

Inspection handbook: inspections of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers

This guidance is to assist inspectors when they conduct inspections of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers .

It should be read alongside the 'Framework and evaluation schedule for the inspections of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers (the single inspection framework)'.

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Section 1. Introduction

1. This guidance is to assist inspectors when they conduct inspections of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers in local authorities in England. It should be read alongside the 'Framework for the inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers'.
2. Local authorities can use this guidance to understand how inspections and reviews will be conducted. They may also find it useful when carrying out their self-evaluations or improvement planning. Ofsted publishes all guidance for inspectors.
3. Inspections are carried out according to the published inspection framework. This guidance document sets out the principles of inspection and the code of conduct, which all inspectors know and apply.
4. Section 4: Supplementary Guidance has been amended with effect from September 2015. The amendments take account of arrangements made by local authorities to delegate some or all of their functions to a third party provider. References in this guidance to functions that have been delegated are to functions that have either been delegated voluntarily by a local authority¹ or where directions to delegate local authority functions have been given by the Secretary of State.² The amendments clarify what is expected of a third party provider acting as agent for a local authority and the ongoing responsibility of the local authority.
5. Where a local authority has made arrangements to delegate all or part of its functions, the inspection is still an inspection of the local authority – the third party is acting as agent for the local authority.³ Where the Secretary of State has given a direction to delegate functions then, by virtue of section 497A(4AA) Education Act 1996, any reference to a local authority is to be read as a reference to the person by whom the function is exercised.

¹ Under Part 1 of the Children and Young Persons Act 2008 (CYPA) local authorities may make arrangements with a body corporate for the discharge by that body of some or all of the relevant care functions of the authority. Relevant care functions are those functions set out in section 1(2) of the CYPA and regulation 3 of the Children and Young Persons Act 2008 (Relevant Care Functions) (England) Regulations 2014. Relevant care functions do not include those functions set out in section 2 of the CYPA. A body corporate which is carried on for profit may not be a party to an arrangement for the discharge of a function set out in regulation 3 of the 2014 Regulations.

² Under section 497A of the Education Act 1996 the Secretary of State may direct a local authority to contract out its social services functions relating to children or transfer those functions to a nominee.

³ For the purposes of section 136 of the EIA references to the performance of a local authority of any function include references to anything done in any place by another person pursuant to arrangements made by the authority in the performance of the function (section 142(2)(b) of the EIA)

6. This guidance is designed to support inspections of the highest quality. It aims to provide for consistency in inspections and reviews with the flexibility to respond to the individual circumstances of each local authority. As such, it is not a set of inflexible rules, but a guide on the processes that normally govern inspections.

Section 2. Inspection of local authorities

Scheduling and team deployment

7. Local authorities will be notified of the inspection the day before inspectors arrive on site. When scheduling inspections, we will take account of: previous inspection outcomes; information from other sources, such as whistleblowing, complaints, serious case reviews; other inspections carried out in the local area by Ofsted and/or partner inspectorates; and any other relevant information.
8. Inspections will not usually commence in August or over the Christmas and New Year period.
9. The size of the inspection team will vary according to the population and geography of the local authority. A standard size local authority will usually be inspected by a team of six inspectors experienced in the delivery and inspection of social care (including the lead and deputy lead) and one inspector experienced in the inspection of education. In larger local authorities we will deploy an extra social care inspector. The inspection team will usually be on site for nine working days across a four-week period.

Week One	Week Two	Week Three	Week Four
Small inspection team on site Tuesday to Thursday (3 days)	Inspection team off site	Full inspection team on site Tuesday to Thursday (3 days)	Full inspection team on site Tuesday to Thursday (3 days)

10. A smaller inspection team will be deployed in City of London, Rutland and Isles of Scilly. The size of the team will be bespoke to their size and most recent data.
11. Ofsted may adjust the size of any inspection team to take account of contextual factors at the time of the inspection. This decision will be made by the senior manager who is responsible for the inspection programme.
12. Standard and large inspection teams may include an additional inspector who is shadowing the work of their colleagues. Any activity they undertake will be for the purpose of training and development, or to evaluate the inspection framework and methodology – they will not undertake any inspection work independently or gather evidence that will inform the inspection judgements.

Deferrals

13. As inspectors arrive on site within one day of notifying the local authority of the inspection, they are likely to encounter a variety of complex situations. However, inspections will not normally be deferred. Illness or non-availability of an inspector must be reported immediately to the Ofsted manager with lead responsibility. This will not usually result in rescheduling of the inspection, as a replacement inspector will be sought.
14. Inspections will only be deferred in exceptional circumstances. Staff absence, including the absence of the Director of Children's Services (DCS), is not a reason for deferral. Deferrals will only be made where there is a strong case that, if the inspection went ahead, it might place staff at risk, or if inspectors are severely restricted in their ability to gather secure evidence. Such conditions might be:
- serious weather conditions that make access to sites for inspectors and staff difficult and/or dangerous
 - a power failure meaning that inspectors cannot access electronic records for a prolonged period.

Structure and overview of the inspection⁴

15. The timeframe for inspection, including preparation, on-site work and the publication of the inspection report, is set out below..

Example day of week	Working day	Activity	Who
Week minus one Thursday	-1	Preparation (off site).	Lead inspector
Week minus one Friday	0	Preparation (off site).	Lead inspector and initial inspection team
Week One Monday	1	Lead inspector notifies the DCS of the inspection by 9.30am and asks the local authority to begin to prepare the information outlined in Annex A. Preparation (off site). Team travels from home to hotel base (off-site).	Lead inspector and initial inspection team
Week One Tuesday	2	Lead inspector and initial inspection team arrive on site by 9am. Local authority makes available the first tranche of child-level data across the 10 child-	Lead inspector and initial inspection team (on site)

⁴ A separate timeline for a post monitoring re-inspection is included in section 3 of this document.

Example day of week	Working day	Activity	Who
		<p>level data fields in Table 1 of Annex A. Fields 1–7 on arrival and fields 8–11 by the end of the day.⁵ The local authority/police should also make available, on arrival, reports on children missing from home, care or education.⁶</p> <p>Lead inspector meets with the DCS/senior leaders to outline how the inspection will run.⁷</p> <p>The lead inspector:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ starts to identify the cases of children and young people that the local authority will be asked to audit. Where possible this will include up to four cases identified in week one’s inspection of the contact, referral and assessment arrangements and two cases of children looked after drawn from the list of 10 children who have most recently become looked after ■ gathers information outlined in Annex A ■ sets up a meeting with the senior nominated leads for the authority and the police regarding missing children. This meeting will happen in week one to enable the evidence from that meeting to be pursued in weeks three and four of the inspection. The list/register of children about whom the police and local authority are concerned must be available for this meeting. ■ begins to plan the remainder of the inspection. <p>The rest of the inspection team focuses on inspecting practice across the scope of the inspection. This activity will focus on evaluating the effectiveness of the contact, referral and assessment arrangements and evaluating the experiences of children who have recently become looked after.</p>	

⁵ Where the local authority is unable to provide all of the child level data requested, they should provide all the information they have readily available within this timeframe and provide the remainder by the Tuesday of week two.

⁶ For further information, see paragraph 27, Annex A (items 2.06 and 2.07) and Annex M.

⁷ See paragraphs 33 to 35 for further information about this meeting.

Example day of week	Working day	Activity	Who
Week One Wednesday	3	<p>Lead inspector and initial inspection team on site (as day two).</p> <p>Lead inspector informs the local authority of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ the 20 children and young people they are being asked to audit ■ the two or more children and young people looked after who are living in children's homes out of their home authority area (one of whom will be a child who is known to have been missing on more than one occasion in the last four months) whose experiences will be part of the inspection and makes arrangements for the necessary consents to be obtained. <p>The local authority provides the lead inspector with their overview of children who have had missing episodes or are currently missing and/or about whom there are concerns that they are or may be vulnerable to sexual exploitation (See paragraph 27).</p>	Lead inspector and initial inspection team (on site)
Week One Thursday	4	<p>Lead inspector and initial inspection team on site (as day two).</p> <p>Lead inspector arranges meetings with the senior nominated leads for missing children for the local authority and the police.</p> <p>Feedback of initial findings to DCS/senior leaders</p>	Lead inspector and initial inspection team (on site)
Week One Friday	5	<p>Lead inspector and initial inspection team off-site.</p> <p>Team travels home.</p> <p>Local authority provides all Annex A performance information.</p>	Lead inspector and initial inspection team (off-site)
Week Two Monday to Friday	6–10	<p>Local authority audits the experiences of the cohort of children and young people identified by the lead inspector.</p> <p>Lead inspector uses off-site time to analyse and allocate Annex A information and update records of evidence.</p> <p>Remainder of inspection team has a minimum of one day to read the pre-inspection briefing and undertake tasks as allocated by the lead inspector.</p>	Local authority (case file auditing) and inspection team (off-site)
Week Two Tuesday	7	Any child-level data that has not previously been given to the lead inspector is made available by the end of Tuesday.	

Example day of week	Working day	Activity	Who
Week Two Wednesday	8	<p>Lead inspector receives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ information from the local authority to plan observations of practice ■ outcome of the case file auditing. <p>Lead inspector informs the local authority of the remainder of the children and young people whose experiences will be tracked and asks the local authority to prepare the documentation for Week Three (as outlined in paragraphs 40 to 41).</p>	
Week Two Thursday	9	Preparation (off site).	Lead inspector and the four inspectors who were not deployed in week 1.
Week Two Friday	10	Preparation (off site).	Full inspection team
Week Three Monday	11	Team travels from home to hotel base (off-site).	Full inspection team
Week Three Tuesday to Week Three Thursday	12–14	<p>On-site days.</p> <p>Case tracking - Tuesday</p> <p>Case tracking meeting and case tracking feedback to DCS - Wednesday</p> <p>Team members will normally leave local authority premises by 6pm on the Thursday (day 14) and return to hotel (off-site)</p>	Full inspection team
Week Three Friday	15	Team travels home	Full inspection team
Week Four Monday	16	Team travels from home to hotel base (off-site).	Full inspection team
Week Four Tuesday	17	Inspection continues	Full inspection team

Example day of week	Working day	Activity	Who
Week Four Wednesday	18	<p>Brief team meeting to share any new findings for the final keep-in-touch meeting (KIT) with the DCS.</p> <p>Inspection continues to 3pm</p> <p>Final KIT (Lead Inspector, QAM, and DCS).</p> <p>Strand leads consolidate inspection findings (afternoon) in preparation for the judgement meeting (see paragraph 131).</p>	Full inspection team
Week Four Thursday	19	<p>Preparation for the judgement meeting (morning)</p> <p>Lead inspector and inspection team meet to agree provisional judgements (morning)</p> <p>Lead inspector and inspection team prepare for the feedback meeting (afternoon)</p> <p>The lead inspector, inspection team, quality assurance manager (QAM), Regional Director, DCS and key senior leaders in the local authority meet to discuss feedback from inspectors on their findings (afternoon)</p> <p>Team leaves local authority premises by 6pm on the Thursday (day 19) and returns to hotel (off-site)</p>	Full inspection team QAM Regional Director
Week Four Friday	20	Team travels home	Full inspection team
Week Five Monday	21	Report drafting	Full inspection team
Week Five Tuesday to Thursday	22–24	Report drafting	Lead inspector
Week Five Monday to Week Eight Tuesday	25–37	<p>Report quality assurance process.</p> <p>Days 25–27 – A draft report is agreed between the QAM and the lead inspector.</p> <p>Day 28 – The report is circulated to the internal consistency panel</p> <p>Day 29 – Internal consistency panel, chaired by Director, Social Care (see paragraphs 203-211)</p>	Lead inspector QAM

Example day of week	Working day	Activity	Who
Week Eight Thursday	39	A draft report is sent to the DCS within 21 working days of the end of fieldwork for a factual accuracy check (by 5pm on Thursday, day 39) The DCS has five working days to respond (by 9.30am on Friday, day 45)	
Week Eight Friday to Week Nine Thursday	40–44	Factual accuracy check by the local authority Allows five working days for the DCS to provide the response (by 9.30am on Friday, day 45)	Local Authority
Week Nine Friday to Week 10 Monday	45–46	Comments received from the DCS by 9.30am on Friday (day 45). Comments on factual accuracy considered. Lead inspector and quality assurance manager to agree final report by the end of the day on Monday (day 46) when it is sent to the Quality Assurance Reader (QAR).	Lead inspector QAM
Week 10 Tuesday	47	QAR clears report by close on day 47.	QAR
Week 10 Wednesday	48	Regional Director signs off report.	Regional Director
Week 10 Thursday	49	Director, Social Care, clears final report by the end of the day on Thursday, day 49.	Director, Social Care
Week 10 Friday to Week 11 Tuesday	50–52	Publications team undertake final proof reading from noon on Friday (day 50) to close on Tuesday (day 52).	Publications Team

Example day of week	Working day	Activity	Who
Week 11 Wednesday	53	QAM carries out final review of report in light of Publications Team comments and finalises report by noon on Wednesday (day 53). Pre-publication report sent to the DCS, local authority Chief Executive, lead member and Department for Education by 5pm on Wednesday, day 53.	QAM
Week 11 Friday	55	The inspection report is published on Ofsted's website (within 35 working days of the end of fieldwork).	
After the inspection	60	Deadline for all inspectors to submit their notebooks and any other evidence documents to the Inspection and Management Support team for central storage. Evidence notebooks must be sent by recorded delivery. All evidence will be retained in line with Ofsted policy.	
		The local authority submits their improvement plan to ProtectionOfChildren@ofsted.gov.uk within 70 working days of the report being published. ⁸	

Pre-inspection activity

16. Pre-inspection analysis and planning are an important part of all inspections. The Ofsted senior analytical officer will coordinate the data and provide a pre-inspection briefing for the lead inspector that will be shared with the inspection team. The Ofsted senior analytical officer will ensure that the briefing contains all the information the lead inspector and team will need to inform the inspection planning and on-site activity. This will summarise:

- findings from relevant inspections and regulatory activity, including those from inspections carried out by other inspectorates
- relevant nationally collected data
- relevant reports from the local government ombudsman

⁸ The improvement plan is required under regulation 3 of The Education and Inspections Act 2006 (Inspection of Local Authorities) Regulations 2007; www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2007/462/regulation/3/made

- the annual quality and data returns from the local authority fostering service and the adoption agency
 - analysed returns from the annual surveys of children, young people, birth relatives, foster carers, adopters, local authority staff, panel chairs and service providers
 - the Joint Strategic Needs Analysis
 - the local authority sufficiency strategy
 - serious incident notifications
 - the findings from any published serious case reviews
 - evidence from whistleblowing or complaints to Ofsted
 - regional intelligence including events of public concern, such as high-profile court cases or media issues
 - high-profile media coverage relating to the area being inspected
 - any other related published documentation, such as the LSCB or independent reviewing officer annual reports.
17. Lead inspectors will use this information to decide which site(s) in the local authority to visit at the beginning of the inspection.
 18. Lead inspectors will have two and a half days allocated, before fieldwork begins, to review documents and to ensure that the fieldwork is properly focused and used to best effect in collecting first-hand evidence.
 19. The lead inspector will read the pre-inspection briefing and identify initial lines of enquiry for the inspection. Only initial lines of enquiry will be generated at this point. These will be few in number and themed around priority areas. These must be informed by the views of children and young people, parents and staff as they have been expressed through the social care annual point-in-time-surveys run by Ofsted. They will be shared verbally with the local authority at the beginning of the inspection. The lead inspector will ensure that the local authority is aware of how these lines will be pursued and what, if any, specific information is required from them as a result. It is not expected that the local authority will produce documents and data in response to these lines of enquiry unless specifically requested by the lead inspector.
 20. The lead inspector will review any serious incident notifications received from the local authority in the previous three years. This will inform their inspection planning and their evaluation of whether serious case reviews have been appropriately commissioned, concluded and deployed to learn from and improve practice.
 21. The lead inspector will ensure that the pre-inspection briefing and lines of enquiry are shared with the inspection team and form a critical part of their preparation before their on-site inspection activity.

22. All inspectors have a minimum of one day to prepare for the inspection. All team inspectors must have read the briefing and familiarised themselves with the relevant material and profile of the local authority area before arriving on site. In addition the lead inspector is likely to email other documents to inspectors prior to the on-site activity.
23. The Annex A material provided by the local authority must be read. The lead inspector will allocate material across the team. Key points will be disseminated to inform the inspection.

