

Children's services assessment for 2011

Arrangements and guidance for local authorities and their partners on Ofsted's annual assessment of children's services

The Education and Inspections Act 2006 places a statutory duty on Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) to assess annually the quality of children's services for each local authority. This guidance describes Ofsted's arrangements for meeting HMCI's statutory duty for 2011.

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Background

1. The Education and Inspections Act 2006 charges Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) with the responsibility for conducting an annual assessment of the quality of children's services for each local authority. This guidance describes the arrangements to ensure that HMCI's statutory duty for 2011 is met.
2. The 2010 arrangements for a simple and transparent approach to the children's services assessment are further consolidated in 2011 with some minor refinements. This is in line with Ofsted's commitment to even greater transparency.
3. This guidance seeks to:
 - set out the arrangements for the children's services assessment in 2011 in terms of the performance profile and the principles that will be applied in determining the assessment
 - re-affirm the scope of the annual children's services assessment
 - clarify the reporting procedures for the children's services assessment
 - set out the practical arrangements for the 2011 children's services assessment process, including: communication with local authorities; quality assurance processes; appeal procedures; and the overall timeline for the process including the date of publication.

Scope of assessment

4. Ofsted's annual assessment of the performance of children's services recognises the key role played by local authorities in ensuring that good or better quality services and settings improve outcomes for children and young people.
5. Children's services include the full range of services, from universal services such as education through to specialist services, such as those for looked after children. The local authority has a lead role in providing many of these services, and works with its partner agencies, and the private and voluntary sectors to improve outcomes for children and young people. In the majority of local authorities, children's services are working well and making a positive difference to children and young people's lives.

6. The children's services assessment derives from Ofsted's performance profile together with other published data, for example the new impact indicators as and when they become available. The performance profile reports on the quality of services and outcomes for children and young people from across Ofsted's inspection and regulation of the services and settings for which the local authority has a strategic interest or is operationally responsible, including services for safeguarding. The performance profile also includes other settings, such as academies that are located within the area. This evidence, contained in blocks A and B of the performance profile, is the basis for the assessment with less emphasis being placed on impact indicators and other published data (Block C). This means that the annual children's services assessment draws on a wide range of findings from front-line inspection and regulation. For example: the direct observation of professional practice in schools, children's homes and safeguarding; the views of children and young people using these services; and interactions during inspection with managers and other stakeholders.
7. The assessment will take account of the mix and balance of performance across different areas of inspected services and settings. It will also take account of the performance of services commissioned by the local authority that are located within and outside the local area.
8. Ofsted will apply a set of principles to the evidence in the performance profile in order to arrive at the assessment. Further details of the assessment principles can be found later in this document and in Annex E.

Reporting

9. The format of the annual children's services assessment letter for 2011 has changed. This is because the evidence for part two of the letter (the commentary), provided in 2010, was drawn from a range of evidence that is no longer available or no longer statutory, such as the National Indicator Set and the Children and Young People's Plan. The assessment letter focuses on the performance profile and the sources of evidence listed in Annex D.
10. In 2011, the letter will explain the assessment awarded, detailing the strengths of provision and areas for further improvement. More information about the children's services assessment letter can be found later in this guidance.

Communication, quality assurance and timeline

11. This guidance sets out the practical arrangements for the 2011 children's services assessment process, including arrangements for undertaking factual accuracy and appeals work, and arrangements for contact and communication between Ofsted and local authorities.

12. Key dates and activities for 2011 are set out below.

June	Performance profile update published
July	Deadline for receipt of information about commissioned places
August	Performance profile update published
September	Final social care data published
23 September	Draft children's services assessment letter sent to local authorities
30 September	Final date for local authorities to raise factual inaccuracies
17 October	Final date for submission of appeals to Ofsted
4 November	Local authorities notified of outcome of appeals
4 November	Pre-publication version of the children's services assessment letter sent to local authorities
8 November	Publication of children's services assessment

Children's services assessment 2011

The performance profile

13. The performance profile, established in 2009, sets out the quality of services and outcomes for children and young people in each local authority. It draws together relevant findings from across Ofsted's inspection and regulation of education, care and skills, and puts this evidence alongside published performance data. For 2011, changes have been made to Block C of the performance profile in line with the government's policy to abolish the National Indicator Set and introduce a number of impact indicators.
14. For 2011, the core structure of the performance profile remains the same. Evidence in the performance profile continues to be arranged into the following three main Blocks.
- Block A: the findings from regular and ongoing inspection and regulation of services, settings and institutions.
 - Block B: findings from the safeguarding and looked after children services inspections, unannounced inspections of contact, referral and assessment arrangements for children in need and children who may be in need of protection, evaluations of serious case reviews and, if a full inspection of safeguarding and looked after children services has not taken place, the findings from the joint area review inspections.¹

¹ Where the full inspection of safeguarding and looked after children services has not taken place, inspectors will consider the evidence of the joint area review where it took place after 1 April 2007 (joint area review blocks 12 to 21).

- Block C: educational performance outcomes and other published data including any impact indicators established by the Department for Education. For 2011, the Every Child Matters categories and the National Indicator Set will no longer be used. The format and content of Block C will be revised to reflect this. These changes are set out in more detail in the sections below.
15. The performance profile has five layers. This enables local authorities and Ofsted to review a summary of performance at layer one and to scrutinise performance in more detail as required. A visual display of layer one (the summary layer) of the June 2011 performance profile is set out in Annex A.
 16. The upper three layers of the performance profile aggregate all data to local area level. For example, they provide information about the proportion of primary schools in the area judged good or better for overall effectiveness in their most recent inspection. The fourth and fifth layers provide data at individual setting or service level. For example, they provide information about all the judgement grades awarded to individual primary schools following their most recent inspection (see Annex B for further detail).
 17. Although not included in the performance profile, any substantiated complaints received by Ofsted, including through whistleblowing, will also be considered alongside Block B evidence in determining the assessment. Where there are no issues of confidentiality, local authorities will have been advised of these complaints.

