judgement areas and areas of evaluation.
- 11. We are considering ways of gathering the views of service users before we carry out our inspection to ensure that they are central. We would welcome your views on the best way to do this.
- 12. The NMS for adoption set out which standards adoption support agencies should take into account, based on the type of services they offer. The full set of standards can be found on the Department for Education's website: https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/AllPublications/Page1/DFE -00028-2011.

Summary of the evaluation schedule

- 13. We propose that inspectors will make judgements on:
 - outcomes for service users
 - quality of service provision
 - safeguarding children, young people and adults
 - leadership and management
 - overall effectiveness.
- 14. Equality and diversity is no longer subject to a separate judgement. The adoption support agency should be working to ensure that no child, young person or adult is disadvantaged due to age, disability, ethnicity, faith, gender, gender identity, language, religious belief, sexual orientation or their status, for example by being adopted. How the agency promotes equality and tackles discrimination will be taken into account across all the judgement areas and will be reported on throughout the inspection report.



Aspects for consultation

- 15. In developing and implementing a revised framework and evaluation schedule, we want to take the range of providers and the range of services provided into account. Inspectors will focus on outcomes for users of the services provided by adoption support agencies. We plan to achieve this through discussions, where possible, with children, young people, adopted adults, adoptive families, birth relatives, staff and partner agencies, and by reading files and any evaluations undertaken by the agency.
- 16. We would also like to gather service users' views before the inspection. We are considering whether to seek their views when we announce the inspection or make a system available for people to comment on the services they receive at any time. One of the advantages of this is that it would allow people to comment on their experiences immediately after they stop working with an adoption support agency.

We propose to enhance the way we involve the people who use the services we inspect.

- Q1. To what extent do you agree or disagree that people who are receiving or have received an adoption support service should be able to comment to Ofsted on those services at any time?
- 17. The need to talk with service users will impact on the amount of notice we give. Currently the notice given to announce an adoption support agency inspection is eight weeks. Ofsted gives as little notice of inspection as possible and we believe that 10 days will: allow us to invite and receive comments from children and young people, adults and families who are involved with the agency before the inspection starts; reduce the demands on the agency of preparing for the inspection; allow us to see the agency as it normally functions. It also recognises that some adoption support agencies are individuals working from their homes who will require notice in order to make themselves available. We are therefore proposing that the notice period should be reduced to 10 days.

We propose to reduce our notice period of inspection to get a better picture of how adoption support agencies are working.

- Q2. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the normal period of notice for inspection for an adoption support agency should be 10 working days?
- 18. We propose that, as an outcome of an inspection, graded judgements should be made in each of the following areas:
 - outcomes for service users
 - quality of service provision
 - safeguarding children and young people



- leadership and management
- overall effectiveness.

Outcomes for service users

- 19. Inspectors will evaluate the outcomes for children, young people, adopted adults, adoptive families and birth relatives that use the services of the adoption support agency. The evidence used to inform this judgement will only be drawn from the range of services that the adoption support agency provides. However, all adoption support agencies must focus on improving outcomes that are relevant to their provision.
- 20. We propose that, in making their judgement, inspectors will evaluate the extent to which:
 - service users are listened to and contribute to defining the service they will find most helpful
 - service users are satisfied with the service they receive

and where appropriate to the services that the agency offers:

- children's and young people's needs are met
- adoptive families receive effective adoption support and do not experience placement disruption
- children, young people and their adoptive families are supported to cope with placement disruption.

We propose to focus our inspection on outcomes for service users.

Q3. To what extent do you agree or disagree that 'outcomes for service users' should be judged when we inspect an adoption support agency?

We propose to evaluate the areas identified in paragraph 20.

Q4. To what extent do you agree or disagree that we should evaluate these areas when making our judgement on outcomes for service users?