Week One: on-site inspection

Day one: notifying the local authority and requesting information

24. The lead inspector will ensure that the local authority (usually the DCS) is notified by telephone of the inspection by 9.30am on the day before the fieldwork is scheduled to begin. As part of this telephone call, the lead inspector will also arrange to meet with the DCS or the most senior manager available at the earliest opportunity the following day (the first day of on-site fieldwork).
25. Immediately following the telephone call to the local authority, the lead inspector will email the DCS to confirm the start of the inspection and data requirements (see Annex A and Annex B). If the DCS is not available, the lead inspector will speak with/email the most senior manager available and ask them to notify the DCS or, if the DCS is not available, the Chief Executive. The non-availability of the DCS or a senior manager will not delay the start of the inspection.
26. The lead inspector will ask the local authority to provide, from their internal electronic records, the information required to identify the children and young people whose experiences and progress will be tracked and sampled during the inspection. Local authorities should use unique identification numbers rather than full names. Ideally this will be on an Excel spreadsheet.
27. The lead inspector will also require the list/register/overview held by the local authority/police of children who have had missing episodes or are currently missing and/or about whom there are concerns that they are or may be vulnerable to sexual exploitation. This will be the subject of a meeting in week one between an inspector and the senior nominated leads for missing children for the local authority and the police. The inspector will arrange to meet the local authority and police leads again in week three to discuss findings from case tracking and additional evidence gathered after the meeting in week one.⁹
28. The local authority will be asked to provide this information on the first day on site.

⁹ For further information, see Annex A (items 2.06 and 2.07) and Annex M.

29. Annex A lists all the supplementary information that we request from the local authority to inform the inspection. The lead inspector will receive this information as soon as is practical, but it must be made available to the lead inspector before the team leaves the site at the end of Week One.
30. It is expected that the local authority will maintain this information to inform their oversight and management of the service. On this basis, Ofsted does not consider that the request for supporting information is unreasonable.
31. The local authority will also be asked for a list of opportunities for inspectors to directly observe practice – for example, child protection conferences, placement panels, foster carers' support groups and children's reviews – taking place during the on-site inspection (weeks three and four). Ideally, this will be on a separate Excel spreadsheet. This information must be provided to the lead inspector by email by the end of Tuesday of Week Two.
32. The local authority will also be asked to arrange for opportunities for inspectors to talk directly with children about their experiences. It is accepted that it is not always possible to meet in person but telephone conversations may be arranged. The cases to be tracked will be recorded in Annex N and the local authority will subsequently record consent from children and parents or carers which enables inspectors to speak to them. Where consent is withheld or in circumstances where the local authority is unable to arrange a discussion, the local authority will set out the reasons. Wherever possible, this information should be provided by the local authority to the lead inspector by the end of week 2 and discussions will be programmed into the inspection schedule.

Day two

33. The lead inspector and three social care HMI will arrive on site no earlier than 9am. All inspectors will confirm their identities by producing their inspector identity badges. It is not necessary for inspectors to carry copies of Criminal Records Bureau/Disclosure and Barring Service checks.
34. The lead inspector will meet with the DCS and/or the most senior manager available for an initial meeting on arrival.
35. The lead inspector will:
 - provide an opportunity for the local authority representatives to explain the authority's local context, key strengths and challenges
 - provide further information about the scope of the inspection

- outline the format and methodology of the inspection – which will focus on practice observations and shadowing meetings and visits, and scrutiny of case files with appropriate workers – and clarify that evidence gathering will focus on tracking children and young people’s experiences. Any meetings will be kept to a minimum and look into matters arising from case-tracking at the lead inspector’s request
- explain the process and arrangements for visits to children living in residential children’s homes out of the local authority area
- ensure that the DCS is aware of the data and information requirements in Annex A, including the timetable of practice observation opportunities, and agree when and how these will be shared. In addition, the lead inspector will ask the local authority to identify the 10 children that have most recently become looked after. The lead inspector will make clear that information provided by the local authority over and above what is required by Annex A, will be returned directly to them and will not be used as part of the inspection. This will also apply to Annex A information that is provided in an un-useable format.
- discuss arrangements to meet regularly with the DCS and his/her senior leadership team, including the scope and timing of the keep-in-touch and feedback meetings
- agree practical arrangements as needed, such as work space and arrangements for access to files and information technology systems, including staff support to access the systems
- identify a link support person for the inspection and arrangements for interviewing staff. It is important that the link person has ready access to the DCS and senior leaders and sufficient authority to be able to respond to the lead inspector’s requests
- gain an understanding of how the local area services are structured, as well as any issues specific to the site being inspected
- advise the local authority of the contact details of the lead inspector, inspection team members and the allocated Ofsted senior HMI responsible for quality assurance
- provide information for affected/relevant staff, such as copies of the summary of the framework explaining the purpose of the inspection (see Annex C)
- clarify whether there are any serious incidents that are awaiting notification or have been notified to Ofsted recently. This should include significant and current investigations (including police investigations) and/or serious case reviews or local issues of high media interest

- discuss how the experiences of children, young people and families will be directly considered as an integral part of the inspection. The local authority will be asked to make contact with the children, young people and families and to obtain their consent to observe any meetings and speak to inspectors.
36. On-site inspection activity will not normally continue after 6pm on Thursday. The team will inspect practice across the scope of the inspection but this part of the inspection will focus on evaluating the effectiveness of the contact, referral and assessment arrangements and evaluating the experiences of children who have recently become looked after. Inspectors will seek to identify four children from their work in contact, referral and assessment that can become part of the tracked case cohort and a further two will be selected from the group of children who have recently become looked after. This case tracking will be completed in week 1 and each case will be entered into the case tracking template (Annex F).

Week Two: case file auditing

37. During Week Two, the local authority will audit the experiences of a cohort of children and young people identified by the lead inspector in Week One.
38. The lead inspector will select the cases for 20 children and young people as outlined in paragraph 63 and ask that the local authority provides the completed audit by the end of Wednesday in Week Two.
39. The local authority will be asked to consider the strengths of the practice they audit and identify and record areas for improvement in individual cases and note any themes. It is anticipated that the local authority will use the inspection evaluation schedule as a benchmark of good practice.
40. The local authority will ensure that the lead inspector receives the outcome of the audits by the end of Wednesday of Week Two. In addition, for each of these cases the authority will be asked to provide the following key documents where recent examples exist:
- initial referral/contact (where applicable)
 - most recent assessment, including a common or early help assessment
 - section 47 report or equivalent
 - most recent plan (child protection or child in need or care plan or pathway plan)
 - most recent review
 - most applicable court report
 - chronology of significant events.

These documents should be provided through a secure online site, for which the lead inspector will provide access details. The documents should also be made available in hard copy in preparation for when the inspection team returns onsite.

41. The lead inspector will identify the remainder of the cases to be tracked by Thursday of Week Two and notify the local authority. The local authority should provide the documents identified in the list above for inspectors to read on the Monday of Week Three. The cases to be tracked will be a combination of these cases and those already audited by the local authority.

Weeks three and four: the main fieldwork

42. When planning the inspection, the lead inspector should ensure that:
 - support is provided to facilitate communication with children, young people, care leavers, carers and parents who require additional support
 - practice observations should not be carried out if the time needed to travel is excessive
 - practice observation at children and young people's reviews or meetings allows enough time before/after to speak to social workers and where appropriate to children, young people, their carers and their birth families. Consent of children, young people and birth families is sought.
 - the planning allows 30 minutes and travel time between any observations, meetings and interviews so that inspectors have time to reflect on, record, and analyse their findings
 - the planning allows sufficient time and flexibility for inspectors to pursue lines of enquiry
 - names and job roles of those attending meetings are specified for the inspector attending to observe practice
 - staff are given the opportunity to provide their evidence separately to those who manage them
 - if the need for any meeting arises as a result of the case-tracking, the lead inspector asks for this as soon as the need becomes apparent; such meetings may be held by telephone as well as in person.
 - the way inspector-time is planned includes opportunities for team members to analyse and synthesise evidence, individually and together, either as a whole team or in smaller groups
 - where sufficient information has been gathered to make judgements against the evaluation schedule and lines of enquiry may be closed, the lead inspector will advise the local authority if scheduled meetings are no longer required.

43. The plan for the inspection will develop throughout the inspection based on the issues emerging from tracking and sampling children and young people's experiences. The lead inspector has overall responsibility for the plan.

Team briefing at the start of the inspection

44. The initial inspection team will meet on site at 9am on Tuesday (day 2 of the inspection). The purpose of this briefing is to:
- provide information about the key issues arising from the preparatory work, including any lines of enquiry
 - share knowledge of the local area and local priorities
 - allocate tasks and responsibilities, ensuring that team members are supported and able to provide challenge to each other
 - agree practicalities and arrangements for team meetings and keeping in touch with the DCS
 - consider any health and safety risks for individual inspectors (inspectors should use the generic hazard assessment form)
 - identify which inspector will observe any scheduled meetings or visits
 - ensure that inspectors are clear which children and young people they will be tracking and/or where within the scope of the inspection they will focus their attention.

The roles of the lead inspector, deputy lead inspector and team inspector

45. The lead inspector will:
- coordinate the inspection between the team and with the local authority area leaders
 - chair team meetings effectively
 - oversee the quality assurance of the work of the inspection team
 - ensure that all areas of the evaluation schedule are inspected
 - develop lines of enquiry alongside the team
 - prioritise inspection activity according to lines of enquiry
 - ensure that evidence is sufficiently robust to support judgements
 - provide challenge, support and advice to the team
 - consider any health and safety risks for individual inspectors.
46. In addition to the role and function described above the lead inspector will be accountable for the following:

- ensuring that all members of the inspection team are aware of the requirement to produce only evaluated evidence and to be persistent in enforcing the requirement
 - agreeing with the deputy lead inspector which of them will be responsible for overseeing each strand of the inspection
 - agreeing which inspector will coordinate each strand
 - ensure through direction and inspection timetabling that sufficient numerical data and evidence is obtained that relate to each element of the 'required evidence'
 - ensuring that strand coordinators create and have sufficient opportunities within the programme to meet with HMI contributors so that they can gather, analyse and synthesise evidence to inform wider inspection activity and judgements
 - ensuring that Annex H is used to record cases that are fed back to the DCS where the lead inspector, in conjunction with the relevant members of the inspection team, determines there is an issue of concern
 - ensuring that the local authority provide documented and timely feedback on cases raised under Annex H and that an audit trail is maintained which demonstrates how the response was used to inform inspection decisions and judgements
 - ensuring that Annex O is used to record best practice examples that are provided to the DCS following the end of fieldwork
 - ensuring that all members of the inspection team are fully aware of what they are required to prepare, and in what form, for each inspection meeting to which they contribute. The deadline for their submissions will be specified.
47. During the inspection, if further external support and advice is needed this will usually be through the Ofsted quality assurance manager assigned to the inspection.
48. The deputy lead inspector will:
- provide leadership capacity to the team both in the relationship with the local authority and the management and quality assurance of the inspection
 - prepare effectively for team meetings and present succinct analysis of key findings based on reliable evidence
 - provide an important 'check and balance', offering support and challenge to the lead inspector and team members
 - ensure that the learning from children's experiences informs the consideration of leadership, management and governance; linking children's experiences to strategy

- support the lead inspector in assuring the quality of the final inspection report
 - contribute to the lead inspector's quality assurance of their own and other inspectors' work during inspections.
49. In addition to the role and function described above the deputy lead inspector will be accountable for the following:
- supporting the lead inspector in ensuring that all the evidence presented by team members has been evaluated and to take action to support and encourage team members when this does not occur
 - ensuring that the strand coordinators create and use opportunities within the inspection programme to meet with HMI contributors and are clear about the evidence that is required and gathered to ensure robust coverage of the strand.
 - supporting strand coordinators in analysing and synthesising evidence and to produce oral and written contributions that support the inspection process and judgement
 - agreeing with the lead inspector how the deputy will support the meeting processes by ensuring that individual contributions by inspectors meet the requirements of the meeting
 - ensuring that any written contribution he/she contributes to the inspection report complies fully with Ofsted's reporting requirements and is of a sufficiently high standard that means it can be used with minimal editing by the lead inspector.
50. The team inspector will:
- act flexibly to take on tasks and activities within the inspection team
 - work across judgement areas to provide challenge and scrutiny to the work of other inspectors throughout the inspection and in the final judgement meeting
 - take individual responsibility for the quality of the inspection and inspection report
 - prepare effectively for team meetings and present succinct analysis of key findings based on reliable evidence
 - undertake quality assurance of their own and other inspectors' work during inspections.
51. In addition to the role and function described above, each team inspector will be accountable for the following:
- agreeing whether and what strand they will coordinate

- take responsibility for ensuring that they are clear which team members will gather evidence relating to the strand and monitoring that sufficient evidence is being collated and evaluated.
- taking steps to bring inspection team members together to review whether sufficient evidence (in terms of quantity and quality) has been gathered and to advise the lead and deputy lead inspector whether and what further evidence is required
- understanding when in the inspection evidence will need to be analysed, synthesised and prepared so that it can be presented to inspection meetings in the evaluated form required
- recognising when inspection team members can or have gathered evidence to support other strands of inspection and take the necessary action to ensure that strand coordinators are made aware
- preparing contributions to the inspection report in accordance with Ofsted's writing requirements and ensure that it is of a standard that means that it can be included in the final report with minimal editing by the lead inspector.

Inspection team meetings

52. Team meetings will usually take place in the morning to maximise inspection time. The team should meet briefly to:

- share findings and evidence
- triangulate findings and evidence
- develop and close down lines of enquiry as a joint team
- provide time to reflect as a team
- build up an evidence-based view of the quality of practice, leadership and management within the local authority area
- keep the lead inspector fully aware of any key developments
- enable the lead to coordinate the inspection effectively
- identify which inspector will observe any scheduled meetings or visits.

Meetings should reflect key themes identified through evidence gathering and ensure that a holistic view of children and young people's experiences in the local authority area are being collated.

53. It is expected that:

- team meetings will be focused and effectively chaired, enabling each team member to contribute effectively within agreed timescales for the meeting
- all inspectors will contribute

- all inspectors will keep the lead inspector informed of emerging issues and areas of strength and potential areas for improvement
 - all inspectors will distil their evidence in preparation for the team meeting and develop clearly evaluated, evidence-based headlines to share with the team.
54. The team should meet for a more extended period in the middle of Week Three (usually on Wednesday afternoon). This meeting is for inspectors to review the evidence from the cases tracked so far and begin to agree their evaluation of the experiences of children and young people being tracked. It is also an opportunity to identify any further key lines of enquiry arising from the case-tracking and how the team will explore these. For example, further case-tracking and sampling or interviews with individual practitioners and managers. In addition, the team will identify areas of good practice. In tracking individual children and young people's experience inspectors will gather evidence across more than one judgement area.
55. The team will also meet for an extended period on the penultimate day to discuss emerging findings, agree provisional judgements and identify areas for improvement.

Inspection methodology

Inspection activity and gathering evidence

56. Most inspection evidence will be gathered by looking at individual children and young people's experiences. This will be through a combination of case-tracking, case sampling, observations of practice and interviews.
57. Where statutory functions have been delegated, the inspectors will evaluate the experiences of children and young people in the same way as they do in areas where no functions have been delegated.¹⁰
58. Inspections will focus on direct practice by:
- scrutinising and discussing the sample of children's cases that reflect the scope of the inspection alongside practitioners working with the child or young person – this should include social workers and representatives of commissioned services as well as any representatives of the local authority's in house fostering service, the fostering panel chair, the adoption panel chair and the Virtual School Head. These discussions do not have to be in person and may be by telephone

¹⁰ A local authority's functions may be delegated under part 1 of the Children and Young Persons Act 2008 (Relevant Care Functions) (England) Regulations 2014, www.legislation.gov.uk/id/uksi/2014/2407); or Section 497A of the Education Act 1996 (www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/56/section/497A)

- meeting with children, young people, care leavers, parents and carers, foster carers and adopters¹¹
- shadowing staff in their day-to-day work, for example observing: work in the duty team; the work of social workers with children looked after and care leavers; the social worker in the fostering or adoption team; a family group conference; the work of independent reviewing officer; and the work of child protection conference chairs
- observing practice in multi-agency/single agency meetings that relate to the protection of children and young people and in reviews for children looked after.

Tracking and sampling individual children's experiences

59. The inspection team will track and sample the individual experiences of children and young people based on the scope of the inspection. The sample will include:

- children and young people who are at risk of harm (but who have not yet reached the 'significant harm' threshold) and for whom a preventative service would provide the help that they and their family need to reduce the likelihood of that risk of harm escalating and reduce the need for statutory intervention¹²
- children and young people referred to the local authority, including those for whom urgent action has to be taken to protect them; those subject to further assessment;¹³ and those subject to child protection enquiries
- children who become the subject of a multi-agency child protection plan setting out the help that will be provided for them and their families to keep them safe and to promote their welfare
- children and young people who have been assessed as no longer needing a child protection plan, but who may have continuing needs for help and support
- children and young people who are receiving (or whose families are receiving) social work services where there are significant levels of concern about the children's safety and welfare, but these have not reached the significant harm threshold or the threshold to become looked after

¹¹ Throughout this handbook, reference to 'adopters' includes those who have applied to adopt a child, prospective adopters who have been approved for adoption and those who have adopted.

¹² These children may be known by any person with a duty under section 11 of the Children Act 2004; section 40 of the Childcare Act 2006; under section 175 or any regulations made under 157 of the Education Act 2002; section 55 of the Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009, a member of the Local Safeguarding Children Board; or a person associated with a commissioned service, including local voluntary services.