Block A: inspected services, settings and institutions

Groupings of settings and services

18. Block A of the performance profile gives details of the judgements made about the quality of services, settings and institutions inspected and regulated by Ofsted. The number of inspection groups into which services, settings and institutions are placed remains the same as in 2010 (see Table 1 below).
19. In some local authorities there are registered providers of childcare who have no children on roll but who could accept them at any time. It is therefore necessary to establish their compliance with current regulations. In 2011, inspection judgements of these providers can only be recorded in the performance profile as satisfactory for those who are compliant or inadequate for those who are not compliant. Where the super group banding (see paragraph 22) for early years and childcare is materially affected in this way, local authorities will be asked to confirm details about those providers with no children on roll and Ofsted will take this into account in coming to the children's services assessment.
20. In a few local authorities, major restructuring of schools, colleges and other settings has taken place through closure, amalgamation or federation. In these instances, and until the new provision is inspected, the overall effectiveness

judgement of provision prior to the restructure will be taken into account, even if this does not appear in layer one of the most recent performance profile.

21. Some local authorities are proposing to amalgamate their services for children and young people with one or more other local authorities. The quality of inspected services, settings and institutions, and the impact on outcomes for children and young people remain central to Ofsted’s children’s services assessment, regardless of the structure chosen to deliver services. In line with HMCI’s statutory duty, each local authority will be assessed separately.

Table 1: groups of inspected services and settings

	Seven super groups	Twenty-two groups of inspected services and settings
Universal services	Early years and childcare	Childminders Childcare: domestic Childcare: non-domestic Children’s centres
	Nursery and primary schools	Nursery and primary early years foundation stage Primary schools
	Secondary schools	Local authority maintained secondary schools Academy and city technology colleges
	Post-16	Secondary sixth forms General further education and tertiary colleges Sixth form colleges Independent specialist colleges
Targeted services	Special schools and pupil referral units	Local authority maintained special schools Non-local authority and independent special schools Secondary special sixth forms Pupil referral units Residential special schools
	Fostering and adoption	Local authority fostering agency Local authority adoption agency Private and voluntary fostering and adoption agencies
	Children’s homes	Local authority children’s homes Private and voluntary children’s homes

22. The first four super groups in Table 1 above are designated universal services and the remainder designated as targeted services. These super groups are structured to provide reasonable equivalence in terms of service provision for children and young people. They enable local authorities and Ofsted to form a balanced and reasonable overview of the quality of provision. They also enable

a simpler and fairer application of the assessment principles, especially where the number of settings can be very small.

The collection and use of commissioned services data from local authorities

23. In 2010, Ofsted asked local authorities to provide information about the services they commission from private and voluntary sector providers for looked after children. This year, Ofsted will ask local authorities to submit information on the placements for each child together with the unique identifier number for each placement on a voluntary basis.
24. Currently, local authorities submit their looked after children statutory data collection at the end of May. This includes detailed information on all children that they have placed whether inside or outside their local area. Ofsted is proposing that the unique identifier number for each placement is also collected and submitted through the statutory data collection.
25. Information on services commissioned from private and voluntary sector providers will be used alongside other evidence to inform the assessment grade, and will not stand alone as a single deciding factor. Further, local authorities will not be disadvantaged by the inclusion of private and voluntary provision within their local area if they are not making use of this provision. It should be noted that the quality of independent social care provision in the local authority's area will have less impact than the quality of local authority purchased services.

Time periods covered

26. The performance profile gives information about findings from Ofsted inspection and regulation across several years and shows year-on-year trends. This provides a wider view of the quality of services, settings and institutions overall than reporting on those inspected during the past year. Many inspection cycles are three years in length. While it is recognised that services and settings will have drawn up plans and undertaken actions to bring about improvements, the impact cannot be confirmed until a subsequent inspection has taken place.
27. Where a setting, service or institution has been inspected more than once in the full period, the most recent inspection finding is included in layer one of the performance profile. However, it is also possible to see earlier judgement grades in the lower layers of the performance profile to assess how well services have improved when considering any overall trend (see Annex B).

28. Inspection findings in Block A of the August 2011 performance profile will normally be the cut-off point for the 2011 annual children's services assessment. Exceptions are as follows.
- Ofsted will consider evidence up to the point of publication of the assessment where there are any concerns regarding safeguarding. For example, if an autumn inspection of safeguarding and looked after children services or the annual unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements raises concerns, these will be reflected in the annual assessment for 2011.
 - Inspections of all education establishments that take place in July 2011 will be taken into account whether the report is published or not. Consequently, these inspections may not show in the August performance profile.
 - Inspections of children's homes, fostering services and adoption services that take place in July and August 2011 will normally be taken into account whether the report is published or not. Consequently, these inspections may not show in the August 2011 performance profile.
29. Given the exceptions above, layer 1 of the performance profile published alongside the assessment for 2011 and uploaded on Ofsted's website may not necessarily reflect the most recent inspection judgements.
30. A new inspection framework for children's homes came into effect from 1 April 2011. The judgements for overall effectiveness, outcomes for children and young people, and safeguarding children and young people are now based on revised criteria. Although these judgements are not identical to those in the previous framework, they are included in the performance profile in the same way under the 'overall effectiveness', 'enjoying and achieving' and 'staying safe' categories. Local authorities and children's services HMI are aware of the change in the framework and the different criteria underpinning these judgements.

