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Ofsted

1. What is the innovation plan?

This document is one of a suite of plans on innovation and regulation being published by UK regulators in spring 2017 as part of their commitment to better regulation.

The intention is that, together, these plans will provide 'assurance that the UK regulatory framework is working effectively to support innovation and disruptive business models – and that regulators are using innovation to deliver their own work more effectively, and to reduce burdens on business.'

Each regulator's plan covers, at a high level, the following areas:

- how new technology is likely to shape the sectors being regulated and how legislation and enforcement frameworks could adapt
- how regulators could better use new technologies to generate efficiency savings and reduce burdens on those they regulate

Ofsted will seek the views of those we inspect and regulate on the matters included in this plan in order to continue to improve the way we work.

2. How services might use innovation and technology and how regulation might adapt to changes

The ways that the services we inspect and regulate use technology are varied, but some patterns are emerging:

- service providers and users increasingly expect to carry out transactions (such as paying fees), get information and communicate online and on social media
- an increasing amount of data about those who we regulate and inspect is electronic and requires different degrees of accessibility and security; this provides both opportunities and challenges for providers and Ofsted in how we hold, share and extract data
- assistive and learning technologies will continue to develop to help those with disabilities or to help with learning and assessment; use of e-learning and e-assessment is already growing rapidly and inspection will have to adapt to these changes
- future technological developments may allow Ofsted to monitor the provision of services and relevant records more remotely, with less burden on providers, but direct observation will always be an important part of inspection

3. Better use of new technologies

Over the next two years, Ofsted will use new technologies to reduce burdens, share data and information, and generate efficiency savings by:

- improving our online systems to make it easier for childcare and children's social care providers to register with Ofsted, make any necessary payments and keep their information up to date
- making better use of social media to help those we inspect to understand how we work and what we do and don't expect from them
- reviewing how we use technology to seek the views of those we inspect and regulate, and those using their services, during inspections
- keeping under review our risk analysis arrangements and the available sources of data in order to ensure that inspections can be targeted in a proportionate way

Over the next 2 years, Ofsted will make its information and data more accessible by:

- making our inspection reports and 'view' sites simpler and easier to use
- making it easier for third party organisations (such as house-moving and local information sites) to use our published information and data
- looking for opportunities to share information with other parts of government to reduce administrative burdens while acting in accordance with relevant data sharing agreements and legislation

Over the next 2 years, Ofsted will gain efficiency savings from the above actions and will use new technologies to gain further savings by:

- improving the way inspectors access pre-inspection information
- improving the way we capture and collate evidence during inspections and in the production of reports
- developing processes for storing electronic evidence from inspection and using that information to enable greater insight internally and externally

4. Current developments

4.1 Schools inspection

We are:

- working with the Department for Education (DfE), the Education Funding Agency (EFA) and regional schools commissioners to share relevant information about schools and their governance structures and to minimise accountability burdens placed on them
- using online methods to gather and summarise the views of pupils and staff during inspections
- keeping under review how we might use technology to improve how we use data in risk analysis and predict decline in the quality of schools
- engaging with DfE in a data science project to explore the possibility of using near-realtime data and information from social media and other sources to predict and prevent decline in school performance

4.2 Early years regulation and inspection

We are:

- continuing to develop online processes, for instance making it easier and quicker to register as a childcare provider (such as being able to track applications in detail)
- seeking to extend the process of registration and regulation online and improve self-service processes for updating contact details

4.3 Social care regulation and inspection

We are:

- improving processes for self-service, such as enabling providers to update provider contact details or track their application online
- developing the possibility of direct debit for fee payment
- improving our collation of intelligence about individual local authorities - gathering intelligence will inform risk analysis and support proportionate and timely inspection

4.4 Further education and skills inspection

We are:

- developing digital ways of communicating with learners, employers and staff during inspection to gather their views and so limit the disruption to businesses during inspection (such as using webinars to communicate with learners)
- using webinars to communicate information about inspection to providers and so avoid the need for travelling to events
- continuing to develop ways of sharing relevant provider information with government partners (DfE, Skills Funding Agency (SFA)/EFA)

Services and information

Benefits

Births, deaths, marriages and care

Business and self-employed

Childcare and parenting

Citizenship and living in the UK

Crime, justice and the law

Disabled people

Driving and transport

Education and learning

Employing people

Environment and countryside

Housing and local services

Money and tax

Passports, travel and living abroad

Visas and immigration

Working, jobs and pensions

Departments and policy

How government works

Departments

Worldwide

Policies

Publications

Announcements