¹³ This includes children subject to private fostering arrangements.

- children and young people who are missing from education or being offered alternative provision
- children and young people looked after either by being accommodated¹⁴ under section 20 or by being placed 'in care' during or as a result of proceedings under section 31 of the Children Act 1989 and those accommodated through the police powers of protection or emergency protection orders
- children aged 16 or 17 who are preparing to leave care and qualify as 'eligible';¹⁵ those aged 16 or 17 who have left care and qualify as 'relevant';¹⁶ young people aged 18 and above and qualify as 'former relevant';¹⁷ and young people aged 18 to 25 who qualify as 'former relevant children pursuing further education or training',¹⁸ including children living in homes of multiple occupation
- children and young people who have left care to return home, or are living with families under a special guardianship order, child arrangements order¹⁹ or adoption order.

Identifying the children and young people whose experiences will be audited, tracked and sampled

60. Inspectors will track the individual experiences of at least 25 and usually no more than 30 children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers. In exceptional circumstances the number of cases tracked may need to exceed 30 in order to secure a representative judgement. The lead inspector should make a proportionate decision about the number of additional cases to track. They will take an in-depth look at the quality of the help, care and protection children and young people have experienced and the implementation of children in need, child protection, care, placement and pathway plans.
61. There are three routes to evaluating the experiences of children and young people: through the case file auditing undertaken by the local authority; through the cases tracked by the inspection team and through the cases sampled by the inspection team.

¹⁴ Including those children and young people who are detained, unaccompanied child migrants or asylum seekers.

¹⁵ Defined in paragraph 19B of Schedule 2 to the Children Act 1989, and regulation 40 of the Care Planning, Placement and Care Review (England) Regulations 2010 (as amended).

¹⁶ Defined in section 23A(2) of the Children Act 1989.

¹⁷ Defined in section 23C(1) of the Children Act 1989.

¹⁸ Defined in section 23CA(1) as a former relevant child in relation to whom the duties in 23C(2)(3) and (4) no longer apply, and s/he has informed the local authority that s/he wants to pursue or is pursuing a programme of education or training.

¹⁹ Residence and contact orders made under section 8 of the Children Act 1989 were replaced by child arrangements orders through the Children and Families Act 2014;

www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/6/contents/enacted

62. The local authority will be asked to audit the case files for 20 children and young people:
- Six children and young people in need of help and protection:
 - a. to include one child under three years old
 - b. to include one adolescent
 - c. to include a child who has been subject to multiple referrals
 - d. at least five of the children will have been subject to an initial child protection conference and at least two of the cases will be post review:
 - i. to include one child that has been subject to an initial child protection conference but who did not become subject to a child protection plan
 - ii. to include a child who has been subject a child protection plan for more than 12 months.
 - Twelve children looked after, to include:
 - a. at least two children placed out of authority
 - b. at least one child who has a plan for adoption
 - c. at least one child who lives with a foster family provided by the local authority
 - d. one child who has recently returned home in the last three to six months
 - e. one child for whom the plan is to return home
 - f. two children living in children's homes who are known to have run away.
 - Two care leavers: one relevant and one former relevant.
63. In most instances, this cohort of children and young people whose cases are audited by the local authority will inform the overall 25–30 cases that are tracked by the inspection team. The lead inspector will select the remainder of those to be tracked and this will take into account the opportunities to observe practice that are available throughout the inspection.
64. The cohort of children and young people whose cases will be tracked and sampled will be adjusted to ensure a balance of:
- age, gender, disability and ethnicity

- children at risk of harm from physical, emotional and sexual abuse and neglect; inspectors will also want to identify those children and young people where the local authority has concerns that they may be vulnerable to sexual exploitation and those children and young people who have been missing from care, home and education. These children must be part of the cohort of children whose cases are sampled and tracked.
 - educational achievement and ability
 - type of placement, including out-of-area placements, placed in a kinship care or 'connected person'²⁰ arrangement and children placed at home and subject to a care order
 - children and young people at different stages of their journey, for example: children in need of early help; children living at home in need of protection; children who have been the subject of multiple referrals/repeat assessments/multiple episodes of care; children very recently looked after; children who have experienced placement moves/disruption; children placed out of authority; those waiting or placed for adoption; and those who have returned to care following an adoption breakdown
 - at least one child from a large sibling group
 - practitioner and team
 - children and young people supported by a third party provider operating with social services functions delegated to it by the local authority.²¹
65. Some of the children and young people identified will be based on available opportunities to observe practice during the inspection. The lead inspector will also take into account any lines of enquiry identified before arrival on site or particular children and young people who are identified through the sample information, such as children that appear to have experienced significant delay.
66. In Week One, the inspection team will specifically look at the experiences of children who have recently become looked after and children who receive services from the referral and assessment team(s). Six cases, comprising two from the newly looked after cohort and four from the referral and assessment teams' workload, will be selected for tracking.
67. The lead inspector may request a small number of additional cases for examination during weeks three and four to test the quality of service for groups of children and young people where there is a high prevalence of a particular need in the local authority being inspected.

²⁰ Regulation 24(3) Care Planning, Placement and Care Review (England) Regulations 2010.

²¹ Where the local authority has delegated functions to such a provider of social work services under Part 1 of the Children and Young Persons Act 2008.

68. It is important that inspectors examine good and best practice as part of the inspection. The local authority is encouraged to provide examples of cases that demonstrate best practice that it has identified, for example through local case audit activity. Inspectors will also identify examples of good, outstanding and innovative practice that they will record in the best practice log (Annex O).
69. In tracking and sampling children and young people's experiences, inspectors will be testing the following thresholds:
 - early help – including early help assessments
 - referral and assessment
 - children in need
 - child protection (for investigation and for a plan)
 - continuing help and support for families
 - the decision to accommodate
 - the decision to remove
 - permanence planning
 - placement decisions, including work to support return home
 - leaving care.

Case-tracking

70. Case files are only one aspect of tracking the child's journey. Inspectors will enhance their understanding of the child's experience through evidence from other sources, such as observation of practice, from the young person themselves, their carers, the young person's birth family (where appropriate), the social worker, the children's guardian, health and education professionals and other practitioners involved in their care. Inspectors should also contact providers of commissioned services and organisations to which statutory functions have been delegated; for, example independent fostering agencies, children's homes, organisations contracted to support care leavers and voluntary adoption agencies.
71. When tracking the case of a looked after child, the independent reviewing officer, the placing social worker and the keyworker (where they live in a children's home) must always be consulted.
72. In all cases, case files (either electronic or paper-based) will be discussed with the allocated social worker (unless on leave) and team manager, using their knowledge of the case, file structure and recording systems. In the absence of the allocated worker, a suitable colleague will be asked to assist. Case supervision notes will also be called as evidence for the cases being tracked.

73. Where the child's journey is looked at retrospectively, judgements will be based on contemporary practice. Judgements will generally be based on practice that has an impact on the child's or young person's current situation, although inspectors will read some historical information to understand the child's journey, their progress and how this relates to the plans for their future.
74. Where case files are wholly or partly electronic, the local authority should arrange for each inspector to have individual access to their electronic system. During the course of case file reading, inspectors must return any paper case files when they are needed by the staff working with the child and/or family.
75. Inspectors will examine, discuss and evaluate cases in line with the criteria set out in the evaluation schedule. Annex F should be used as a guide for evaluating practice in individual cases.
76. The HMI with an education or learning background will contribute across the scope of the inspection, with a particular focus on tracking the experiences of children and young people receiving early help, the experiences of children missing and absent from education, the education of looked after children and care leaver access to education, employment and training.
77. Inspectors will review a sample of supervision records and carers' records (where appropriate) related to the sample of children and young people.
78. Each social care HMI will track at least five cases and sample further cases as the key lines of enquiry emerge throughout the inspection.
79. Wherever possible, inspectors will want to meet directly with or speak to children, young people and their families so they can hear first-hand about their experiences. Inspectors will use Annex N to identify the children and young people and understand why individual children may not be able to speak with them. The lead inspector will provide a copy of Annex N that identifies the 25–30 children whose experiences will be tracked and inspectors would therefore like to meet. The relevant columns in Annex N should be completed by the local authority and returned to the lead inspector by the end of week two and will be updated as the inspection progresses. When completing Annex N the local authority should record whether parents, carers, children and young people have given their consent to speak with inspectors and, in circumstances where consent is withheld or discussions cannot be arranged, the reasons should be recorded.

Tracking children and young people placed out of authority

80. The lead inspector will identify a minimum of two children and/or young people living in a children's home that is not in the local authority area. Those young people who live furthest from the authority and those most vulnerable will be prioritised and one of these children will be known to have been missing for more than one episode in the last four months. Where two or more young

people from the authority are placed in the same children's home, the lead inspector will include all those young people in this activity.

81. The lead inspector, or nominated team inspector, will ask the local authority to make contact with each of the children's homes during the first week of the inspection. The young person's keyworker, or equivalent, will be asked to talk to the young person to ask if they consent to an inspector from Ofsted visiting them in their home to talk about how their social worker and local authority supports them. The local authority, on behalf of Ofsted, will confirm arrangements by letter to the Registered Manager of the children's home and include a leaflet for the keyworker to share with the young person, as set out in Annex E. The Registered Manager will be asked to consent to the visit and confirm this along with the young person's consent in writing, by email to the local authority, who will convey this to the lead inspector.
82. The lead inspector will then contact the appropriate regional social care regulatory inspection manager (RIM) or in their absence the duty RIM. The RIM will identify the social care regulatory inspectors (SCRI) to visit the two children's homes during the course of the local authority inspection. This will always be before the end of Week Three. The lead inspector is responsible for ensuring that any particular lines of enquiry that need to be pursued are identified and shared with the SCRI.
83. The SCRI will contact the children's home to make the appointment to visit at a time that is convenient to the young person.
84. The SCRI visiting the child will be acting under section 136 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and evaluating the exercise of the local authority functions.²² If the SCRI has concerns about the functioning of the children's home, they will ensure that these are addressed through a triggered inspection within 24 hours or, in the case of more urgent concerns, they will inform the Registered Manager that an inspection of the children's home will commence with immediate effect.
85. The SCRI will gather evidence for the local authority inspection by talking to the young person, keyworker and/or Registered Manager to triangulate the actual experience of the young person in relation to his/her care plan.
86. The SCRI will email a completed pro-forma (Annex L) for each young person to the lead inspector. This will evaluate:
 - the plan for the child's future, establishing that it is clear, sets out appropriate arrangements to protect them and is acceptable, including to the young person

²² These are the social services functions of the authority (within the meaning of the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970 (c. 42)) that relate to persons aged under 18.

- that any plan for the young person to go home is appropriate, well-planned, establishes the family support that will be undertaken and is in their best interests
- the relationship between the placement and care plans with particular regard to any specific issues of vulnerability or safety
- the quality and effectiveness of the local authority response to looked after children and young people who go missing
- the young person's relationship with their social worker and the frequency and effectiveness of contact
- the appropriateness of contact with the young person's birth and wider family
- the effectiveness of the children's home in respect of the assessed needs of each young person.

Foster carer and adopter records

Foster carers

87. Inspectors will review at least four foster carers' records, linked to the tracked cases where possible. Annex I details the information that should be found in a foster carer's record as outlined in regulation. The purpose of this will be to assess the impact of the placement on outcomes for children and young people and how well the service promotes children's progress.
88. Foster carers and providers should always be asked about:
- the information provided to them regarding children's needs and how the child coming to live with them could be cared for by the family according to the needs they have
 - the service they receive: training, support and supervision
 - how delegated authority is managed
 - how permanence, including special guardianship orders, are supported.
89. If the placement is made with a local authority foster carer, inspectors will assess:
- the recruitment, preparation and assessment
 - training
 - supervision and support
 - review of foster carers including kinship carers (connected persons) and the extent to which children and young people have contributed to their foster carer's review.

90. If the foster carer has been recruited recently, the assessment and preparation of the carer should be discussed with the fostering team manager and/or fostering social worker, the assessment report reviewed and, if needed, checks should be seen. If the foster carer is a long-standing carer, the annual review and ongoing training and support should be evaluated through similar discussions.

Adopters

91. Inspectors will review at least four adopters' records linked to the cases tracked, where possible. Annex J details the information that should be part of a prospective adopter's record as outlined in the regulations. The purpose of this will be to assess the impact of the placement on outcomes for the child/ren and how well the adoptive family and those who support the placement prioritise the child/ren's needs and progress. Adopters and the adoption service providers should always be asked about the information provided for them regarding children's needs and the effectiveness of the matching process. Inspectors may also consider records of prospective adopters who have been unsuccessful in the process.
92. If the placement is made with one of the local authority's approved adopters, inspectors will assess:
- the effectiveness and impact of recruitment, preparation, training, assessment and support of adopters
 - the provision of adoption support and any promise of future adoption support
 - the quality of the assessment report and rigour of checks as appropriate.
93. The adoption team manager, adoption social worker and adoption panel chair should be involved in discussions where necessary to triangulate evidence.

Case sampling

94. In addition to detailed tracking of individual children's experiences, inspectors will also evaluate thresholds in the children's journeys to further test the effectiveness of the services and arrangements to help, care for and protect children and young people. This will be through more targeted sampling of case files. The inspection team will look at the experiences of at least 50 children and young people in this way.
95. Case sampling will also be used to pursue areas of both weak and good practice raised through tracking individual children's cases, and triangulate evidence, for example to establish whether weaknesses in practice reflect weaknesses that are widespread or serious. Inspectors will record whether a case has been sampled or tracked. The lead inspector should make a

proportionate decision about the number of cases to sample in order to secure sufficient evidence for a representative judgement.

Observations of practice

96. Observation of practice is a key evidence-gathering activity. Observations will be evaluated in line with the criteria set out in the evaluation schedule and as exemplified in Annex G.
97. During any observations of practice, inspectors will be sensitive to the potential pressures on, and the apprehension of, children, young people, families and staff. Inspectors will consider and discuss the appropriateness of each observation and whether they should observe whole or part of the activity. Any observation of planned meetings will be with the explicit and informed consent of the children, young people and families. The relevant practitioners will be asked to gain this consent and inspectors will confirm it with the children, young people and families. Inspectors will explain that the purpose of the inspection is to assess the effectiveness of help, care and protection for children, young people, their families and carers; it is not to make judgements about individuals.
98. Inspectors will target their inspection activity where they are most likely to gather robust evidence within the time available. This may involve observing meetings such as:
 - child protection conferences: initial and review
 - core groups
 - adult service meetings, such as those led by mental health teams and drug and alcohol services where children who may be at risk of harm are discussed
 - strategy discussions/meetings
 - multi-agency panels and risk management meetings
 - planned child protection monitoring visits
 - children in need reviews
 - looked after children reviews, including those conducted when children have been missing
 - legal planning meetings²³
 - secure accommodation and 'edge of care' panels
 - multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARAC) meetings

²³ Should there be any question of legal privilege, it is for the client (the local authority) to waive legal privilege rather than their legal advisor.

- early support and preventative work such as multi-agency 'team around the child' discussions or planning discussions to escalate the case or to reduce the support.
99. Inspectors may also spend time observing practice in locality or specialist teams or they may shadow staff in their day to day work.
100. In some instances, inspectors will ask managers to observe practice alongside them to provide opportunities to discuss with managers their own evaluation of practice. After any observation of practice, the inspector is likely to have a brief discussion with the child, young person and family about their experience of the services received and their impact.
101. The inspector will have a brief discussion with the practitioner (and manager if present) about what they have just observed. They will not provide judgements about the practice observed, but will evaluate what they have seen and discuss their overall impression.

Hearing the views of children and young people and their families

102. There are various ways to hear the views of children, young people and their families. These include:
- direct testimony, for example inspectors visiting and talking to children placed a long way out of their authority area
 - speaking to those whose cases we are looking at closely
 - views of representative groups – for example inspectors will always invite the Children in Care Council to meet with them
 - views expressed by others advocating for children looked after and care leavers, including foster carers and residential staff
 - views directly recorded in case files and meeting minutes
 - views expressed by practitioners
 - views expressed by others advocating for children, young people and their families
 - analysis of the annual questionnaires
 - reviewing complaints made by children.
103. Inspectors are committed to talking to as many children and young people as possible during the inspection although it is accepted that these discussions will not always be face to face. In particular, inspectors will endeavour to have contact with those whose cases have been selected for tracking. To assist this process, the local authority will be asked to complete Annex N to indicate whether consent has been given by parents, carers, children and young people to speak with inspectors. When talking to children or young people, inspectors will be interested in hearing how their rights are being considered, their

entitlements realised and about their experiences of the local pledges or charters in practice.