Performance bands

31. Block A of the performance profile uses a set of four fixed performance bands to summarise the performance of inspected and regulated services, settings and institutions. The bands are applied to the proportions judged to be good or better for overall effectiveness over the period covered in the performance profile. Block A also provides details of the proportion of settings or services judged adequate or inadequate, and the number of inspections undertaken.
32. All children and young people should have access to good or better quality services and be well cared for by good providers. The inclusion of performance bands in the performance profile reflects Ofsted's commitment to helping improve outcomes for all children and young people, and acknowledges the impact of good or better services on their well-being.

33. The cut-off points for the bands are derived from analysis of the national proportions of providers, settings or services judged to be outstanding, good, adequate or inadequate following their most recent Ofsted inspection. The application of the four performance bands to the findings of inspection and regulation assists analysis and interpretation. For 2011, the cut-off points will remain as they were for 2010 (see Table 2 below). Ofsted will continue to review where the cut-off points are set to ensure they are achievable but continue to drive improvement.

Table 2: performance bands

80% of services, settings and institutions judged good or better	Dark green
65–79% judged good or better	Light green
50–64% judged good or better	Amber
Less than 50% judged good or better	Red

Block B: safeguarding and looked after children inspections; unannounced inspections of contact, referral and assessment arrangements; inspection of private fostering arrangements; and evaluation of serious case reviews

34. Reflecting their importance as key services, Block B of the performance profile includes: the findings of the unannounced inspections of contact, referral and assessment arrangements for children in need and for children who may be in need of protection; the findings of inspections of safeguarding and looked after children services; and the evaluations of serious case reviews that have taken place since 2007.
35. Where an unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements has taken place and identified one or more areas for priority action, the annual children’s services assessment is likely to be ‘performs poorly’.
36. The overall effectiveness judgement of the inspection of safeguarding and looked after children services overrides findings from a previous unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements. Where the judgement of the inspection of either safeguarding or services for looked after children is inadequate, the annual children’s services assessment is likely to be ‘performs poorly’. Where the overall effectiveness judgement of the inspection of safeguarding and looked after children services is no better than adequate, the children’s services assessment is unlikely to be ‘performs excellently’.
37. Where an inspection of safeguarding and looked after children services has not taken place, inspectors will take into account evidence from both the latest unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements, and

any historical evidence from a joint area review that took place after 1 April 2007 (blocks 12 to 21) in coming to their judgement.

38. A number of local authorities were judged to be performing poorly in their 2010 children's services assessment because of an inadequate judgement for safeguarding in their inspection of safeguarding and looked after children services. For these local authorities, where the safeguarding and services for looked after children report was published before and including 17 December 2010, Ofsted may conduct a re-inspection of safeguarding arrangements. Ofsted has written to all local authorities in this category explaining the evidence it will consider in coming to a view as to whether to re-inspect or not.
39. For a re-inspection of safeguarding and/or services for looked after children, the overall effectiveness judgements from the re-inspection will be taken into account for the children's services assessment. Where overall effectiveness has been judged to be adequate or good, this will override the inadequate judgement of the previous inspection of safeguarding and/or services for looked after children. However, even with a good overall effectiveness judgement, it is unlikely that coming from an inadequate position, a children's services assessment will move two grades (for example, from 'performs poorly' to 'performs well') from one annual children's services assessment to the next, unless well established and sustained improvement in safeguarding can be clearly evidenced.
40. Where inspection finds safeguarding and/or services for looked after children to be inadequate, and this is followed by an unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements, whether or not a priority action is identified, the annual children's services assessment will remain 'performs poorly'. This will remain the case until safeguarding and/or services for looked after children are re-inspected and judged to be at least adequate.

Block C: the impact indicators and other published data

41. The government has signalled its intention to abolish the National Indicator Set and introduce a number of impact indicators. The detail of the new indicators is yet to be finalised but these are likely to include: children and young people's readiness to progress to the next stage of their education; attainment at the age of 16 and 19; and narrowing the gap in attainment for vulnerable groups.
42. Layer 1 of Block C on the performance profile will no longer show outcomes under the Every Child Matters headings. Instead it will show validated educational performance data for 2010 for: the Early Years Foundation Stage; Key Stage 2 combined English and mathematics; five or more A* to C GCSEs including English and mathematics at Key Stage 4; and Level 3 qualifications at the age of 19. Layer 2 will expand on this information, show statistical neighbour comparators and trends over time, and include additional published data. The provisional list of indicators and comparators is shown in Annex C.

43. Ofsted will confirm the make up and format of Block C, layer 2 as soon as further information is available.
44. Should local authorities become aware of any inaccuracies in either the June or August 2011 versions of their performance profile, they should alert Ofsted to these as soon as possible by email to socialcaredatateamqueries@ofsted.gov.uk.
45. As in 2010, Ofsted has agreed that the latest unvalidated data for 2011 will be taken into account as far as possible, for example to explain significant changes in educational attainment.

Comparing performance with statistical neighbours and national figures

46. In 2011, most of the published data in Block C compares the local authority's performance against the national average or against comparator groups of similar areas (statistical neighbours).
47. For the indicators that show a strong correlation with the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index score, where appropriate, the statistical neighbours' comparator is used. Where no strong socio-economic relationship exists, the national comparison is used. This approach recognises the effect of social and economic factors in the local authority's performance. However, for educational attainment data, both the national and statistical neighbour comparators are used. The list of indicators and specific comparators used for each indicator are shown in Annex C.
48. Some indicators do not show a comparator as this is either inappropriate or adds little value, such as when the range of values across local authorities is too narrow to offer any insight, or actual numbers make banding impractical.