Quality of service provision

- 21. We propose that, in making their judgement, inspectors will evaluate the extent to which:
 - Those delivering the service have knowledge and understanding of all aspects of adoption
 - service users' progress is understood and supported



adoption support is tailored to the needs of the individuals involved and provided to the adoptive family, birth relatives, adopted adults and children and young people as appropriate

and where appropriate to the services that the agency offers:

birth records counselling and intermediary services meet the needs of people using the service.

We propose to evaluate the overall quality of how the service is provided.

Q5. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the 'quality of service provision' should be judged when we inspect an adoption support agency?

We propose to evaluate the areas outlined in paragraph 21.

Q6. To what extent do you agree or disagree that we should evaluate these areas when making our judgement on quality of service provision?

Safeguarding children, young people and adults

- 22. This judgement focuses on how the adoption support agency puts safeguarding at the centre of all it does and ensures that all those receiving a service and their families are safe and benefit from effective child protection procedures. This includes procedures for handling disclosures of historic abuse from both adults and children.
- 23. We propose that in making their judgement, inspectors will evaluate the extent to which:
 - the recruitment of staff protects all those using the adoption support service
 - the agency ensures that adopters understand the possible impact of abuse on children, young people and adults and are able to take this into account in the care they provide
 - allegations and disclosures are handled promptly and in a manner that is in the best interests of all children and young people, the adoptive family, adopted adults and birth relatives

and where appropriate to the services that the agency offers:

- the agency provides appropriate support and independent advice for children and young people
- the agency provides appropriate support and independent advice for adopted adults, adoptive families and birth relatives.



We propose to continue making safeguarding a central part of our inspection of adoption support agencies.

Q7. To what extent do you agree or disagree that 'safeguarding children, young people and adults' should be judged when we inspect an adoption support agency?

We propose to evaluate the areas outlined above in paragraph 23.

Q8. To what extent do you agree or disagree that we should evaluate these areas when making our judgement on safeguarding children, young people and adults?

Leadership and management

- 24. We propose that in making their judgement, inspectors will evaluate the extent to which:
 - leaders and managers monitor and report regularly on compliance with regulations, NMS and statutory guidance, ensuring that they meet requirements and deliver an effective service for all users
 - registered individuals working alone ensure that they comply with regulations, NMS and statutory guidance, and deliver an effective service for all clients
 - the agency monitors and understands its impact on outcomes for service users
 - the agency's own self-assessment and quality assurance processes, including how it learns from the views of children and young people, the adoptive family, adopted adults, birth relatives and partner agencies, lead to improving outcomes for all
 - the agency learns from problems such as placement disruptions and allegations and plans effectively for professional learning and development
 - leaders and managers employ and retain appropriately experienced and qualified staff and promote their professional development
 - the agency secures and sustains significant improvement and maintains very high quality outcomes over a period of years.

We propose to judge the leadership and management of adoption support agencies.

Q9. To what extent do you agree or disagree that 'leadership and management' should be judged when we inspect an adoption support agency?

We propose to evaluate the areas outlined in paragraph 24.

Q10. To what extent do you agree or disagree that we should evaluate these areas when making our judgement on leadership and management?



25. We would like your views on whether we should make a judgement in relation to leadership and management for individual providers. Of the 43 adoption support agencies currently registered with Ofsted, 18 are provided by registered individuals working alone. While they are responsible for management, provision and the quality of the service delivered, and for complying with regulations, the NMS expectations of individual providers are different from those of organisations. Individual providers would still need to demonstrate, for example, that they manage effectively, are financially viable and that they monitor outcomes for service users. Such aspects could be considered when making a judgement in respect of the quality of the service.

We propose to judge the leadership and management of registered individuals.

Q11. To what extent do you agree or disagree that 'leadership and management' should be judged when we inspect an individual provider of an adoption support agency?