104. Inspectors will discuss any risks or ethical issues concerned with meeting children and birth family members with the child's social worker or lead practitioner in order to determine whether it is in the best interests of the individual concerned.
105. An inspector will always meet with a group of foster carers – this will be either an established group or a group identified through an open invitation to meet the inspection team.
106. Inspectors will provide the local authority with guidance to help prepare children, young people, carers and families to be involved in the inspection.²⁴ Local authorities should gain the consent of the children and young people and birth families before involving them in the inspection and they should be given the option of a discussion by telephone.
107. The lead inspector will also want to see and hear the impact of local consultation with all children and young people including those looked after, care leavers, carers and birth families to demonstrate how their feedback has been asked for both individually and collectively, taken into account and, where appropriate, impacts on practice, strategy, service development and design.
108. Inspectors will work with agencies to ensure that any child or young person with communication difficulties has access to the necessary support to facilitate her/his full involvement in the inspection.

Interviews with practitioners and/or managers and stakeholders

109. Inspectors will triangulate evidence by talking to practitioners and/or managers, either by telephone or in person. Where children and young people are supported by a third party provider as the result of statutory functions being delegated, inspectors will talk to the practitioners and managers of that provider in the same way as they would to local authority staff. Lead inspectors will only request that groups of people are brought together for discussion where this is the only way to triangulate evidence and is based on lines of enquiry arising from case-tracking. The local authority will not be asked to schedule a plan of meetings.
110. When talking to social workers about practice, inspectors are also likely to ask about:

²⁴ *Will you help us with our inspection? Information for children and young people;* www.gov.uk/government/publications/inspecting-services-for-children-in-need-of-help-and-protection-children-looked-after-and-care-leavers-and-reviews-of-local-safeguarding-children-boa--2

- the quality and impact of supervision and management oversight;
- the ways in which they are helped to strengthen families and to minimise risk
- workloads and workload management
- the availability, quality and impact of training and development opportunities;
- the impact of the LSCB on practice through multi-agency training and the dissemination of learning from serious case reviews.

Inspectors may wish to speak about these issues alone with social workers and with the social worker's line manager present.

111. The focus on tracking children and young people's experiences is the spine of this inspection. Meetings with groups are likely to arise only as a consequence of case-tracking and will be limited in number. Where meetings do occur, the inspector leading the group will usually identify the key practitioners and agencies to be represented.
112. Inspectors will create opportunities to engage with middle managers. This is likely to be through individual discussions relating to practice issues to consider how policy translates into practice.
113. Inspectors will always meet:
- the DCS
 - the Chief Executive
114. Inspectors will usually talk, by telephone where necessary, with:
- staff and managers responsible for ensuring commissioning activity meets the authority's sufficiency duty²⁵
 - the lead member for children's services
 - the Chair of the LSCB, LSCB business manager and LSCB members
 - the corporate parenting group or senior officers in partner agencies responsible for corporate parenting
 - local authority adoption panel chair
 - fostering panel chair

²⁵ Section 22G of the Children Act 1989 and *Sufficiency: statutory guidance on securing sufficient accommodation for looked after children*, Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2010; www.gov.uk/government/publications/securing-sufficient-accommodation-for-looked-after-children

- the local authority fostering association chair or equivalent body and/or members
- lead manager for emergency placements
- virtual school head
- children in care council and/or group of children looked after
- care leavers
- the chair of scrutiny committee
- the local authority designated officer (LADO)
- independent reviewing officers (IROs)
- the agency decision makers – adoption/fostering
- the performance management lead officer
- a representative from the local authority team responsible for data analysis and performance
- the workforce development lead
- the principal social worker (if the local authority has appointed to this role)
- the lead managers responsible for monitoring children missing from school and elective home education
- the local authority and police lead officers for child sexual exploitation and those missing (weeks one and three)
- the chair of the child death overview panel
- Cafcass
- LSCB partners (police and health)
- LSCB lay members (if any)
- where statutory functions have been delegated to a third party provider, the chief executive or equivalent of that provider and the chair of the provider's board.

115. Where these individuals are not available, inspectors may talk to those who are deputising for them in their absence. The lead inspector will determine which other managers or practitioners they need to make contact with, such as representatives from youth offending services. Where a youth offending team has been commissioned, the fact of the commissioning should only be reported upon if this resulted in a direct positive or negative impact on the experiences and progress of children. The commissioning itself does not need to be routinely reported.

116. Where local authorities are in a process of reform or implementing an improvement plan, the lead inspector will ensure that the impact of these changes is evaluated throughout the inspection and discussed with the senior

managers. This is likely to be reflected in executive summary of the report and/or the leadership, management and governance judgement.

117. Where, as part of the assessment of the quality and effectiveness of local authority leadership and management, inspectors identify an issue arising from the arrangements for discharging the functions of the DCS and lead member for children's services, inspectors will look at the quality and effectiveness of the authority's assurance and compliance process.

Local family justice system

118. In evaluating services for children subject to care, supervision and adoption proceedings, it is important to understand local authority performance in the context of the local family justice system and to offer a wide range of valuable evidence, particularly in reviewing the child's journey into the looked after system and plans for permanence. Inspectors will always make contact with the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass) as part of their evidence-gathering process to hear their experience of local authority performance and a perspective on the local family justice system.
119. Inspectors may, in some circumstances, also decide to speak with the local judiciary (likely to be the local Designated Family Judge and/or the Chair of the family proceedings court bench) and/or court administration (court manager, family court listing officer or clerk to the family justices). Interviews will usually be by telephone.
120. Ofsted will not make judgements about family justice partner organisations or the judiciary in the report, but will report system-wide strengths and weaknesses.
121. Examining the local family justice system will elicit evidence for other parts of the framework in relation to partnership working and quality of information sharing. The range of information gathering will vary according to the lines of enquiry in each area and will need to be proportionate. However, the following may be helpful to consider:
- Minutes of the Local Family Justice Board – this board is influential as a catalyst for change in the family justice system. Review of minutes will enable inspectors to understand the priorities of the board and the involvement of the local authority and their engagement and influence in improvement activities.
 - Most recent data on the duration of care cases – nationally and by local authority within the area. Cafcass 'heat maps' can provide data on trends for up to five years. Where this has not been included in the pre-inspection briefing, it can be requested from Cafcass. This should show time from application to conclusion, but will need inspectors to explore the local authority's influence on issues of tackling delay.

122. Contact with the local Cafcass service area will add to the evidence base. Cafcass will have data on:

- response to referrals and requests for information
- the appropriateness of thresholds for care applications and timeliness of applications
- level and appropriateness of applications for section 25 secure orders and emergency protection orders
- the quality of the local authority's pre-proceeding work within the Public Law Outline
- timeliness and quality of assessments and reports to court, including quality assurance processes
- the effectiveness of independent reviewing officers
- the local authority's engagement with the Local Family Justice Board
- the appropriate allocation of requests for section 7 reports²⁶ to Cafcass or the local authority
- the quality of the local authority's legal advice and representation.

123. A telephone call with the Chair of Family Justice Board²⁷ may be useful to triangulate information from the minutes of the Local Family Justice Board and to discuss the local authority's commitment to the family justice review and performance targets, if these are not clear.

124. Where there are specific areas of concern, or if there are issues where Cafcass is unable to offer a definitive response, contact with the Designated Family Judge (DFJ) for the area may be helpful. However, in many cases, they sit as judge on work from a number of local authorities and as the throughput between authorities will vary, this can distort their views of relative quality and effectiveness. They would also act as the spokesperson for a number of judges across the circuit. In the recent past, DFJs have been asked about the local authority's performance at the Local Family Justice Board. As they attend as observers, this may not be an appropriate use for this contact.

²⁶ When a court is considering any question with respect to a child under the Children Act 1989 it can 'ask' (a) a Cafcass officer or (b) a local authority to report to the court. These often relate to questions of where a child should live or with whom they should have contact with in circumstances where parents are divorcing or separating. A national protocol (*Protocol for allocating responsibilities for court reporting in private law Children Act 1989 proceedings between Cafcass and local authority children's services*; <http://adcs.org.uk/download/position-statements/aug-10/adcs-cafcass-protocol-for-allocation-reponsibilities-final-august-2010.pdf>) states that if the child is an open case to a local authority or a closed case of less than a month, the report should be prepared by the local authority.

²⁷ This is often the Cafcass head of service or a senior officer from Her Majesty's Court and Tribunal Services.

125. The Chair of the Family Proceeding Court (FPC) or their legal advisor could offer added value in some cases. As FPCs are locally based, this would be a more reliable source of local evidence about the performance of the local authority, particularly if there are concerns about the use of emergency protection orders or secure accommodation order applications.

Documentation

126. The inspection team will review the documentation requested in Annex A. In exceptional circumstances, the lead inspector or other members of the inspection team may request additional evidence. Where documentation is presented but has not been requested by an inspector, it will only be evaluated where it directly relates to the evaluation schedule for the inspection. The local authority will be expected to be explicit about what it believes to be the relevance of other material provided and direct inspectors to specific aspects of the documents presented.

Engaging the Director of Children's Services during the inspection

127. The DCS or another member of the senior staff will be informed of emerging findings throughout the inspection. This is likely to be on a daily basis in the form of brief face-to-face meetings, which may involve any other inspectors from the team. This gives the local authority the opportunity to challenge and understand emerging findings.
128. Although the lead inspector should offer the DCS opportunities for engagement, this is not mandatory. The DCS may choose whether or not to accept; they may not be available to meet with the lead inspector due to other commitments. The extent to which the DCS engages with the inspection team will not influence inspection judgements.
129. These meetings will be informed by the headlines from the team meeting. They will explore key issues arising from the inspection but not include a description of all inspection activity. Where there are concerns about individual children and young people, these will be shared at the earliest opportunity and written feedback requested on the action taken and/or current circumstance for the young person (Annex H).
130. They will be sharp, focused meetings. The lead inspector should check that the DCS is clear about the relationship between the evidence and the emerging and/or substantiated judgements.

Finalising evidence

131. On the Wednesday of the final fieldwork week (the penultimate day onsite), the inspection team will complete its inspection activities at 3pm. In the afternoon, inspectors should share and consolidate their findings, pulling together the key issues so that the judgement meeting is informed by clear and aligned

evaluation of the evidence. The lead inspector, QAM and DCS will meet for a final brief keep-in-touch (KIT) meeting.

132. The inspection team will meet on Thursday morning (the last day onsite) to agree their judgements. All inspectors must prepare effectively for this meeting and have taken time to synthesise and analyse evidence individually and collectively before the meeting starts. Lead inspectors should identify sufficient time in the timetable for this to be achieved.
133. Inspectors will weigh the evidence against the grade descriptors outlined in the evaluation schedule. Inspectors will make a judgement of 'good' where the characteristics set out in the framework are widespread and common practice and are demonstrably leading to improved outcomes. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings. A judgement of 'good' will be made where the inspection team concludes that the evidence overall sits most appropriately with a finding of 'good'. This is what Ofsted describes as 'best fit'.

Feedback at the end of the inspection

134. In the afternoon of the final day onsite (Thursday), the DCS and senior leaders will be invited to meet with the inspection team to hear the provisional judgements and, most importantly, the evidence that supports them. The meeting should encourage dialogue between the inspection team and the local authority about this evidence. There should be 'no surprises' as key strengths and areas for improvement should have been part of the daily meetings. The DCS will be informed of the provisional judgements prior to the meeting.
135. Usually, only five core attendees will be invited: the DCS, the Chief Executive, two other local authority representatives and the Lead Member. This attendance list can be increased when necessary and where the lead inspector agrees, but should be kept to a minimum number of participants. The Chief Executive may choose to invite the LSCB chair to the feedback meeting.
136. The LSCB Chair will usually be invited to this meeting unless the Chief Executive decides otherwise.
137. These individuals are invited to engage in this final discussion about the evidence supporting the provisional judgements, areas for improvement and areas of good practice in order to:
 - fully understand the key evidence that the team used to reach judgements to support improvement
 - take the opportunity to clarify any outstanding issues
 - participate in a dialogue about the areas for improvement that are likely to follow the inspection and to ensure that senior leaders fully understand the issues that have been identified

- to support understanding of the evidence so that the findings and judgements of the inspection can be disseminated accurately and inform internal discussions about improvement.
138. To make judgements clear and to inform the discussion with the local authority, inspectors should share their analysed, prioritised and themed summary evidence highlighting strengths and areas for improvement across the scope of the inspection in preparation. The presentation should not be scripted and the inspection team will not have or be expected to have produced the final report at this stage.
 139. The lead inspector will outline the team's final judgements. Then the inspection team will describe to the local authority the key evidence that supports their judgements and the areas where they have had debate. They will invite dialogue and discussion about what this means. The discussion should be child-focused and relate clearly to the scope of the inspection, looking at the experience of children and young people through evidenced examples. The lead inspector will ask each inspector to identify aspects of good practice that they have seen and have evidence for, and areas that they have identified that require improvement.
 140. The local authority should be engaged in the discussion about the evidence so that the areas for improvement are clear. The inspection team should be clear about what will make the most difference in this local authority and the children, young people and families that it serves.
 141. Before leaving the local authority area on the last day of fieldwork, the lead inspector must make clear the procedures for publishing the report and the complaints procedure.
 142. The lead inspector will confirm that the draft inspection reports will be sent to the DCS and the Chief Executive.

Section 3. Supplementary guidance

Issues of concern

143. Where serious issues of concern are identified – for example, a failure to follow child protection procedures and/or where a child is discovered to be at immediate risk of significant harm – the senior manager nominated by the local authority will be notified as soon as possible. Annex H will be used by inspectors to record the concerns and by the DCS to provide a response. Annex H should not be used to refer all cases where poor practice is identified. It applies only to those cases falling into categories one and two outlined below:
- **Category one:** A case that suggests a child is at risk and the local authority needs to act immediately. The local authority should report back the action they have taken to the lead inspector within a timescale agreed between the lead inspector and DCS – usually not longer than 24 hours.
 - **Category two:** A case that suggests the service offer/risk assessment for a particular child is not appropriate to their needs. The local authority's review of these cases is necessary for inspectors to come to a definitive view on the quality of practice.
144. The DCS will be asked to provide a response to any concerns raised through Annex H. Case details for other children in the family or household should be included where these are relevant. The response from the DCS will be evaluated by the inspector and the details will be provided to the DCS. Where this information is shared on paper, this will be stapled into an inspector's evidence notebook as part of the evidence base for the inspection.
145. Where there is evidence of significant concerns relating to the practice of other agencies, the relevant inspectorate will receive a pre-publication copy of the inspection report with a letter from HMCI setting out the concerns as laid out in the report and our advice that they may wish to investigate under their powers. There may be occasions where, due to the serious nature of the concern, we will share information with other inspectorates during the course of the inspection. It is the responsibility of the lead inspector to draft and submit letters to partner chief inspectors at the same time that the draft inspection report is submitted for quality assurance.
146. Where inspection evidence suggests that there are weaknesses in practice in other providers or agencies that Ofsted regulates or inspects, this information will be documented clearly in every inspection and will inform future inspections.

147. Inspectors should be familiar with Ofsted’s safeguarding policy and procedures²⁸ and follow the reporting arrangements, ensuring that Ofsted’s compliance, investigation and enforcement team are always notified via the National Business Unit helpline: 0300 123 1231 if they need advice. The quality assurance manager for the inspection and the Director of Social Care Inspection and Improvement will also be informed.

Inspecting commissioned services and delegated functions

148. Inspectors will look for adherence to the following principles where services have been commissioned from providers external to the local authority, and when considering contract management processes where local authority functions have been delegated to a third party provider:²⁹

- Positive outcomes and a child-centred approach which is ambitious for children and young people are at the heart of commissioning
- Commissioning focuses on ensuring resources are targeted on the authority’s priorities, which are based on a robust needs assessment
- The local authority consults relevant stakeholders before commissioning services
- Children, young people and families are actively involved in decisions to commission services and their feedback is used to improve services
- Tendering and procurement processes are well led, transparent, fair and inclusive
- Commissioned services are reviewed regularly, and de-commissioning takes place where services do not meet required standards , fail to deliver value for money or unnecessary duplication
- Commissioning promotes a sustainable, diverse and well managed market which is capable of being responsive to demographic change.

149. Where the local authority has voluntarily delegated some or all of its children’s social work services functions to a third party organisation, accountability for functions provided will rest with the local authority and the report will be in the name of the local authority. Inspectors should consider the quality of arrangements in the third party provider when applying the inspection framework guidance and relevant grade descriptors.

150. In instances of voluntary delegation, leadership, management and governance judgements should take into account the nature and extent of delegation. For example, where an authority has delegated all of its services to a third party

²⁸ *Ofsted safeguarding policy*, Ofsted, 2015; www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted-safeguarding-policy.

²⁹ See paragraphs 4–5 for further information

provider, inspectors should assess the effectiveness of these services as a whole. Where services are partially delegated, inspectors should consider the effectiveness of providers in terms of meeting the needs of the children and families that it is responsible for and whether the level of accountability between the third party provider and the local authority is proportionate.

151. Where services are delivered outside the direct control of a local authority on direction of the Secretary of State, any reference in this guidance to a “local authority” will mean the organisation or organisations exercising those statutory functions as the local authority’s agent. The inspection will be of the exercise of statutory functions and the inspection report will be in the name of the local authority. However, the inspection report will make clear which agency is attracting positive or negative findings.