Updating and changing the performance profile

49. Ofsted updates the performance profile on a regular basis. Following the publication in January 2011, the next updates will be published in June and August 2011. Each update will contain the most recent validated performance data.
50. The content of the performance profile will continue to be reviewed as the implications of the government's impact indicators are clarified, as new findings become available and as additional analysis becomes possible, such as in relation to evaluating progress over time.
51. For queries that relate to any of the data in the performance profile, please email socialcaredatateamqueries@ofsted.gov.uk. For difficulties accessing the performance profile and all other queries, please email CSTeam@ofsted.gov.uk.

Using the performance profile to produce the assessment

General principles underlying the children's services assessment

52. Ofsted will continue to apply a set of principles to the performance profile to arrive at the assessment, exercising inspector judgement as required. As in 2010, meeting the minimum requirements alone does not define the grade.
53. The assessment principles will cover all three blocks. However, performance in blocks A and B will have the most impact on the overall assessment. Performance in Block C is used to supplement and inform the judgement arising from applying the principles in blocks A and B. In addition, in Block A, performance in the staying safe and enjoying and achieving outcome areas will be given particular consideration. For full details of the assessment principles please see Annex E.
54. As in 2010, when assessing educational attainment, the impact indicators and other published data in Block C will be taken into account and will include: outcomes in the Early Years Foundation Stage; results at Key Stage 2 and at higher grade GCSE; as well as qualifications at Level 3 at the age of 19 (see Annex C for further information on the relevant indicators).
55. The 'closing the gap' indicators are those for measuring: achievement of the free school meal cohort at the Early Years Foundation Stage; achievement of pupils with special educational needs at Key Stage 4; achievement of children on free school meals at Key Stage 4; and inequalities in achievement of Level 2 and 3 qualifications at the age of 19. Further analysis may be carried out, for example for children from minority ethnic groups where cohorts are large enough. Where this is the case, Ofsted will provide local authorities with this data separately to ensure transparency.

Inspector judgement

56. Inspector judgement serves to secure a fair and just assessment from careful and considered analysis of evidence. As in previous years, while all five layers of the performance profile remain central to the assessment, meeting or not meeting the minimum requirements within the assessment principles alone does not define the grade.
57. The exercise of inspector judgement can constrain or indeed raise the overall assessment because it brings into play factors that could pose risk or create unfairness in the mechanistic application of the principles. The use of inspector judgement at every stage of the assessment, from initial analysis to the final quality assurance stages, supports consistency, but also ensures that each local authority is assessed individually. Therefore, two local authorities with apparently similar performance in layer 1 of the performance profile may not always receive the same assessment grade.

58. Where inspector judgement has been used, this will be made clear in the assessment letter. Some, but not necessarily all, of the key considerations underpinning the application of inspector judgement to the assessment principles include:
- the proportion of inadequate and satisfactory provision for children and young people in an area
 - inadequate provision for vulnerable groups of children, such as for those in pupil referral units
 - the proximity of the percentage of good or better provision to the cut-off point of an adjacent performance band
 - the quality of schools, including findings from monitoring visits of inadequate schools
 - improvement or deterioration in educational standards
 - detailed findings from the annual unannounced inspections of contact, referral and assessment arrangements and from full inspections of safeguarding and looked after children services.

Calculating the super groups

59. If a local authority does not have all seven super groups because, for example, there are no children's homes in the area, the calculation will be adjusted to ensure fair application of the assessment principles.
60. In calculating the percentage of good and outstanding providers, those in each of the 22 groups of inspected services are weighted equally.
61. For each of the groups of inspected services that contributes to a super group, the number of outstanding providers are added together to produce a single outstanding figure for that super group (the same is done for good, satisfactory and inadequate providers). These figures are then used to calculate the percentages for each of the super groups in the performance profile. It is important to note that while there are other ways of calculating the figures that weight different aspects of the performance profile, each method has its strengths and weaknesses. However, Ofsted has agreed on this single approach to ensure consistency.

Assessment grades

62. The annual assessment will use the assessment grades set out below.

Performs excellently	4	An organisation that significantly exceeds minimum requirements
Performs well	3	An organisation that exceeds minimum requirements
Performs adequately	2	An organisation that meets only minimum requirements
Performs poorly	1	An organisation that does not meet minimum requirements

User and stakeholder views

63. All Ofsted inspection frameworks and evaluation schedules give high importance to the views of children, young people and their families who are supported by, or who make use of, settings or services.
64. In line with this principle, Ofsted takes account of the views of service users in all inspections and assesses the extent to which their views, particularly about service satisfaction, are considered in reviewing and improving provision.

The children's services assessment letter

65. In 2011, the children's services assessment letter has been reviewed to take account of the demise of the National Indicator Set, the end of the requirement for a Children and Young People's Plan, and to reduce demands on local authorities.
66. Within Ofsted, all local authorities will be subject to a full assessment and the same processes in terms of challenge, consistency and quality assurance prior to notification of the assessment grade. Local authorities will receive a letter using a standard format confirming the children's service assessment grade in November 2011. For local authorities where there has been little change since the 2010 assessment, the text will provide a brief summary explanation for the grade awarded and identify the major strengths and areas for further development that have influenced it. Where inspectors' analysis shows there has been improvement or deterioration in children's services over the year, the letter will have more detail and provide further explanation to support the assessment grade. In all cases, prospects for improvement will not be included.

Arrangements for 2011

Contact between Ofsted and local authorities

67. Ofsted is committed to improving communication with local authorities by ensuring prompt response to queries and by creating opportunities for dialogue about the children's services assessment arrangements and outcomes. The arrangements for 2011 take account of feedback gathered through an evaluation questionnaire to local authorities and through discussions with representatives of the Association of Directors of Children's Services. The designated link HMI remains Ofsted's single point of contact for the local authority. Inspectors carrying out the children's services assessment receive the link HMI's 'note of visit' and have occasional discussions about emerging themes and issues from Ofsted's inspection and regulatory work. However, the link HMI is not formally involved in the analysis and evaluation processes that determine the children's services assessment.