Overall effectiveness

- 26. Inspectors will consider evidence and judgements from across the evaluation schedule before arriving at the overall effectiveness judgement. It summarises outcomes for people receiving adoption support services, how the agency promotes positive outcomes and how leaders, managers and registered individuals monitor their services and outcomes for everyone using their service.
- Q12. To what extent do you agree or disagree that 'overall effectiveness' should be judged when we inspect an adoption support agency?
- 27. Given the wide range of services provided by adoption support agencies, it would be helpful to know if there are other areas that should be included in the inspection.
- Q13. Are there any other judgement areas that you think should be included?
- Q14. Are there any other aspects of an adoption support agency that we should evaluate?



The consultation process

We welcome your responses to this consultation paper. The consultation remains open until 3 April 2012.

There are three ways to complete and submit the questionnaire and any other comments.

Online electronic questionnaire

Visit our website to complete and submit an electronic version of the questionnaire: https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/ofsted-asa2012adult.

Print and post

Visit our website to print a Word version of the questionnaire that can be filled in by hand: www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/110010. When you have completed the questionnaire, please post it to:

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Inspection of adoption support agencies consultation
Ofsted
Social Care Development Team
Floor 7, Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

Download and email

Visit our website to download a Word version of the questionnaire that you can complete on your computer: www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/110010. When you have completed the questionnaire, please email it to: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk. Please put 'Inspection of adoption support agencies consultation' in the subject line.

What happens next?

We will publish a revised framework for the inspection of adoption support agencies, taking full account of the responses to this consultation, which will also be published.



Questionnaire for the inspection of adoption support agencies

Confidentiality

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

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

Section 1

Are you	responding on behalf of an organisation?						
Yes No		please complete Section 1 and the following questions please complete Section 2 and the following questions					
•	re completing the consultation on behalf of an organder publishing the views of your organisation, please						
Organis	ation:						
I repres	ent:						
	a government department						
	a local authority						
	a primary care trust						
	a provider representative body						
	a children's representative body						
	another type of organisation (please specify)						



Section 2

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

I am:

A person who has received an adoption support service	a person who has been affected by adoption but not received an adoption support service	
An adopted adult	the parent or carer of a child who has been adopted or placed for adoption	
an adoptive parent or prospective adopter	The registered provider of an adoption support agency	
The manager of an adoption support agency	A social worker	
Prefer not to say	other (please specify)	



Don't know

The consultation questions

Agree

Strongly

For each of the following questions, please select the option that most closely fits your view and include any additional comments in the boxes provided.

Q1. To what extent do you agree or disagree that people who are receiving or have received an adoption support service should be able to comment to Ofsted on those services at any time?

Disagree

Strongly

Neither

agree	agree nor disagree	disagree	
Comments:			
1			



Q2. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the normal period of notice for inspection for an adoption support agency should be 10 working days?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
Comments:					



Q3.	To what extent	do you agree	or disagree	that 'out	comes for	service users	s' should
be j	udged when we	inspect an ac	loption supp	ort agen	cy?		

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know

Q4. To what extent do you agree or disagree that we should evaluate the following areas when making our judgement on outcomes for service users?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
Service users are listened to and contribute to defining the service they will find most helpful.						
Service users are satisfied with the service they receive.						
Children's and young people's needs are met.						
Adoptive families receive effective adoption support and do not experience placement disruption.						
Children, young people and their adoptive families are supported to cope with placement disruption.						



Comments:					
	xtent do you a ged when we ir				provision′
Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know



Q6. To what extent do you agree or disagree that we should evaluate the following areas when making our judgement on quality of service provision?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
Those delivering the service have knowledge and understanding of all aspects of adoption.						
Service users' progress is understood and supported.						
Adoption support is tailored to the needs of the individuals involved and provided to the adoptive family, birth relatives, adopted adults and children and young people as appropriate.						
Birth records counselling and intermediary services meet the needs of people using the service.						