Recording evidence

152. Throughout the inspection, each inspector will maintain contemporaneous records of the evidence obtained from all aspects of the inspection. Evidence must be recorded in a bound book (the evidence notebook), used for that inspection only, that is dated, legible and signed by the inspector. Evidence may be scrutinised for quality assurance monitoring and will be considered in the event of any complaint. Any written evidence provided by the local authority should be stapled into the notebook if it is considered material to the inspection, and if it has not already been stored electronically on the Ofsted SharePoint site.
153. Inspectors should take account of the following when compiling their evidence notebooks:
- Evidence should be clear, and the source, date and time of the meeting/recording of the evidence should be noted.
 - Evidence should be outcome-focused, evaluative and clearly linked to the evaluation schedule.
154. Inspectors may find it helpful take account of the following pointers when using their evidence notebooks:
- Maintain an index at the front of the evidence notebook that records the page, date and activity.
 - Keep a running record at the back of the book of case numbers of the cases seen and a brief note about relevant strengths and weaknesses so they can more easily aggregate findings throughout the inspection.

- On a regular basis throughout the day, as soon as they can after observations or meetings, they should write short evaluative summaries of practice to inform their aggregate recording in the summary of evidence and analysis (the SEA). Tracked cases should be entered into the case tracking evaluation template (Annex F). No individual entry is required to be made to the SEA unless serious concerns about the safety and welfare of the child are identified. Following the case tracking meeting, aggregated analysis of all tracked cases against each of the criteria set out in Annex F will be recorded in the SEA.
 - SEA entries should be evaluative, expressing clearly the inspector's view about the quality and effectiveness of practice, rather than simply describing what practice is in place.
155. Inspectors should maintain the SEA that becomes part of the shared evidence for the inspection. The detailed evidence is held in the inspection notebook. The SEA is a summary of the inspectors' evaluation and individual entries may relate to more than one source of evidence or more than one case.
156. The lead inspector will coordinate the SEA, with scrutiny and challenge by the QA manager. Strand coordinators will both contribute entries and monitor those made by other inspectors. They should identify gaps and completed lines of enquiry at an early stage and discuss these regularly with the lead inspector. Although inspectors will need some time to reflect on and analyse their findings before recording in the SEA, they should make their SEA entries by the end of Week One on site and then within a maximum of two days after they collect evidence for the remainder of the inspection. All SEA entries must be made by the morning of Wednesday in Week Four. These timescales will ensure that the SEA remains up to date throughout the inspection and ensure that the feedback meeting is informed by a robust and up to date analysis of the evidence. Reports must be based on robust inspection evidence, so that all findings are supported by relevant SEA entries.
157. Inspectors should write with clarity, impact and accuracy, avoiding jargon, passive verbs, repetition and poor vocabulary. They should quantify the extent of the practice they are evaluating. Volume is less important than quality of evidence and writing for impact. A three-part structure for SEA entries can help to achieve this. Start with an overall evaluative statement about the aspect of practice being considered, then briefly summarise the evidence underpinning this statement and end with a comment on the consequences for children and young people - the impact. This will help to ensure that the impact of inspection findings is clear, both to inform judgements and in the final report.
158. The SEA must include analyses of findings agreed at team meetings and clearly identify any areas of significant concern or outstanding practice. Where Annex H of the handbook is used to flag cases of concern, a summary of the issues and the local authority's responses must be recorded in the SEA.

159. The Senior HMI carrying out the quality assurance function will make entries within the SEA which confirm when they have reviewed it. These entries will include the Senior HMI's analysis of the SEA and, for example, identify areas for further investigation.
160. The SEA should not include anything that could identify individual staff, individual children, young people or family members. Only job titles of staff and case reference numbers and/or initials of cases should be recorded.
161. Ofsted will retain the SEA in accordance with its published retention policy.³⁰

Writing the report

162. The lead inspector will identify specific inspectors for writing sections of the report. The lead inspector is responsible for collating all the information into a final report following fieldwork and is accountable for its quality and integrity. In turn, each strand coordinator or team inspector who writes sections to be included in the report is accountable for the quality of their written contribution and the integrity of the evidence that it contains. The draft report should be of a quality that requires little or no further editing.
163. Reports should be:
- concise, evaluative documents, written in clear, straightforward language and free of jargon
 - a fair and accurate reflection of the local area being inspected, with text, balance and tone that reflect the quality of children's experiences
 - aligned closely to the inspection requirements as set out in the relevant guidance, framework and evaluation schedule
 - written so that they highlight outstanding practice and identify clear areas of strength and improvement for the local authority; the report must strike a balance between being accessible to a wider audience and being of value to the local authority
 - based on robust inspection evidence and outline judgements in line with published criteria from the evaluation schedule
 - accessible and include a summary section that is written for children and young people
 - sufficiently clear, precise and detailed about areas for development to give the local authority a good basis for subsequent action to lead to improvement.

³⁰ Handling and retention of inspection evidence (100122), Ofsted, 2010; www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/100122.

Executive summary

164. This section of the report will describe the findings and judgements about the quality of services that children receive and which impact upon their experiences and progress. It will outline the current state of the service, including whether any statutory services are delegated, and will focus upon the safety of children, the quality of service for children looked after and the strength of management in developing and maintaining an effective children's service. The improvement steps that have been taken by the local authority and its partners to secure better outcomes for children will always be included together with the progress that has been made as a result. This will always include reference to the extent to which the local authority focuses on children's needs, the quality of its leadership, the capacity and capability of its workforce, performance management, strength of its partnerships, and its ability to engage with its community and wider stakeholders.

Recommendations

165. Recommendations must help the local authority fully understand the areas of the service that require improvement to ensure that children receive a good or better service. They will be unequivocal in setting out where statutory guidance is not followed and as a result good outcomes for children are not supported. Recommendations will specify where inspectors judge that they need to be prioritised. They should be written in a style that supports the local authority to convert them to actions with measurable outcomes that can be incorporated into its improvement plan.

166. Recommendations will be kept to a minimum, proportionate to the overall inspection findings and focus on those areas that the local authority has not previously identified itself or is not addressing sufficiently already.

All other sections of the report

167. Inspectors should inspect against the full evaluation schedule, identifying the key aspects of practice that support the judgements, including strengths and weaknesses.

168. While all areas of the evaluation schedule must be inspected, the report should focus on the key strengths and weaknesses. Inspectors do not need to write a section of the report about each of the evaluation schedule criteria, but they must include enough detail in the report to support their judgement. Reports should focus on the experiences of children and young people according to the scope of the inspection.

169. Where children and young people are supported by a third party provider operating under delegated functions,³¹ strengths and areas for improvement must include the extent to which the local authority assures itself of the effectiveness of help, protection and care given to children, young people, families and carers, including the effectiveness of the contract management and quality assurance arrangements. In these circumstances, inspectors look at how children are supported to feedback to the local authority and, where necessary, complain about the quality of care and support they receive from the third party provider.
170. For all issues reported, inspectors must make clear the extent of the issue, the experience that children and young people have and the progress they make. The report must also outline the local authority's knowledge about these children and the effectiveness of their response. If any specific group of children is particularly affected – such as those from a specific age, community or ethnic group, disabled children, or those with a specific placement type (for example, fostered children) – this must be included in the report.
171. Inspectors must report the key strengths and weaknesses in respect of the experiences and progress of children and young people:
- at all the key threshold/decision-making points
 - who are homeless at the age of 16 (including accommodation arrangements for young people aged 16 and over. This must specifically address the number of looked after children living in bed and breakfast accommodation and those in houses of multiple occupation.)
 - missing from home or care
 - missing from education
 - who have been or who are neglected or physically, sexually or emotionally abused
 - at risk of sexual exploitation or who are known to be being exploited
 - at risk of or who are known to have suffered female genital mutilation (FGM)
 - who are looked after and are living outside of the local authority area
 - and whether the planning for their futures is clearly based on permanent alternatives that meet their needs (including the extent to which families are supported where the plan is for the child to return home)
 - and whether they are making educational progress if they are looked after

³¹ The Children and Young Persons Act 2008 (Relevant Care Functions) (England) Regulations 2014; www.legislation.gov.uk/id/uksi/2014/2407

- receiving and being aware of their rights and entitlements as a child or young person looked after or as a care leaver
- waiting for adoption (including any shortfall in the number of approved adopters)
- in need of adoption support services.

172. Inspectors must also report key strengths and weaknesses in relation to:

- The effectiveness of the local authority in meeting the 'Prevent Duty' in relation to safeguarding children (where the local authority has been identified as a Home Office priority area³² or the lines of enquiry have identified particular concerns)
- the recruitment, retention and sufficiency of foster carers
- the local authority's knowledge about domestic abuse, parental substance misuse and the mental ill health of parents or carers
- performance against the DfE adoption scorecard in the context of our judgement and evidence.

173. As part of the leadership, management and governance judgement, inspectors must report key strengths and weaknesses in relation to:

- how well the leaders and managers know the strengths and weaknesses of their services, including their direct knowledge of the effectiveness of frontline practice, and how well they lead improvement in professional practice
- how effective leaders are at creating the right environment for social work to flourish, including learning and development (and whether learning from SCRs is effective) and workloads (including management oversight, guidance and direction)
- the impact of commissioning and sufficiency arrangements, including (if applicable) the effectiveness of contract management arrangements between a local authority and a third party provider to which local authority functions have been delegated.
- (if applicable) the effectiveness of leadership, management and governance arrangements between the Chief Executive and DCS in the local authority, and the leadership structure of any third party provider to which statutory functions have been delegated

174. Further guidance for inspectors on the links between these reporting areas, inspection information collected through Annex A and the evaluation schedule can be found in Annex M.

³² This will be included in the pre-inspection briefing.

175. The final version of the reports will be published on the Ofsted website and a copy will be sent to the local authority, and to either the Chair of Children in Care Council and/or the worker who supports the council to share with children and young people and their families.

Quality assurance

176. All inspectors are responsible for the quality of the inspection and are accountable for the quality of their contributions to the inspection report, with the lead inspector taking overall responsibility. As the inspection team is responsible for the inspection, all issues should, wherever possible, be resolved within the team, with oversight by the lead.

177. Each inspection will have a lead quality assurance (QA) manager assigned by Ofsted (usually the line manager of the lead inspector). The QA manager will be available on site at key stages during the inspection to provide support and challenge. They will also help to ensure:

- consistent use of the inspection framework, evaluation criteria and emerging evidence
- that there is additional support for any lead inspector undertaking their first inspection as the lead
- that emerging concerns or deficiencies about inspection evidence are quickly addressed
- that there is specificity and early discussion about emerging inadequate judgements
- that the Director of Children's Services and senior managers understand the progress of the inspection and confirm that it is being properly conducted
- that the work of each inspector is assessed and evaluated as part of performance management system at Ofsted.

178. The role of the QA manager is to assess and consider the evidence base to ensure that judgements are robust. They will also ensure that evidence has been gathered in accordance with the published methodology. They will provide support and guidance to the lead/team and oversee the final report to publication.

179. All inspectors are expected to quality assure their own and other inspectors' work during inspections. The lead inspector has overall responsibility for ensuring that all the evidence gathered is robust, reliable and secure.

180. A QA manager will speak to the lead inspector and inspection team. They will also attend any inspection team meetings taking place during their visit. This inspector will always seek views from the local authority on the conduct of the

inspection. The QA manager will sample the way that evidence is being gathered and test the local authority's understanding of the emerging findings.

181. Ofsted will ask the local authority to complete a short evaluation form after each inspection. Feedback will be used to improve the quality of inspections and reviews. The lead inspector will provide the evaluation forms at the start of the inspection. They will each ask for the local authority's views on the inspection reports so responses should not be submitted until after the final report has been published.
182. The post-inspection questionnaire should not be used to feedback any issues as they arise on the inspection or to raise concerns about the conduct of individual inspectors. These issues should be communicated directly to the lead inspector and/or quality assurance manager so they can be resolved as soon as possible in a sensitive and appropriate manner.

The moderation process

183. The purpose of the moderation process is to ensure consistent and fair judgements. At each stage of the moderation process, judgements are scrutinised against the analysis of evidence. The National Director, Social Care makes the final decision about the judgements. In the vast majority of inspections, the provisional judgements given to local authorities on site on the Thursday of week four do not change.
184. After fieldwork is completed, the lead inspector reviews the evidence and drafts the inspection report. The quality assurance manager will offer challenge and support to confirm that the provisional judgements and presentation of findings in the report are supported by the evidence.
185. The draft inspection report is then submitted to the consistency panel (see paragraphs 190–198). The lead inspector and quality assurance manager will consider any recommendations from the panel and, where the panel has questioned whether the analysis of the evidence supports the judgement(s), the lead inspector will review the evidence. The lead inspector will be given the opportunity to make changes to the report to ensure that the analysis of the evidence supports the judgement.
186. The inspection report is then subject to further quality assurance before being reviewed by the relevant Regional Director, and signed off by the Director, Social Care and/or HMCI. The Director, Social Care makes the final decision about the judgements. Any revisions will be made in consultation with the Regional Director, quality assurance manager and lead inspector.
187. At any stage of the quality assurance process, the Director, Social Care may conclude that there is insufficient evidence to enable a secure judgement to be reached. The Director, Social Care will inform the DCS and arrange to gather

more evidence through our policy on *Gathering additional evidence to secure an incomplete inspection: Ofsted-related protocol*.³³

The consistency panel: terms of reference

188. The purpose of the panel is to support consistency of judgements relating to the single inspection programme. To do so, it will test consistency:
- within the individual inspection report
 - across the specific inspection block
 - across the inspection programme
 - in relation to the published evaluation schedule.
189. To achieve this purpose, the consistency panel will consider whether:
- the provisional judgements and presentation of findings are supported by the evidence
 - the executive summary clearly explains the reasons why a particular judgement has been reached
 - the recommendations are clear, specific, proportionate and will support improvement
 - the executive summary accurately reflects the recommendations
 - there are any lessons learnt that should be disseminated to all inspectors that would support consistency in future inspections.
190. The consistency panels meet in week six of every inspection block. They will be chaired by the Director, Social Care or by a nominated deputy
191. All lead inspectors from that block and the Senior HMIs who undertook a quality assurance role will attend the panel. Two SHMIs who are independent of the the inspection reports being considered and one HMI or SHMI from the social care policy team also attend. The lead inspector and SHMI will complete the first draft of the report and ensure it is circulated two days before the consistency panel meets. The attendees will read the reports before the consistency panel.
192. The consistency panel's role is not to change the judgements. The panel will test whether the provisional judgement and the analysis of evidence are supported by the evidence.

³³ *Gathering additional evidence to secure an incomplete inspection: Ofsted-related protocol*, Ofsted, 2014; www.gov.uk/government/publications/flawed-inspections-ofsted-related-protocol

193. The consistency panel will also make observations as to the relative consistency of judgements within the inspection block and programme as a whole, including the number and nature of any recommendations and strengths.

194. The lead inspector and quality assurance manager will consider any recommendations from the panel and, where the panel has questioned whether the analysis of the evidence supports the judgement(s), the lead inspector will review the evidence. The lead inspector will be given the opportunity to make changes to the report to ensure that the analysis of the evidence supports the judgement.

195. After any appropriate amendments suggested at the consistency panel are addressed, the report will be further quality assured.

HMCI remains responsible for final sign-off of all inspection reports but may nominate a deputy to fulfil this role.

196. All recommendations and learning will be recorded in the minutes and sent to the attendees. Continuous learning will be disseminated through the SHMI monthly meetings and other appropriate inspectors' forums.

Complaints

197. The great majority of Ofsted's work is carried out smoothly and without incident. If concerns arise during an inspection, these should be raised with the lead inspector or quality assurance manager as soon as possible during the inspection visit. This provides an opportunity to resolve the matter before the inspection is completed. Any concerns about the factual accuracy of the findings in the report can be raised after the inspection and will be considered as part of the quality assurance process.

198. If it has not been possible to resolve concerns through these means, a formal complaint can be raised under Ofsted's complaints procedure:
www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted.