Children's services assessment links with local authorities

68. Ofsted is mindful of the need to minimise the demands of inspection on local authorities and to avoid unnecessary meetings and additional requests for documentation. The analysis of available evidence leading to the judgements about the quality of children's services in a local area will usually be conducted without necessarily needing discussions with local authority officers or an on-site visit. The evidence used for the children's services assessment is listed in Annex D.

69. Nevertheless, Ofsted is committed to facilitating contact with local authorities where needed, as detailed below.

- At anytime, if the local authority has a query or wishes to talk to an inspector about the children's services assessment, this will be accommodated.
- Following receipt of their draft children's services assessment letter on 23 September 2011, local authorities can contact Ofsted to ask questions, to resolve any factual inaccuracies or other issues at an early stage, or to request a visit. Where a telephone conversation or visit is agreed this will take place between 30 September 2011 and no later than 14 October 2011.
- Where a local authority requests a meeting with Ofsted, arrangements will be made for both the link HMI and the children's services HMI to visit the local authority together as far as possible. A brief record of the visit will be kept and sent to the local authority.

70. In all cases, queries regarding the children's services assessment should be raised by emailing CSTeam@ofsted.gov.uk or telephoning Sue Leaver on 020 7421 6666, who will keep a record of all requests and ensure that an appropriate response is provided.

Quality assurance

71. Quality assurance provides confidence that the assessment process and the evidence used are of the quality needed and expected by users and providers, and indeed by Ofsted itself. As part of this, Ofsted will ensure inspectors are suitably trained and experienced and that each inspector is responsible for ensuring that the assessment is conducted according to the agreed procedures and to a good standard. This establishes quality assurance firmly throughout the assessment process.
72. Rigorous quality assurance procedures will secure a consistent and secure approach across all assessments. Relevant procedures will include critical reading, moderation, consistency and challenge panels involving peer inspectors, senior inspectors and directors with an appropriate range of expertise. All draft and final assessment grades are considered and signed off by a panel of directors before being sent to local authorities.
73. Inspector judgement is applied throughout the assessment process, not solely by the inspector carrying out the initial assessment, but by all within Ofsted who are involved throughout the quality assurance process, in order to ensure that assessments are fair and consistent.

Factual accuracy check and appeals

74. The local authority will have five working days to check the draft children's services assessment letter for factual accuracy. Any concerns regarding factual accuracy should be raised as soon as possible and no later than 5.00pm on 30 September 2011 by contacting CSTeam@ofsted.gov.uk.
75. In most circumstances, queries about the assessment can be dealt with without recourse to the appeals stage. Where queries are not resolved in this way, local authorities may decide to lodge a written appeal against the children's services assessment grade.
76. All appeals against the children's services assessment grade should be made in writing. Appeals must be received by 5.00pm on 17 October 2011 and sent to Sue Leaver at sue.leaver@ofsted.gov.uk.
77. Local authorities may send an accompanying statement in support of their appeal at the same time as the appeal letter. The statement should focus on the significance afforded to, or any perceived inaccuracies in, the evidence used in support of the assessment. It is not an opportunity for the local authority to enter new evidence. Statements should not exceed 2000 words.

78. If a local authority decides to make an appeal, the process will be as follows.
- Each appeal and any accompanying statement will be scrutinised by an independent evaluator. This evaluator will be one of Her Majesty's Inspectors who undertakes the annual assessment of children's services but who has not taken part in the assessment process for the particular local authority under consideration.
 - The scrutiny will consist of consideration of the local authority's statement against the available evidence that has been used in arriving at the draft assessment grade.
 - The independent evaluator will report their findings to a panel of senior managers within Ofsted who have not previously been involved in the assessment process for the particular local authority. Members of the panel will read and evaluate the statement from the local authority in the light of the evidence and the response of the independent evaluator. A final judgement on the assessment grade will be made, and the local authority will be notified of the outcome of any appeal no later than Friday 4 November 2011.
79. Following the consideration of any appeals, the final children's services assessment for all local authorities will be approved by HMCI or a nominated representative.

Complaints procedure

80. The appeals procedure is the final stage of the 2011 children's services assessment. If a local authority wishes to make a complaint about any part of the children's services assessment process they should follow the Ofsted complaints procedure. Details of the complaints procedure are available at www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/070080. Complaints should be made in writing and addressed to:

The National Complaints Team
Ofsted – National Business Unit
2nd Floor
Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

Or email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

Publishing the children's services assessment

81. The children's services assessment letter for each local authority will be published on Ofsted's website on 8 November 2011.

Further information

82. These arrangements will be reviewed further in 2012 as appropriate.
83. We hope that you find this guidance useful. If you have any queries about the children's services assessment please contact Sue Leaver at sue.leaver@ofsted.gov.uk or on 020 7421 6666.

Annex A. Layer 1 example of the performance profile (summary)