Comments:						
Q7. To what extent do you agree or disagree that 'safeguarding children, young people and adults' should be judged when we inspect an adoption support agency?						
Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know	



Q8. To what extent do you agree or disagree that we should evaluate the following areas when making our judgement on safeguarding children, young people and adults?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
The recruitment of staff protects all those using the adoption support service.						
The agency ensures that adopters understand the possible impact of abuse on children, young people and adults and are able to take this into account in the care they provide.						
Allegations and disclosures are handled promptly and in a manner that is in the best interests of all children and young people, the adoptive family, adopted adults and birth relatives.						
The agency provides appropriate support and independent advice for children and young people.						
The agency provides appropriate support and independent advice for adopted adults, adoptive families and birth relatives.						



Comments:					
Q9. To what e should be judg	xtent do you a jed when we ir	gree or disagrenspect an adop	ee that 'leaders tion support aq	ship and manaq gency?	gement′
Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know



Q10. To what extent do you agree or disagree that we should evaluate the following areas when making our judgement on leadership and management?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
Leaders and managers monitor and report regularly on compliance with regulations, NMS and statutory guidance, ensuring that they meet requirements and deliver an effective service for all users.						
Registered individuals working alone ensure that they comply with regulations, NMS and statutory guidance, and deliver an effective service for all clients.						
The agency monitors and understands its impact on outcomes for service users.						
The agency's own self-assessment and quality assurance processes, including how it learns from the views of children and young people, the adoptive family, adopted adults, birth relatives and partner agencies, lead to improving outcomes for all.						
The agency learns from problems such as placement disruptions and allegations and plans effectively for professional learning and development.						



Leaders and managers employ and retain appropriately experienced and qualified staff and promote their professional development.			
The agency secures and sustains significant improvement and maintains very high quality outcomes over a period of years.			
Comments:			



Q11. To what extent do you agree or disagree that 'leadership and management' should be judged when we inspect an individual provider of an adoption support agency?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
Comments:					



Q12. To what extent do you agree or disagree that 'overall effectiveness' should be judged when we inspect an adoption support agency?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
comments:					



Q13. Are there any other judgement areas that you think should be included?

Yes	No	Don't know	
Comments:			



evaluate?	e any other asp	ects of an add	phion support agency that we should
Yes	No	Don't know	
Comments:			



Please add any further comments you would like to make about our proposals revised framework for the inspection of adoption support agencies:	for a

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Thank you for taking part in our consultation.



What did you think of this consultation?

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

Please tell us what you thought of this consultation by ticking the box that most closely represents how you feel about each of the statements below.

	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Don't know
The consultation information was accessible and easy to find.				
I had enough information about the consultation topic.				
I would take part in a future Ofsted consultation.				
How did you hear about th Ofsted website Ofsted News Ofsted's email alerts service Ofsted conference		on?		
Another organisation (pleas	se give details	if you know th	nem) .	
☐ Other (please give details)				





Additional questions about you

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

Please tick the appropriate box. 1. Gender Female Male Yes \square No \square Are you living as the same gender as you were born in? 2. Age Under 14 14-18 19-24 35-44 25-34 45-54 55-64 65+ 3. Ethnic origin (a) How would you describe your national group? British or mixed British English Northern Irish Irish Welsh Scottish

Other (specify if you wish)



(b) How would you describe your ethnic group?

		1		
Asian		Mixed ethnic origin	1	
Bangladeshi		Asian and White		
Indian		Black African and Wh	ite	
Pakistani		Black Caribbean and	White	
Any other Asian background (specify if you wish)		Any other mixed ethr (specify if you wish)		
Black		White		
African		Any White backgroun you wish)	d (specify if	
Caribbean		Any other ethnic ba	ackground	
Any other Black background (specify if you wish)		Any other background you wish)	d (specify if	
Chinese				
Any Chinese background				
(specify if you wish)				
4. Sexual orientation Heterosexual Lesbia	an	Gay	Bisexu:	al
5. Religion/belief				
Buddhist		Muslim		
Christian		None		
Hindu		Sikh		
Jewish		Any other, please sta	te:	
6. Disability				
Do you consider yourself to have a d	isability?	Yes	No 🗌	