Section 4. re-inspection of inadequate local authorities

199. This section of the guidance outlines arrangements for re-inspections when Ofsted decides to undertake a post-monitoring single inspection rather than a full single inspection. Unless otherwise stated within this section, inspectors will follow the single inspection framework and the other sections in this handbook.
200. Ofsted will usually re-inspect a local authority judged inadequate at its last inspection within two years of it submitting its action plan. The deadline for the local authority to submit its action plan is within 70 working days of receiving its pre-publication inspection report. A re-inspection will not usually take place until there have been at between four and six quarterly monitoring visits. This is because our evidence shows it is unlikely a local authority will be able to demonstrate sufficient improvement to alter its inspection outcome in less than a year.
201. Ofsted will tell the local authority when they decide that a re-inspection is the appropriate next step. At this point no further monitoring visits will be scheduled. Ofsted will not tell the local authority when that re-inspection will take place. The timing of the inspection is not within a prescribed timeframe but will be in the coming months. Ofsted will want to see that the improvements identified in the monitoring visits have been maintained.
202. Local authorities found to be inadequate across all or most areas will receive a full repeat single inspection. For local authorities in which inadequacy is less widespread – for example, a local authority that is inadequate in either, help and protection or children looked after – Ofsted may undertake a ‘post-monitoring single inspection’ instead.
203. The scope of the post-monitoring single inspection is the same as the single inspection and inspectors will make the same judgements. Inspectors will be on site for less time than in a full inspection under the SIF. The shorter fieldwork is possible because of the substantial body of evidence gathered by Ofsted on its quarterly monitoring visits.
204. Ofsted re-inspects local authorities under section 136 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

Decision to undertake a post-monitoring single inspection

205. The decision to undertake a post-monitoring single inspection lies with the Ofsted regional leadership team. The decision will be informed by:
- information gathered during the quarterly monitoring visits
 - the local authority’s evaluation of its improvement journey and performance, including whether they consider they are ready for re-inspection
 - the view of the Department for Education

- performance data
- other regional intelligence, for example inspection outcomes of regulated settings run by the local authority.

Decision making process for conduction a post-monitoring single inspection



Deployment for post-monitoring single inspection

206. The inspection team will usually be four social care HMI. The team size may change to reflect circumstances, size and complexity of the inspection or local authority. The inspection team will include HMI who undertook monitoring visits in the local authority. This will usually be the HMI who led the monitoring visits.
207. A senior analytical officer from Ofsted may be on site for up to two days in week one and one day in week two. When they are not on site, they will support the inspection remotely.

Pre-inspection

208. The lead inspector will have two planning days, up to three weeks before the inspection fieldwork. These two days will be for the lead inspector to identify areas where there is already substantial, up-to-date evidence from the monitoring visits that will only require final triangulation during the inspection. The days will also be used to determine any lines of enquiry in addition to the areas of weakness identified at the last inspection. This will enable the inspection team to be more targeted in its evaluations of practice, leadership and management.
209. Data analysts will provide a pre-inspection briefing (PIB). The PIB will focus on:
- relevant data/information published by the local authority
 - national data trends and comparisons
 - data and trends from monitoring visits
 - other intelligence, for example serious incident notifications and whistleblowing
 - links to significant and relevant published documents, for example serious case reviews and other relevant inspection reports

210. The lead will determine which documentation from the single inspection framework (SIF) Annex A is required from the local authority at the start of the inspection.

Notice period

211. The lead inspector will notify the director of children’s services two days before they arrive on site. This will usually be the Thursday before fieldwork.

Inspection activity

212. The inspection activity on a post-monitoring single inspection will mirror the full single inspection. However, we will not ask the local authority to audit a sample of children’s cases for the inspection. Inspectors will ask for a list of children’s cases that the local authority has audited in the past three months. Inspectors will track and sample some of these children’s cases using the guidance and recording tools in the single inspection handbook. They will also sample some randomly identified children’s cases.

213. All inspectors’ evaluations of practice, leadership and management will be benchmarked against the grade descriptors within the single inspection framework. Inspectors’ evaluations will be made based on evidence gathered during the inspection, but inspectors will also rely on the substantial evidence base from recent monitoring visits to help develop robust lines of enquiry and to triangulate their findings. Where findings from monitoring visits indicate strong performance, inspectors will only sample sufficient cases to satisfy themselves that this performance has been maintained or improved.

Inspection fieldwork – indicative timeline

Day	Day of week	Activity
Two days – up to three weeks before		Lead inspector planning days
-2	Thursday	Local authority notified of the inspection (AM). Lead inspector requests information to support the inspection.
1	Monday	All inspectors travel (PM) lead inspector on site PM to set up the inspection.
2 – 4	Tuesday – Thursday	Onsite evidence gathering
5	Friday	Case tracking meeting (AM). QAM on site. Travel (PM)
6	Monday	Travel (PM)
7 – 8	Tuesday – Wednesday	Onsite evidence gathering
9	Thursday	Mop up activity (AM) Provisional judgement meeting (PM) QAM on site
10	Friday	Confirm judgements. Feedback (late AM). Travel (PM) QAM on site

Communicating with the director of children's services

214. The lead inspector will carry out one keeping in touch (KIT) meeting per day, including the final day of week one. There will not be any further feedback at the end of week one. Feedback arrangements on the final day of inspection will mirror those for a full single inspection.

The post-monitoring single inspection report

215. The inspection report will include:

- a one-page executive summary
- up to two pages per key judgement summarising the key strengths and weaknesses
- a one-page summary of the graded judgements
- recommendations for improvement.

216. A post-monitoring single inspection report should not usually exceed 12 pages in total.

After the inspection

217. Arrangements to sign off and check the factual accuracy of the report will mirror the single inspection handbook.

218. If the inspection determines that the local authority remains inadequate, Ofsted will continue to carry out monitoring visits. In the event that the Secretary of State appoints a Children's Services Commissioner or begins the process of removing service control from the local authority, Ofsted will consult with DfE about next steps.

Annex A. Identifying cases for tracking and sampling, including management and performance information

Introduction

This annex sets out a number of requirements for local authorities in respect of the inspection. It includes requests to:

- provide child-level data so that the lead inspector can establish those that will be tracked and sampled
- provide the most up-to-date performance information used by the local authority to manage services for looked after children and child protection (including early help for families)
- review the context section of the inspection report called *information about this local authority area*.

Details of planned multi-agency meetings

The details of multi-agency meetings planned to take place during the fieldwork period – including: initial and review child protection conferences; looked after children reviews; multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARAC); core groups; planned strategy discussions and legal planning meetings – should be provided to the lead inspector, who may specify the geographical areas to be covered. These will be reviewed on a regular basis between the lead inspector and the local authority during the inspection.

Child-level data for the case sample and case tracking

When the lead inspector contacts the local authority, she/he will ask for lists containing child-level data. The local authority should provide the child-level data lists as soon as they are able. The table below sets out expected deadlines for submission. Please provide these lists in Excel.

The table below is an outline of the broad contents of each list. Further detailed guidance about the fields for each list is available at www.gov.uk/government/publications/inspecting-local-authority-childrens-services-framework.

To reduce burden on local authorities we have aligned the information within the child-level lists with Department for Education guidance.³⁴ If possible please use descriptors and codes in line with the DfE 'common basic data set' and Department for Education definitions.³⁵ If this is not possible, the local authority should provide a description or metadata explaining the codes they use.

Child protection		
List	Submission date – Stage 1	Submission date – Stage 2
1. All those who have been the subject of a contact in the three months prior to inspection	Week one (Tuesday am)	Not applicable
2. All those who have been the subject of an early help assessment, a common assessment or a targeted intervention in the six months prior to inspection	Week One (Thursday am)	Not applicable
3. All those who have been the subject of a referral in the three months prior to inspection	Week One (Tuesday am)	Not applicable
4. All those who have been the subject of a statutory assessment in accordance with section 17 or section 47 of the Children Act 1989 in the six months prior to inspection	Week One (Tuesday am)	Week One (end of Friday)
5. All those who have been the subject of a section 47 enquiry in the six months prior to inspection	Week One (Tuesday am)	Week One (end of Friday)
6. All those in receipt of services as a child in need at the point of inspection and those who ceased to receive services as a child in need in the three months prior to inspection	Week One (Tuesday am)	Week One (end of Friday)
7. All those who are the subject of a child protection plan at the point of inspection and those who ceased to be the subject of a child protection plan in the three months prior to inspection	Week One (Tuesday am)	Week One (end of Friday)
Children looked after and care leavers		
List	Submission date – stage 1	Submission date – stage 2
8. All those children looked after as at the point of inspection and all those children who ceased to	Week One (end of Tuesday)	Week Two (end of Tuesday)

³⁴ Children looked after return 2017 to 2018: guide, October 2017;
www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-looked-after-return-2017-to-2018-guide

Children in need census 2016 to 2017: guide, November 2016;
www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-in-need-census-2016-to-2017-guide

³⁵ Common basic data set (CBDS): database, October 2017;
www.gov.uk/government/publications/common-basic-data-set-cbds-database

be looked after in the six months prior to inspection		
9. All those care leavers who are receiving leaving care services as at the point of inspection	Week One (end of Tuesday)	Week Two (end of Tuesday)
10. All those children who have been adopted in the 12 months prior to inspection, those where the decision that the child should be placed for adoption has been made but they have not yet been adopted, and those who had an adoption decision which was subsequently reversed during the period.	Week One (end of Tuesday)	Week Two (end of Tuesday)
11. All those individuals who in the last 12 months have had contact with the local authority adoption agency by having: (a) made an enquiry, received an information pack and attended a follow-up interview; and/or (b) had an enquiry or application in progress 12 months ago and have subsequently been approved/rejected; and/or (c) had a child placed with them in the last 12 months	Week One (end of Tuesday)	Week Two (end of Tuesday)

Some children may appear on more than one list. The consistent use of the child ID across the lists will enable the lead inspector to recognise where this occurs.

For lists 3 to 10, please provide only one row for each unique child ID where possible. Information should relate to the most event (for example: in list 3, the most recent referral; or in list 6, the most recent episode of need).

Some of the requested data – particularly in relation to list 1 ‘contacts’ and list 2 ‘early help assessments’ – may not be recorded on the main ICT systems. In these circumstances, the local authority is free to use the solution that suits it best and enables them to provide the data in the timeframe requested. Whatever the format, the data should be clearly identifiable.

For list 8, it would assist inspectors to have information about the number of brothers and sisters each child has. This will help them when they select the children whose experiences they will evaluate. The local authority can choose how to provide this information. Two possible options for this are:

- including an extra column in list eight showing the number of brothers and sisters that each child in care has
- providing a separate Excel sheet containing each child in list eight with their unique child ID and the number of brothers and sisters that each child has.

If certain data are unavailable, we will ask the local authority to demonstrate how they have sufficient management oversight of the specific issue.

After the local authority share annex A, we may arrange a brief telephone conversation between an Ofsted analytical officer and a local authority analyst. This is to help us understand the composition and content of the local authority's information and the layout of their management information systems.

Queries about the child-level data should be sent to SocialCareSAO@ofsted.gov.uk. However, if you have any queries after you have been notified that an inspection is to take place, please contact the lead inspector

Performance information required to support the inspection

The lead inspector will also ask for documented performance information to help understand the work of the local authority. It should not be all documents that the authority holds that refer to the topics listed below. This needs to be the local authority's **best**, and **most recent** evidence. Where multiple documents are provided, the local authority must clearly direct the lead inspector to the relevant sections so that inspection time can be used effectively. Where the reason for presenting a document is unclear or if the information is unprocessed or unfit for the purpose of strategic understanding, the document will be returned unread. The information provided should be the information that the local authority is currently using to understand and manage its own performance.

Each of the topics has been numbered sequentially. When the local authority provides the information to the inspection team, they should include the number in the document name as a prefix. This will enable inspectors to easily identify and retrieve information and support the local authority to link their evidence to the topic.

- **1.01 organisational structure** showing lines of reporting and accountability (including, where relevant, for third party providers who exercise functions delegated to them as the agent of the local authority)
- **1.02** arrangements for **decision-making, workflow and case management**
- **1.03 monthly management information reports** for child protection and looked after children, at **both** team (locality) and departmental level
- **1.04** the **workforce profile** for social care staff working with children in need, children subject to child protection plans, children looked after and care leavers (including: the number of qualified social workers and their post-qualifying experience; the number of vacancies for permanent staff; the number of locum/agency staff; the extent of staff turnover/stability and sickness levels; and average caseloads of staff by team)
- **1.05** the **training and development strategy** for the workforce, including arrangements to accommodate **feedback from children and families** and **learning from case and serious case reviews**
- **1.06 social work caseload and supervision** policy

- **1.07 assessment and threshold criteria** for helping families, protecting children and looking after them
- **1.08** number of **complaints and follow-up** activity
- **1.09 local strategic needs analysis**, including the number of children living in homes where there is a **parent/carer** known to be receiving treatment for **drug or alcohol misuse, known to be suffering from mental ill health and/or experiencing domestic abuse**. This should also include details of any commissioned services in support of children and families living in these circumstances. The number and needs of looked after children and care leavers should also be included in respect of the provision of **sufficient placements and choices** for care leavers.
- **1.10** details of findings from any **peer review** type activity of child protection or services for looked after children within the last 12 months
- **1.11 the annual report by the local safeguarding partners**
- **1.12 the safeguarding arrangements agreed by the local safeguarding partners**
- **1.13 minutes** from the last 12 months of meetings of the local safeguarding partners

Children in need of help and/or protection

- **2.01 early help strategy and impact analysis**, including management information on **availability of services** (family support), **numbers of families receiving help** following an early help assessment or similar (CAF) in the last 12 months
- **2.02 sample practice audits, including some that are multi-agency** over the six months prior to inspection and associated **improvement/action plans**
- **2.03** a report on those children known to the local authority who are currently being **privately fostered**. This report should include for each child:
 - child unique ID, date of birth
 - date private fostering arrangement commenced
- **2.04 number of young people placed under secure accommodation welfare orders** (section 25 of the Children Act 1989)
- **2.05 number of children who are electively home educated** known to the authority
- **2.06** a report on children, for whom the local authority is responsible, who are of school age and **who are not in receipt of full-time school education** at the time of inspection. This report should include for each child:
 - child unique ID or UPN, date of birth

- type of educational provision that they are receiving, including home tuition
 - number of hours provision per week (in particular whether they are receiving more or less than 25 hours per week)
 - type of exclusion (if the child has been excluded)
 - date when alternative provision commenced.
- **2.07** a report on all **children missing from home or care**. The report should include for each child:
- child unique ID and date of birth (where available)³⁶
 - number of episodes when the child or young person has been missing
 - a short summary of action and decisions
 - details about whether they are known to be vulnerable to sexual exploitation.

Children looked after and care leavers

- **3.01 strategic plan for looked after children, including corporate parenting objectives, education and housing priorities, planning for permanence and children’s futures**
- **3.02 Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) strategy**, including length of waiting time and average length of help offered
- **3.03 commissioning and sufficiency** strategy
- **3.04** annual report of the **Virtual Head Teacher**
- **3.05 sample practice audits, including some that are multi-agency** over the six months prior to inspection and associated **improvement/action plans**
- **3.06** management report of the **independent reviewing officer service**
- **3.07** evidence from **complaints and feedback** from **children and families**
- **3.08** evidence on **educational progress and outcomes**, including data on attainment, progress, attendance, exclusion, personal education plans, alternative educational provision, employment and training at age 16
- **3.09** the local family justice board minutes from the last six months
- **3.10** evidence of children’s health, including data on health (physical, psychological and emotional) assessments and dental checks.

³⁶ There may be children about whom the police have concerns but who may not be known to the local authority. In these cases there will be no unique ID available. For the purpose of the meetings between inspectors and the local authority/police leads for missing children in weeks one and three of the inspection, it is expected that the police will share information about children known to them to be missing or vulnerable to sexual exploitation. See paragraph 27 and Annex M for further information.

Information about the local authority area

All reports include a section about the local authority area. This information is important for understanding the context in which the local authority operates. The information required to populate this section will come from either published information that is available for all local authority areas or from the most up-to-date information available within the local authority.³⁷ The lead inspector will make the final decision about whether and what updates to include in the report.

The content of this section must be referenced in the main body of the report, where required, to understand the inspection findings. All outliers should be fully explored and explained in the report and specifically in respect of their impact on the judgement of which they form a part. The items in this section are:

Previous Ofsted inspections

- The local authority operates XXX children’s homes. XXX were judged to be good or outstanding in their most recent Ofsted inspection.
- The previous inspection of the local authority’s safeguarding arrangements / arrangements for the protection of children was in MONTH YEAR. The local authority was judged to be XXX.
- The previous inspection of the local authority’s services for looked after children was in MONTH YEAR. The local authority was judged to be XXX.

Local leadership

- The Director of Children’s Services has been in post since MMM/YYYY.
- (Delete if not applicable) The DCS is also responsible for (e.g. Adult services)
- The Chief Executive has been in post since MMM/YYYY.
- (Delete if not applicable) The functions that the local authority has delegated to a third-party provider are:
 - XXX
 - XXX
- The local authority has commissioned out XXX services (Delete if not applicable – this bullet only needs to be included where the commissioning of a service can be directly linked to a subsequent change, positive or negative, in the experiences and progress of children.)

³⁷ The information we require from the local authority is highlighted in red. Ofsted will source all other information from either published information or the most recent information we hold. Where we ask for the most up-to-date information from a local authority, this should preferably be as at the point of inspection. If this is not possible, we will accept information from the most recent monthly or quarterly performance report. Please note that all figures used in this section should be rounded to the nearest whole number

- The local authority uses the **XXX** model of social work.