Local area children's services performance profile: summary profile				Local area:	Kingsville City Council		
				Reporting date:	Quarter 9: XX June 2011		
Inspected services, settings and institutions							
% of providers judged outstanding, good, satisfactory, inadequate for Overall Effectiveness			Total number inspected	% outstanding / good / satisfactory / inadequate			
Number inspected	% outstanding / good / satisfactory / inadequate						
		% good or outstanding			% good or outstanding		
Childminder	321	59	36	2	62%		
Childcare – domestic	3	100			100%		
Childcare – non-domestic	104	66	24	1	75%		
Children's centre	3	33	67		33%		
Nursery and EYFS primary	6	17	33	50	50%		
Primary school	69	43	42	7	91%		
Maintained secondary	10	10	60	30	70%		
Academy and CTC	8	75		25	75%		
Secondary sixth form	7	30	30	10	60%		
General FE and tertiary	4	50		50	50%		
Sixth form college	1	100			100%		
Ind. specialist college	2	100			0%		
Maintained special	5	100			100%		
Non-LA & ind. special	2	50	50		50%		
Sec. special sixth form	2	50	50		100%		
Pupil referral unit	4	25	50	25	25%		
Residential spec. school	4	25	50	25	25%		
LA fostering agency	1	100			100%		
LA adoption agency	1	100			100%		
P & V foster & adoption	1	100			0%		
LA children's home	6	100			100%		
P & V children's home	3	67	33		67%		
Click here for further detail and ECM judgements							
Safeguarding and looked after children inspections, including unannounced inspections and serious case reviews							
Annual unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements	Jul-09	Area for priority action:		No			
Inspection of safeguarding	Apr-10	Adequate					
Inspection of services for looked after children	Apr-10	Good					
Serious case reviews evaluated as adequate or better (out of total number of cases)	01/04/07 - XX/06/10	2 out of 2					
Joint area review	N/A	Safeguarding:		N/A			
Private Fostering arrangements	Jun-08	Adequate		N/A			
Educational overview - click here for details on further contextual data							
	Trend:	2007	2008	2009	2010	1 year improvement	4 year improvement
EYFS	LA	46	46	47	58	+11%	+12%
	NAT	47.9	51.6	53.2	56.9	+3.7%	+9%
Key stage 2	LA	72	74	73	76	+3%	+4%
	NAT	71	73.1	72.1	72.8	+1.8%	+1.8%
GCSE 5 A* to C including English and Maths	LA	50.6	52.6	56.1	58.7	+2.6%	+8.1%
	NAT	46.6	48.5	50.6	53.9	+3.3%	+7.3%
L3 at age 19	LA	47.5	47.6	49.2	n/a		+1.7%
	NAT	46.5	47.4	49	n/a		+2.5%
Children's services assessment							
2009			Performs well				
2010			Performs well				
2011			Available in November 2011				

Annex B. Tiers of information included in the performance profile

Tier	Local authority or provider level data	Block A: inspected services settings and institutions	Block B: safeguarding/looked after children inspections, unannounced inspections, and serious case reviews	Block C: educational attainment and other published data
1 – Summary profile	Local authority level	Overall effectiveness grades for full period, based on latest grade for each provider and super group (see performance profile for periods).	<p>Inspection outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> contact, referral and assessment arrangements safeguarding and looked after children services joint area reviews evaluations of serious case reviews private fostering arrangements. 	Educational attainment and trends for the Early Years Foundation Stage, Key Stage 2, higher grade GCSEs including English and mathematics, and Level 3 qualifications at age 19.
2 – Latest data for the local area	Local authority level	Overall effectiveness and Every Child Matters grades for full period, based on latest grade for each provider (see performance profile for periods).	n/a	Educational attainment and other published data for the most recent period available to Ofsted.
3 – Historical data for the local area	Local authority level	Overall effectiveness and Every Child Matters grades for the individual financial years within the full period (see performance profile for periods). Some providers may be included more than once if inspected more than once in the period. Includes closed providers.	n/a	Data for each year or period individually.

Tier	Local authority or provider level data	Block A: inspected services settings and institutions	Block B: safeguarding/looked after children inspections, unannounced inspections, and serious case reviews	Block C: educational attainment and other published data
4 – Provider, setting or service level data	Each provider, setting or service inspected in the area, with the relevant grade	Overall effectiveness and Every Child Matters grades for the full period (see performance profile for periods). Some providers may be included more than once if inspected more than once within the period. Includes closed providers.	n/a	n/a
5 – Individual inspection reports	Provider, setting or service	Link to published reports for a range of provider types.	n/a	n/a

Annex C. Block C indicators and comparators

The appropriate comparator used for each indicator

Indicator	Appropriate comparator
Percentage of primary pupils who have school lunches	Similar areas
Percentage of secondary pupils who have school lunches	Similar areas
Percentage of children in the reception year who are obese	Similar areas
Percentage of children in Year 6 who are obese	Similar areas
Percentage of referrals to children's social care going on to initial assessment	National
Percentage of initial assessments for children's social care carried out within seven working days of referral	National
Percentage of core assessments for children's social care that were carried out within 35 working days of their commencement	National
Percentage of child protection plans lasting two years or more	National
Percentage of children becoming the subject of a child protection plan for a second or subsequent time	National
Percentage of child protection plans which were reviewed within required timescales	Not banded
Percentage of looked after children placed for adoption within 12 months of the decision that the child should be placed for adoption	National
Percentage of looked after children who had three or more placements in 12 months, year ending 31 March	National
Percentage of looked after children in placement for two or more years, year ending 31 March	National
Percentage of looked after children cases reviewed within timescales	National

The appropriate comparator used for each indicator

Indicator	Appropriate comparator
Achievement of at least 78 points across the Early Years Foundation Stage with at least six in each of the scales in personal social and emotional development, and communication, language and literacy	Similar areas and national
Progression by two levels in English between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2	Similar areas and national
Progression by 2 levels in mathematics between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2	Similar areas and national
Achievement at Level 4 or above in both English and mathematics at Key Stage 2 (threshold)	Similar areas and national
Percentage of looked after children reaching Level 4 in English at Key Stage 2	Similar areas and national
Percentage of looked after children reaching Level 4 in mathematics at Key Stage 2	Similar areas and national
Key Stage 2 attainment for minority ethnic groups: Gypsy Roma Traveller group	Not banded
Key Stage 2 attainment for minority ethnic groups: any other White group	Not banded
Key Stage 2 attainment for minority ethnic groups: Black Caribbean group	Not banded
Key Stage 2 attainment for minority ethnic groups: White and Black Caribbean group	Not banded
Key Stage 2 attainment for minority ethnic groups: Black African and White & Black African group	Not banded
Key Stage 2 attainment for minority ethnic groups: any other Black group	Not banded
Key Stage 2 attainment for minority ethnic groups: Pakistani group	Not banded
Key Stage 2 attainment for minority ethnic groups: White British group	Not banded
Key Stage 2 attainment for minority ethnic groups: Irish group	Not banded

The appropriate comparator used for each indicator

Indicator	Appropriate comparator
Key Stage 2 attainment for minority ethnic groups: White and Asian group	Not banded
Key Stage 2 attainment for minority ethnic groups: any other mixed group	Not banded
Key Stage 2 attainment for minority ethnic groups: Indian group	Not banded
Key Stage 2 attainment for minority ethnic groups: Bangladeshi group	Not banded
Key Stage 2 attainment for minority ethnic groups: any other Asian group	Not banded
Key Stage 2 attainment for minority ethnic groups: Chinese group	Not banded
Key Stage 2 attainment for minority ethnic groups: any other ethnic group	Not banded
Achievement of five or more A* to C grades at GCSE or equivalent, including English and mathematics (threshold)	Similar areas and national
Percentage of looked after children achieving five A* to C GCSEs (or equivalent) at Key Stage 4 (including English and mathematics)	Similar areas and national
Achievement of two or more A* to C grades in science at GCSE or equivalent	Similar areas and national
Key Stage 4 attainment for minority ethnic groups: Gypsy Roma Traveller group	Not banded
Key Stage 4 attainment for minority ethnic groups: any other White group	Not banded
Key Stage 4 attainment for minority ethnic groups: Black Caribbean group	Not banded
Key Stage 4 attainment for minority ethnic groups: White and Black Caribbean group	Not banded
Key Stage 4 attainment for minority ethnic groups: Black African and White & Black African group	Not banded
Key Stage 4 attainment for minority ethnic groups: any other Black group	Not banded
Key Stage 4 attainment for minority ethnic groups: Pakistani group	Not banded

The appropriate comparator used for each indicator

Indicator	Appropriate comparator
Key Stage 4 attainment for minority ethnic groups: White British group	Not banded
Key Stage 4 attainment for minority ethnic groups: Irish group	Not banded
Key Stage 4 attainment for minority ethnic groups: White and Asian group	Not banded
Key Stage 4 attainment for minority ethnic groups: any other mixed group	Not banded
Key Stage 4 attainment for minority ethnic groups: Indian group	Not banded
Key Stage 4 attainment for minority ethnic groups: Bangladeshi group	Not banded
Key Stage 4 attainment for minority ethnic groups: any other Asian group	Not banded
Key Stage 4 attainment for minority ethnic groups: Chinese group	Not banded
Key Stage 4 attainment for minority ethnic groups: any other ethnic group	Not banded
Secondary schools judged as having good or outstanding standards of behaviour	Not banded
Secondary school persistent absence rate	Similar areas
Under 18 conception rate	National
Participation of 17- year-olds in education or training	Similar areas
16–18-year-olds who are not in education, training or employment (NEET)	Similar areas
Percentage of care leavers in employment, education or training	National
Achievement of a Level 2 qualification by the age of 19	Similar areas and national
Achievement of a Level 3 qualification by the age of 19	Similar areas and national

The appropriate comparator used for each indicator

Indicator	Appropriate comparator
Young people from low income backgrounds progressing to higher education	Not banded
Percentage of care leavers in suitable accommodation	National

Annex D. Evidence used for the children's services assessment

- Ofsted local authority performance profile
- Notes of Ofsted link HMI visits
- Information from substantiated complaints received by Ofsted, including through whistleblowing
- Judgements and evidence from Ofsted assessments, inspection, monitoring visits and surveys
- Inspection evidence from the other inspectorates, for example, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation inspections of youth offending services
- Information from the local authority website, for example, local scrutiny reports, consultation arrangements, any recent review and/or any existing self-evaluation
- Information from local authorities on services commissioned from private and voluntary sector providers.

Annex E. Summary of the assessment principles

General principles underlying the children's services assessment

- These principles aim to be simple, transparent and easy to apply.
- Outlined below are the minimum requirements for each grade which cover all three blocks. Meeting or not meeting the minimum requirements alone does not define the grade. The assessment will involve the application of inspector judgement.
- The assessment will take account of the mix and balance of performance across different areas of inspected services and settings. It will also take account of the performance of services commissioned by the local authority that are located within and outside the local area.
- Performance within Block A² and Block B³ will have the most impact on the overall assessment. Where a local authority has been judged inadequate for either safeguarding or for looked after children services as a result of a full inspection, or received an area for priority action in an unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements, it is likely that the overall judgement for children's services will be 'performs poorly'.
- Where inadequate safeguarding and/or looked after children services have been re-inspected and overall effectiveness has been judged at least adequate, these judgements will inform the children's services assessment. However, it is unlikely that the assessment grade will move from 'performs poorly' to 'performs well' unless well established and sustained improvement in safeguarding can be clearly evidenced..
- Performance in Block C⁴ is used to supplement the judgement arising from the assessment based on blocks A and B. Education outcomes for children from early years to those aged 19 will be given specific consideration.
- Many inspection cycles are three years in length, and sometimes longer. The most recent inspection judgement is used in making the assessment.
- It should be noted that:
 - very large majority means 80% or more
 - large majority means 65%–79%
 - majority means 50%–64%
 - minority means less than 50%.