Children living in this area

- Approximately **XXX** children and young people under the age of 18 years live in **XXX**. This is **XX%** of the total population in the area.
- Approximately **XX%** of the local authority's children aged under 16 years are living in low income families.
- The proportion of children entitled to free school meals:
 - in primary schools is **XX%** (the national average is **XX%**)
 - in secondary schools is **XX%** (the national average is **XX%**)
- Children and young people from minority ethnic groups account for **XX%** of all children living in the area, compared with **XX%** in the country as a whole.
- The largest minority ethnic groups of children and young people in the area are **XXX** and **XXX**.
- The proportion of children and young people with English as an additional language:
 - in primary schools is **XX%** (the national average is **XX%**).
 - in secondary schools is **XX%** (the national average is **XX%**).
- **Additional contextual statement (example): A large Traveller and Eastern European population seeks seasonal work in the agricultural parts of the county, but is not resident.**

Child protection in this area

- At **INSERT DATE**, **XXX** children had been identified through assessment as being formally in need of a specialist children's service. This is a reduction/increase from **XXX** at 31 March **YYYY**.
- At **INSERT DATE**, **XXX** children and young people were the subject of a child protection plan (a rate of **XXX** per 10,000 children). This is a reduction/increase from **XXX** (**XXX** per 10,000 children) at 31 March **YYYY**.
- At **INSERT DATE**, **XXX** children lived in a privately arranged fostering placement. This is a reduction/increase from **XXX** at 31 March **YYYY**.
- In the two years before inspection, **XXX** serious incident notifications have been submitted to Ofsted and **XXX** serious case reviews have been completed.
- There are **XXX** serious case reviews ongoing at the time of the inspection.

Children looked after in this area

- At **INSERT DATE**, **XXX** children are being looked after by the local authority (a rate of **XXX** per 10,000 children). This is a reduction/increase from **XXX** (**XXX** per 10,000 children) at 31 March YYYY.
 - Of this number, **XXX** (or **XX%**) live outside the local authority area
 - **XXX** live in residential children’s homes, of whom **XX%** live out of the authority area
 - **XXX** live in residential special schools,³⁸ of whom **XX%** live out of the authority area
 - **XXX** live with foster families, of whom **XX%** live out of the authority area
 - **XXX** live with parents, of whom **XX%** live out of the authority area
 - **XXX** children are unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.

- In the last 12 months:
 - there have been **XXX** adoptions
 - **XXX** children became subject of special guardianship orders
 - **XXX** children ceased to be looked after, of whom **XX%** subsequently returned to be looked after
 - **XXX** children and young people ceased to be looked after and moved on to independent living
 - **XXX** children and young people ceased to be looked after and are now living in houses of multiple occupation.

³⁸ These are residential special schools that look after children for 295 days or less per year.

Annex B. inspection notification emails

Email to notify Director of Children’s Services of the start of the inspection (SIF)

Dear [insert name of Director of Children’s Services]

Inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers– [insert name of council]

This email is to inform you that tomorrow [insert date] Ofsted inspectors will arrive on site in [insert LA name] to begin an inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers.

Week One	Week Two	Week Three	Week Four
Small inspection team on site Tuesday to Thursday (3 days)	Inspection team off-site	Full inspection team on site Tuesday to Thursday (3 days)	Full inspection team on site Tuesday to Thursday (3 days)

I have spoken to [insert name and title of manager or ‘to you’] to inform **him/her/you** that the inspection will commence in line with the guidance published on our website.

We will be tracking cases, which will involve visiting offices to talk to staff, reading files and considering and observing front-line practice. It is probable that we will identify cases to track in the first week as a result of our scrutiny of the contact referral assessment team and the cases of the ten most recently looked-after children. If this occurs it will require the arrangements to be made expediently and I will talk to you about how best to achieve this.

To help identify cases to track and practice to observe, I will need lists of children and young people who are within the scope of the inspection and any meetings that will take place during the inspection. When compiling this information please refer to Annex A of the framework and evaluation schedule and the supplementary guidance. These documents are available on Ofsted’s website:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/inspecting-local-authority-childrens-services-framework

Can I take this opportunity to emphasise that it will be most helpful to have details of up to date data on child sexual exploitation and missing children during the course of the first week of inspection. This information will be discussed at a meeting on Thursday of week one between the senior nominated leads for missing children for the local authority and the police so should be provided on the Wednesday of week one.

Please provide this information in whatever format is easiest for you to produce. Once I have this data, I will select a sample of cases and ask you to audit these during Week Two of the inspection.

An online portal has been established to receive all Annex A information. Details for uploading information to this portal are in a guidance note appended to this letter.

All inspections are subject to a quality assurance process undertaken by a named quality assurance manager. If there are any issues the inspection team cannot resolve, you may wish to discuss these in the first instance with the manager for this inspection. This person is [**insert name**] and can be contacted on [**insert number/email**].

Email to notify Director of Children’s Services of the start of the inspection (post-monitoring SIF)

Dear (insert name of Director of Children’s Services)

Re-inspection of local authority children’s services judged inadequate – (insert name of council)

This email is to inform you that I will arrive onsite on (insert date) to begin a re-inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers. The rest of the inspection team will arrive onsite the following morning. The inspection will take place over a two-week period.

Week One	Week Two
Lead inspector on site Monday afternoon to set-up the inspection. Full inspection team on site Tuesday to Friday (4 days)	Full inspection team on site Tuesday to Friday (4 days)

I have spoken to (insert name and title of manager or ‘to you’) to inform him/her/you that the inspection will commence in line with the guidance published on our website.

We will be tracking cases, which will involve visiting offices to talk to staff, reading files and considering and observing front-line practice. We will identify cases to track from cases you have audited in the last three months. This will require the arrangements to be made expediently and I will talk to you how best to achieve this.

To help identify cases to track and sample, I will need lists of children and young people who are within the scope of the inspection and any meetings that will take place during the inspection. When compiling this information please refer to Annex A of the framework and evaluation schedule and the supplementary guidance.

Inspectors will follow the single inspection framework and inspector handbook. The inspector handbook includes a section on re-inspection. Please see the links below for the relevant documents. I will discuss the specific arrangements for your inspection with you before the full inspection team arrives onsite.

Framework and evaluation schedule:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inspecting-local-authority-childrens-services-framework>

Inspection handbook: www.gov.uk/government/publications/inspecting-services-for-children-in-need-of-help-and-protection-children-looked-after-and-care-leavers-and-reviews-of-local-safeguarding-children-boa--2

An online portal has been established to receive all Annex A information. Details for uploading information to this portal are in a guidance note appended to this letter.

All inspections are subject to a quality assurance process undertaken by a named quality assurance manager. If there are any issues the inspection team cannot resolve, you may wish to discuss these in the first instance with the manager for this inspection. This person is (insert name) and can be contacted on (insert number/email).

Annex C. Information for staff

Inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers.

This inspection is to evaluate the effectiveness of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers in your local authority area. Full details about the inspection are available in the framework and evaluation schedule for the inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers.

Inspectors will be sensitive to the potential pressures on, and the apprehension of, staff being interviewed. The purpose of the inspection is not to make judgements about individuals but to ascertain the extent to which the help, care and protection given to children and young people does protect them, does support their families and does improve the quality of their lives and futures.

The contact details of the inspectors are detailed below should you wish to make contact to discuss any issues outside the interview.

Evidence will be gathered in a variety of ways, including:

- reading case files
- directly observing practice
- attending meetings
- shadowing staff
- interviewing staff and partners
- meeting with key partners
- discussions with children looked after, care leavers, their carers and where appropriate members of their birth family
- discussions with providers of commissioned services.

Inspectors will spend time with staff to:

- observe practice
- assess the quality of work to support children looked after and care leavers to meet their potential
- examine the quality and impact of supervision and management oversight.

Inspectors will meet with senior managers throughout the fieldwork to ensure that they understand the emerging findings. At the end of the inspection, the final overall judgements will reflect the body of evidence collated and evaluated by the inspection team.

Feedback to the local authority and their partners at the end of the fieldwork will be chaired and managed by the lead inspector. The Director of Children's Services, or their representative, will always be present and will determine who else to invite, which could include other managers, the lead member and key partners.

Following the inspection, the lead inspector will write a report about the findings of the inspection. The inspection report will be sent to the local authority to check factual accuracy and will be published on the Ofsted website six weeks after the end of the inspection.

Thank you for your assistance with this inspection.

Confidentiality will be respected unless the safety and welfare of a child is compromised by the withholding of that information.

Ofsted inspectors are currently conducting an inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers in this authority area. If you wish to speak to an inspector please contact:

Name of inspector(s):

Mobile number:

Annex D. Template letter for families

Dear Parent/Carer

xxxxx local authority area, inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers

We are undertaking an inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers in **[insert LA name]**. I am the inspection team leader and I am writing to invite you to meet or have a telephone conversation with a member of the team to help us to understand the help and support you have been given by **[insert LA name]**.

This inspection will involve the team and I interviewing the people you have been working with and reading information about the work they do. However, it is also important that we speak to parents and children so that we can fully understand your views and experiences.

With your permission, the inspectors may want to sit in to observe meetings or meet separately with you and other children, young people and families. When they do this, they are looking to see how well agencies and workers are working together to help children and their families. When they talk to you, they will want to hear how well you think you have been listened to. They will want to see how well the local authority is doing at keeping your child/children safe and how you are being helped. They will ask you what difference their help has made.

Inspectors are not checking up on you or your family and you do not have to share any personal information with them. We will make sure that what we write or talk about will not in any way lead to you being identified. If you tell us anything about a child or young person being harmed or at risk of being harmed, we would have to tell a social worker working for the local authority so that they could take action to protect them.

At the end of the inspection, the inspectors write a report (this will not name you or anyone in your family). This is then sent to the local authority and published on the Ofsted website. The inspector isn't able to tell you all individually what the outcome was at the end of the inspection, but you can read the report online www.ofsted.gov.uk/inspection-reports/find-inspection-report or your social worker or support worker will be able to tell you what the inspection report said.

We really want to talk to you and understand your experiences. I hope this letter will reassure you and enable you to agree to talk and/or meet with us.

If you have any further questions or concerns, please either telephone me on **[insert phone number]** or email me at **XXXX@ofsted.gov.uk**. I always do my best to respond promptly but forgive me if there is a short delay at this busy time of inspection.

Annex E. Letter to Registered Manager of a children's home

Dear Registered Manager of children's home

xxxxx local authority area – inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers.

I write on behalf of Ofsted, who are undertaking an inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers in [LA name]. As part of the inspection, inspectors want to understand the help and support given by [LA name] to the children and young people whose well-being they are responsible for, but who live outside of its local authority area.

The lead inspector has identified a **young person/young people**, [their name/s], living in your children's home and would like to arrange for an inspector to visit you. The regulatory inspector would like to meet with you, the key worker and [young person's name] separately to hear about your experiences of the support provided by [LA name]. In addition to this visit, Ofsted will talk to [young person's name] social worker/s, look at their case file and speak to key family members and professionals who are a part of the young person's life. I would be grateful if you would speak to [young person's name] and his/her key worker to seek their consent. Please can you send consent for the inspector to visit to [name] (email address) at [LA name]. **Include if appropriate:** As [young person's name] is accommodated under section 20 of the Children Act 1989, we will seek the consent of his/her parent/s.

Before [young person's name] give/s consent, please make sure that they understand that the inspector is not visiting to check up on them or their family and that they do not have to share any personal information. What Ofsted write in the inspection report will not lead to them being identified. However, if they say anything about a child or young person being harmed or at risk of being harmed, the inspector would have to tell the social worker responsible for their well-being so that they could take action to protect them.

Please note that this is not an inspection of your children's home and will not result in a report or grade about your provision. However, if during the visit the inspector identifies anything that suggests any child is at risk of harm or not being appropriately cared for, this may result in an inspection of your service and any evidence gathered by the inspector would inform this inspection.

After the inspection, Ofsted will write a report about the services provided by [LA name]. You will be able to read the report online at:

www.ofsted.gov.uk/inspection-reports/find-inspection-report

If you have any further questions or concerns, please contact the lead inspector.
(enter name) on **phone number** or at XXXX@ofsted.gov.uk

Yours faithfully

DCS

CC – Lead Inspector

Annex F. Case tracking template

Inspectors should use this template to ensure that they record evidence from tracking individual children and young people’s cases consistently. It brings together the main relevant criteria from the evaluation schedule to support inspectors in recording evidence from across the cases that have been tracked. Overall analysis of findings from case tracking should be recorded in the SEA.

Inspectors do not need to record individual tracked cases in the SEA unless the case is being referred to the DCS under Annex H because of serious concerns or there is critical evidence not captured in the Annex F, for example a particularly good or poor piece of work that would add value to the final report. Inspectors should continue to record evidence in their evidence notebooks and identify areas of good practice in Annex O.

The criteria in this template help capture the experiences of children and young people at each key stage of the child’s journey. The evidence inspectors will look at will enable them to identify the quality of different parts of the service and their impact on individual children. Aggregating the evidence from across the tracked cases for analysis enables inspectors to understand the overall impact of the local authority.

Local authority audit

Was the case evaluated by the local authority?		Is the local authority’s evaluation accurate?	
If local authority evaluation is not accurate, outline reasons:			

Inspector’s evaluation

	Inspectors’ evaluation of the quality of the child/young person’s experience
<p>Are children safe? Has risk been identified and have services provided made a positive difference?</p> <p>This section relates to the identification, assessment and management of risk and, crucially, whether the child is safer as a result of the local authority actions. Relevant risks include children who experience and/or are at risk of: sexual exploitation, neglect, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, physical abuse and domestic abuse.</p>	

	Inspectors' evaluation of the quality of the child/young person's experience
<p>Is work child-centred?</p> <p>Has the child's lived experience been put at the centre? Do children feel safe? Do ethnic, cultural and diversity factors inform interventions and are family members consulted?</p> <p>Is there evidence of effective direct work leading to sustained changes for this child and their family?</p> <p>Are children seen and seen alone? Are they and their family appropriately involved in meetings about them (such as children in need meetings, core groups, and child protection conferences)?</p>	
<p>Are management oversight and decision making effective?</p> <p>Is there evidence that timely management action is resulting in improved outcomes for this child?</p> <p>Is supervision regular, of good quality and reflective? Is it making a positive difference for this child?</p> <p>Is recording clear, comprehensive, reflective of work undertaken and focused on the experience and progress of the child?</p>	
<p>Are assessments timely, comprehensive and analytical, and do they lead to appropriately focused help and effective interventions?</p> <p>Do they incorporate historical factors, factors of identity, ethnicity and diversity and are they informed by a current case chronology?</p> <p>Does analysis clearly identify the main risks and protective factors and outline what needs to change to make things better?</p>	
<p>Is coordination between agencies effective?</p> <p>Is consent for information-sharing well considered?</p> <p>Is joint work and information-sharing improving outcomes for this child?</p> <p>Do the right agencies attend meetings such as strategy discussions, CP conferences, Team Around the Family TAF meetings and looked after children reviews?</p>	
<p>Are plans and planning timely and effective? Is there evidence that they are making things better within a time frame that is right for the child?</p> <p>Are all relevant family members and agencies involved in shaping and delivering plans?</p> <p>Are actions well-coordinated between different plans in place at the same time (for example, child protection plans and MARAC)?</p>	

	Inspectors' evaluation of the quality of the child/young person's experience
<p>Is permanence planning timely and well matched to need?</p> <p>This includes when permanence is through transition to independent living</p> <p>Is the care plan clear, easily understood and up to date? Does it effectively set out what help and services will be provided to a looked after child and their family? Is it having a positive impact on the child's circumstances? Are plans for permanence, including adoption, in the best interests of children and young people and are they achieved without delay?</p> <p>Are care leavers effectively prepared for independence and supported through their transition to adulthood?</p>	
<p>Do children benefit from regular and timely reviews?</p> <p>Are they, their family and carers helped to participate in their reviews and do their views influence decisions made? Does the review process ensure plans are appropriate and that any drift or delay is identified and challenged?</p>	
<p>Are children looked after and care leavers living in good-quality placements or accommodation that meets their needs?</p> <p>Are children appropriately placed according to their assessed needs, including when placed with parents or family/friends?</p> <p>How effective is matching, stability, contact and placement support (including adoption support)?</p> <p>Are care leavers living in safe, permanent and affordable accommodation?</p>	

Annex G. Evaluating the effectiveness of directly observed practice

Observation of practice aide memoire

This tool should be used to ensure that the team are consistently recording evidence during practice observations. It brings together the key relevant criteria from the evaluation schedule. The detailed evidence will be recorded in individual inspectors' records of evidence. The evaluative summary will be recorded on the SEA (Summary of Evidence and Analysis).

Inspectors should, wherever possible, ask families if they know and understand the plan and the expectations of them.

The evaluation schedule reference numbers refer to the characteristics of a good service outlined in the framework and evaluation schedule for these inspections. Number one refers to the first characteristic of the key judgement the experiences and progress of children who need help and protection (page 13 of the framework). The bullet points in the framework are numbered sequentially thereafter. The numbering excludes the bullet points that describe a service that is outstanding, requires improvement or is inadequate.