² The outcomes of inspected services and settings

³ Inspections of safeguarding and services for looked after children, annual unannounced inspections, relevant joint area reviews and findings from serious case reviews

⁴ Published data including any agreed impact indicators

Performs excellently

Block A
Performance, in terms of overall effectiveness, is in one of the top two bands (that is rated good or outstanding) for at least six out of the seven super groups of inspected services and settings, and none is likely to be in the red band. and The very large majority of the 22 inspection groups of services and settings is likely to be in one of the top two bands for each of the enjoying and achieving and staying safe outcome areas.
Block B
The most recent unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements for children in need identifies no area(s) for priority action. ⁵ Where a full inspection of safeguarding and looked after children has taken place ⁶ (or a joint area review post-April 2007), whether before or after any unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements, the overall effectiveness judgements must be good or better.
Block C
(This will supplement the judgement arising from the assessment based on blocks A and B. Education outcomes against appropriate comparators will be given specific consideration.) Performance is at least in line with the appropriate comparator/s for a very large majority of published indicators. and either Gaps ⁷ in educational attainment for key vulnerable groups have narrowed between the most recent and previous years. or A very large majority of published indicators for educational attainment ⁸ and progress are at least in line with appropriate comparators.

⁵ An area for priority action is identified as a result of an unannounced inspection of safeguarding where the safety of children in need is not assured.

⁶ Where a recent full inspection of safeguarding has not taken place, consideration will be given to the post-April 2007 joint area review grade for safeguarding.

⁷ The 'closing the gap' indicators are those for measuring: achievement of the free school meal cohort at the Early Years Foundation Stage; pupils with special educational needs at Key Stage 4; achievement of children on free school meals at Key Stage 4; and inequalities in achievement of Level 2 and 3 qualifications at age 19. Further analysis may be carried out, for example for children from minority ethnic groups where cohorts are large enough. Where this is the case, Ofsted will provide local authorities with this data separately to ensure transparency.

⁸ As in 2010, when assessing educational attainment, the published indicators and other data in Block C will be taken into account and will include outcomes in the Early Years Foundation Stage, results at Key Stage 2 and at higher grade GCSE as well as qualifications at Level 3 at age 19 (see Annex B for further information on the relevant indicators).

Performs well

Block A
Performance, in terms of overall effectiveness, is in one of the top two bands for at least four out of the seven super groups of inspected services and settings, and this must include at least two out of the four blocks for universal provision. ⁹ and The large majority of the 22 inspection groups of services and settings is likely to be rated in one of the top two bands for each of the enjoying and achieving, and staying safe outcome areas.
Block B
The most recent unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements for children in need identifies no area(s) for priority action. Where a full inspection of safeguarding and looked after children has taken place ¹⁰ (or a joint area review post-April 2007), whether before or after any unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements, the overall effectiveness judgements must be adequate or better. Where a re-inspection of safeguarding and/or looked after children services has taken place and the judgements are adequate or better, the children's services assessment is unlikely to be judged as 'performs well' unless well established and sustained improvement in safeguarding can be clearly evidenced.
Block C
(This will supplement the judgement arising from the assessment based on blocks A and B. Education outcomes against appropriate comparators will be given specific consideration.)
Performance is at least in line with the appropriate comparator/s for a large majority of published indicators. and either Gaps in educational attainment for key vulnerable groups have narrowed between the most recent and previous years. or A large majority of published indicators for educational attainment and progress are at least in line with appropriate comparators.

⁹ Universal services include the inspection groupings for early years, nursery/primary, secondary and post-16.

¹⁰ Where a recent full inspection of safeguarding has not taken place, consideration will be given to the post-April 2007 joint area review grade for safeguarding.

Performs adequately

Block A
Performance in terms of the overall effectiveness judgement is in one of the top two bands for at least three out of the seven super groups of inspected services and settings, which must include at least two out of the four blocks for universal provision. and The majority of the 22 inspection groups of services and settings <u>is</u> likely to be in one of the top two bands for each of the enjoying and achieving and staying safe outcome areas.
Block B
The most recent unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements of children in need identifies no area(s) for priority action. Where a full inspection of safeguarding and looked after children has taken place ¹¹ (or a joint area review post-April 2007), whether before or after any unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements, the overall effectiveness judgements must be adequate or better. Where a re-inspection of safeguarding and/or looked after children services has taken place the judgements must be adequate or better.
Block C
(This will supplement the judgement arising from the assessment based on blocks A and B. Education outcomes against appropriate comparators will be given specific consideration.)
Performance is at least in line with the appropriate comparator/s for a majority of published indicators. and either Gaps in educational attainment for key vulnerable groups have narrowed between the most recent and previous years. or A majority of published indicators for educational attainment and progress are at least in line with appropriate comparators.

¹¹ Where a recent full inspection of safeguarding has not taken place, consideration will be given to the post-April 2007 joint area review grade for safeguarding.

Performs poorly

Block A
Performance in terms of the overall effectiveness judgement is in one of the top two bands for no more than two of the seven super groups of inspected services and settings. It is likely that three of the four super groups for universal services are not better than adequate. and It is likely that two or more of the seven super groups of inspected services and settings will be in the red band.
Block B
The most recent unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements for children in need identifies one or more area(s) for priority action. or Where a full inspection of safeguarding and looked after children has taken place ¹² (or a joint area review post-April 2007) and the judgement for either safeguarding or looked after children is inadequate. or Where a re-inspection of safeguarding and/or looked after children's services judges that services for safeguarding and/or looked after children remain inadequate.
Block C
(This will supplement the judgement arising from the assessment based on blocks A and B. Education outcomes against appropriate comparators will be given specific consideration.)
Performance is below the appropriate comparator/s for a majority of published indicators. and Published indicators show that gaps in educational attainment for key vulnerable groups have not narrowed between the most recent and previous years. or A minority of published indicators for educational attainment and progress are in line with appropriate comparators.

¹² Where a recent full inspection of safeguarding has not taken place, consideration will be given to the post-April 2007 joint area review grade for safeguarding.