Possible evaluation schedule reference	Criteria
3, 7, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 22, 27, 28	Risk is identified, responded to and reduced.
1, 12, 20, 26, 46, 48, 62, 65	Attendance and participation (parents, carers, children, young people, professionals and advocates) – the involvement and participation of care leavers increasingly influences decisions which affect their lives.
1, 2, 7, 11, 12, 26, 35, 44, 45, 46, 49, 56	The focus on the child.
1, 2, 12, 13, 19, 26, 44, 45, 46, 56	Effectiveness of the communication with the child and family, evidence of relationship building and appropriate use of empathy and challenge.
1, 2, 12, 19, 26, 46, 56	Appropriate involvement of children, young people and families in the process and decision-making, including impact and evidence of their understanding.
9, 10, 22, 46, 56, 72	Quality of decision-making – effective and timely?
4, 10, 11	Quality of assessment and help: comprehensive and up to date?
4, 10, 13	Quality of evidence gathering.
12, , 13, 24, 35, 42, 46, 51, 56	Quality of planning and review, including the timely consideration of the range of permanency options. Reviews are timely, effective, appropriately challenging and lead to the delivery of a child-centred plan.
4, 14, 35, 58	Quality and timeliness of information sharing.

Possible evaluation schedule reference	Criteria
4, 5, 6, 14, 16, 29, 33, 35, 56, 57, 63	Effectiveness of coordination between agencies and quality of joint working.
10, 12, 21, 35, 49, 56, 62	Consideration and impact of age, disability, ethnicity, faith or belief, gender, gender identity, language, race and sexual orientation.
1, 12, 26, 27, 46, 48, 54, 55	Children, young people and their families feel they have been effectively helped.

Annex H. Referring individual children's and young people's cases back to the local authority

Case details (include details of other children in the family/household if relevant)	Reasons for referral back to the local authority (select one category)	
Case number(s): HMI referring: Date of referral: LA team:	Category 1 <input type="checkbox"/> Serious issue of concern (for example, failure to follow child protection procedures and/or child at immediate risk of significant harm)	Category 2 <input type="checkbox"/> concern that the service offer or risk assessment may not be appropriate for the child's needs
What are the issues that led to the case being referred back?		
Local Authority response and explanation required by _____ (date)		
Inspector's evaluation of the information provided by the local authority		
Sign off		
DCS: Date:	Lead inspector: Date:	Quality assurance manager: Date:

Annex I. Foster carer records

Records must be kept for at least 10 years from the date that the foster carer's approval has been terminated.

National Minimum Standard 26.1 states that the fostering service should implement a written policy on the 'purpose, format and content of information' on foster carers' files.

The requirements with regard to case records relating to foster carers are set out in Regulation 30 of The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011.

The regulatory requirements

- The assessment of the applicant's suitability to be a foster carer, which has been submitted to the fostering panel, including the fostering provider's proposal about terms of approval.³⁹
- References and checks with the local authority where the foster carer is living.
- Any information obtained by the fostering provider in relation to the assessment of the foster carer.
- Any reports submitted to the fostering panel.
- Any recommendations made by the fostering panel.
- Foster carer agreement.
- Notice of approval.
- All reviews of the approval of foster carers.⁴⁰
- A record of each placement with the foster carer, details of each child placed including name, age and gender, the dates on which each placement began and ended and the reasons why the placement ended.
- Any information relating to the approval of the foster carer including any review or termination of the approval.

National minimum standards state that files should include:

- records of supervisory meetings (NMS 21.8)
- a clear and comprehensive summary of any allegations made against a member of the fostering household including details of how the allegation was followed up and resolved, a record of any action taken and the decisions reached (NMS 22.7).

³⁹ The requirements for foster carer assessments are covered in Regulation 26(2) Schedule 3 of The Fostering Services Regulations 2011. In addition the assessment is required to include any other information that the fostering provider considers relevant to the assessment of the foster carer.

⁴⁰ National Minimum Standard 26 states that reviews include an appraisal of performance and consideration of training and development needs. This should be recorded. The views of each child currently placed with the foster carer should be taken into account.

Annex J. Prospective adopter records

Case record requirements are set out in the Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013. Inspectors will focus on the effectiveness, quality and timeliness of matching and decision-making.

The regulatory requirements:

- Stage One pre-assessment information⁴¹
- a summary of the state of health of the prospective adopter completed by the agency's medical adviser
- a written report from a registered medical practitioner about the health of the prospective adopter⁴²
- records and observations of DBS check for any members of household aged over 18 years old
- record of interviews with nominated referees and checks with the local authority where the prospective adopter is living
- the prospective adopter Stage One plan
- assessment plan for the prospective adopter
- information and reports obtained by the agency
- observations relating to the preparation of the prospective adopter
- the prospective adopter's report and the prospective adopter's observations on that report
- Stage Two assessment information⁴³
- the matching plan
- the prospective adopter's review report and the prospective adopter's observations on that report where applicable
- relevant information relating to the adoption panel including its recommendation, the reasons for the recommendation and any advice given by the panel to the agency
- a record of the agency's decisions

⁴¹ As listed in Schedule 4 Part 1 of the Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendment) Regulations 2013.

⁴² This must include what is listed in Schedule 4 Part 2 of the Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendment) Regulations 2013. (The exception to this is where the agency has received advice from its medical adviser that such an examination and report is not required.)

⁴³ As listed in Part 3 of Schedule 4 of the Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013. The assessment should also include any other information that the agency considers relevant.

- relevant information relating to the adoption panel including its recommendation, the reasons for the recommendation and any advice given by the panel to the agency
- the recommendation of the independent review panel, where applicable.

In addition:

- a clear and comprehensive summary of any allegations made against an adopter or a member of an adopter's family (NMS 22.7).

Annex K. Adoption – key timescales

Some key timescales are listed below for inspectors to take into account when tracking the child's journey through to adoption, including the timeliness of response to prospective adopters. Inspectors' overriding consideration will be the welfare of the child.

- An agency should respond to requests for information within 10 working days.
- The Stage One pre-assessment should take no more than two months unless the agency is satisfied that there are good reasons for it to take longer.
- The Stage Two assessment should take four months unless there are exceptional circumstances that mean the agency cannot make the decision within that time, or the agency delays making the decision at the request of the prospective adopter.
- Agencies are required to complete the fast-track assessment process in four months.
- Agencies must refer prospective adopters to the Adoption Register as soon as possible and no later than three months after their approval unless the agency is considering placing a particular child with the prospective adopter.
- A permanence plan should be made at the four-month review/second review.
- The adoption panel should receive all necessary information from the adoption agency within six weeks of the completion of the child's permanence report.
- The adoption panel's recommendation on whether the child should be placed for adoption should be made within two months of the review where adoption has been identified as the permanence plan.
- Agencies must refer children to the Adoption Register as soon as possible and no later than three months after the agency decision-maker's decision that the child should be placed for adoption unless the agency is considering placing the child with a particular prospective adopter.
- A proposed placement with a suitable prospective adopter should be identified and approved by the adoption panel within six months of the decision that the child should be placed for adoption.
- The timescales are different where a birth parent has requested that a child aged under six months be placed for adoption. A proposed placement with a suitable prospective adopter should be identified and approved by the panel within three months of the decision that the child should be placed for adoption.

The adoption scorecard

- The first indicator of the adoption scorecard measures the average time it takes for a child who goes on to be adopted from entering care to moving in with his or her adoptive family. The performance threshold has been set at 639 days for 2010–13, 547 days for 2011–2014, 487 days for 2012–2015 and 426 days for 2013–2016. The scorecard shows both the number and the percentage of children who wait less than the current performance threshold.
- The second indicator of the adoption scorecard measures the average time it takes for a local authority to match a child to an adoptive family once the court has formally decided that adoption is the best option. The performance threshold has been set at 182 days for 2010–13, 152 days for 2011–2014, 121 days for 2012–2015 and 2013–16
- Additional information is included in the scorecard to give a context to local authority performance.

Annex L. Record of visit to looked after children living in children's homes outside of the local authority area

Placing local authority	
SC number of children's home visited	
Type of children's home visited (for example, residential special school, secure children's home)	
Information about the children with whom you spoke	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Case file number ■ Length of placement
Reasons for living out of area (for example, shortage of suitable local placements and/or specialist placement required; to ensure child's safety. Does the young person understand why?)	
Short- or long-term placement? If long term, has this decision been formalised?	
Information about the adults with whom you spoke	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Initials ■ Role
Date of visit	
Name of inspector and contact telephone number	

Evaluative summary

Set out here your key findings about the experience and progress of the young person/s visited, including the impact on the young person of living outside the area of the placing local authority. You should pay particular attention to how well they understand the plans for their future and how well they think they are making progress towards this plan. You should also ask about whether they feel safe and can trust the adults looking after them to protect and support them. Their experience of the ways in which adults respond to young people going missing or becoming involved with the police is also important.

Evidence

Record the key evidence that led you to your evaluative summary above.

You should record the key evidence source that supports your summary. This will likely cover:

- the young person's own testimony
- information from staff
- information from the records written about the young person.

The evidence should answer the following questions:

- How well is the young person supported by their social worker/local authority?
- Is the plan for the child's future clear and does it set out appropriate arrangements to protect them and is acceptable, including to the young person
- Does the young person value their relationship with their social worker?
- How frequent are social work visits and do they make a difference to the progress and experience of the young person?
- What difference has the Independent Reviewing Officer made?
- When young people go missing, what attempts are made to find them, to protect them and to agree a plan to make them safe? What has been the response of the local authority and the young person's social worker to the notification that the young person for whom they have responsibility has gone missing? Has this been timely and appropriate? Can you see a plan to protect them from going missing again?
- Is there a chronology of children going missing? Has the social worker had sight of this and fed into it? Is it a shared document?
- What local intelligence is there regarding risks with sexual exploitation? What action has been taken? Are risks recorded, for example, in a risk register?
- Has the young person had access to independent advocacy, an independent visitor and are they aware of their entitlements?
- What is their educational progress, taking account of their starting point?
- What is the quality of their personal education plan and any alternative provision if they do not attend school?
- Is the support that the young person needs to succeed at school, agreed and in place?
- What are their health needs and how well are these met (including emotional and mental health needs)?
- Have they had contact with their birth family or friends and is this in the young person's best interests?
- If the plan is for the young person to return home, is the family getting the help they need to change so that the reunification is successful and safe?
- Does the young person know why they live here?

- Does the young person feel safe and secure?
- Is there a relationship between the care plan and placement plan? Where there have been issues of risk, have these been effectively addressed?
- Is the young person routinely consulted about their care plan, how happy they are and their future plans by the local authority?
- Depending on how long the young person has been in the placement, what was the quality of the information provided to the children's home and young person before their arrival?
- If the plan is for the young person to return to live in their local authority area, is this in accordance with the young person's wishes and feelings and is it in their best interest?
- What is the quality, frequency and impact of dialogue between the home and the placing local authority? What has gone well and what could have been better?
- Has the home challenged the local authority on behalf of the young person if they feel the plan is not working for them or requires some changes and, if so, what has been the outcome?

Annex M. evidence sources and reporting

Annex M provides guidance to inspectors on report writing for issues that are critical to the inspection whilst enabling them to focus on the strengths and areas for improvement particular to a local authority and which are central to the judgement given.

The column **reporting area and evaluation schedule number** identifies those parts of the evaluation criteria that relate to the each of the reporting areas listed. This not an exhaustive list of all applicable areas of the evaluation schedule. Rather, it is a guide to support inspectors to establish links across the breadth of the evaluation criteria.

The column **Annex A (documents and data)** identifies the evidence sources available to inspectors through the information gathered via Annex A of the handbook and framework. This column is a guide to help inspectors quickly locate information within the inspector’s Summary of Evidence and Analysis (SEA) and materials provided by the local authority at the start of the inspection. It is not an exhaustive list of all evidence sources – the evaluation of children’s experiences and progress should always be informed by case tracking, case sampling and direct observations of practice.

Reporting area and evaluation schedule number/s⁴⁴	Inspectors should always report the key strengths and weaknesses in relation to the issues outlined in this column	Annex A (documents and data)
<p>Key threshold/decision-making points (see paragraph 69 of the inspection handbook)</p> <p>Help and protection (H&P) – 3, 5, 6, 7, 11</p> <p>Children looked after and</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The extent to which key thresholds are consistently understood and applied. If thresholds are set too high or too low, what is the impact of this for children and their families? ■ Whether the authority is making timely and correct decisions about when to remove a child from their family and about how to secure permanency for individual children. ■ the effectiveness of family support and the understanding about what has changed at home for children who are returning to their families. 	<p>Child level data lists: 1–11</p> <p>Performance information required to support the inspection: items 1.02, 1.03, 1.07, 2.01, 2.03, 2.04, 2.05, 2.06, 2.07</p>

⁴⁴ The evaluation schedule numbers are noted next to the characteristics for a good service in the *Framework and evaluation schedule for the inspections of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers*; www.gov.uk/government/publications/inspecting-local-authority-childrens-services-framework

Reporting area and evaluation schedule number/s ⁴⁴	Inspectors should always report the key strengths and weaknesses in relation to the issues outlined in this column	Annex A (documents and data)
achieving permanence (CLA) – 23, 24 Adoption – 50 Care leavers – 60		Information about the local authority area (context page for the report): Child protection in this area Children looked after in this area
Young people who are homeless and aged 16/17 H&P – 6, 11 CLA – 22, 34 Care leavers – 60, 64	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The quality of assessment of homeless young people’s needs and the effectiveness of the support provided, including whether it is provided under the most appropriate legislation ■ The extent to which care leavers are prepared for independence and living in accommodation that is suitable for their needs (with specific reference to bed and breakfast accommodation and houses of multiple occupation – HMOs) ■ How effectively the local authority and partners prioritise the current and future accommodation needs of children looked after and care leavers. 	Child level data lists: 9 Performance information required to support the inspection: items: 1.03, 1.09,
Missing from home or care H&P – 16 CLA – 28 Care leavers – 55	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Whether the local authority and partners, including the police, take urgent, persistent and effective action when children are known to be missing. Specific reference should be made to the response to children missing from care. ■ The impact and effectiveness of the strategic analysis of missing episodes ■ Whether the local authority follows statutory guidance⁴⁵. For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – whether safe and well checks and effective independent return interviews are held consistently when children are found and inform plans to keep children safe 	Child level data lists: 8 Performance information required to support the inspection: items 1.03, 1.09, 2.07, 3.01

⁴⁵ Statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care, Department for Education, 2014
www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-who-run-away-or-go-missing-from-home-or-care

Reporting area and evaluation schedule number/s ⁴⁴	Inspectors should always report the key strengths and weaknesses in relation to the issues outlined in this column	Annex A (documents and data)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – how well professionals involved with the care of a child identify and respond to patterns of missing episodes 	
<p>Missing from education</p> <p>H&P – 16 CLA – 31, 32</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ whether the local authority know how many children are missing from education locally, including those who are looked after. ■ whether the local authority is following statutory guidance.⁴⁶ For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – does the local authority hold clear and up-to-date records of the numbers of children receiving alternative education and for those missing from education? – do children and young people who do not attend school have access to good quality registered alternative provision? – is urgent and effective action taken to protect children where they are missing from school or their attendance noticeably reduces? – how effectively do all those involved in the care of children work together to help them return to or remain in suitable education? ■ whether children in alternative provision receive at least 25 hours per week. 	<p>Child level data lists: 8</p> <p>Performance information required to support the inspection: items 1.03, 1.09, 2.07, 3.01</p>
<p>Children and young people who have been or who are neglected or physically, sexually or emotionally abused</p> <p>Applicable across the H&P judgement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Analysis of the prevalence of children on child protection plans in each category and recent trends. What does this tell us about social work practice in relation to each category of abuse and neglect? ■ Analysis of reasons when there has been a significant change in numbers of children subject to child protection plans. ■ Evaluation of strengths and weaknesses in social work practice in relation to specific categories of abuse and neglect. 	<p>Child level data lists: 6, 7 and 8</p> <p>Performance information required to support the inspection: items 1.03, 1.09</p>

⁴⁶ Children missing education: statutory guidance for local authorities, Department for Education, 2013; www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-missing-education

Reporting area and evaluation schedule number/s ⁴⁴	Inspectors should always report the key strengths and weaknesses in relation to the issues outlined in this column	Annex A (documents and data)
<p>Those at risk of sexual exploitation or who are known to be being exploited</p> <p>H&P – 7, 10, 13, 16 CLA – 28 Care leavers – 55</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ the quality and impact of referral, assessment and planning. ■ the effectiveness of direct work with children and families and of services to support children. ■ the level of awareness among professional staff, including their willingness and effectiveness to listen and receive feedback from children and young people. ■ the arrangements to protect care leavers who are at risk of or who have been sexually exploited. ■ what is known about the authority culture in terms of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – listening to children, hearing what they say and acting appropriately – hearing from staff at the frontline and engaging with what they say – elected member engagement with the local community – the quality of work with partners to disrupt offenders or preventative work – children and families’ views on the service they have received. 	<p>Performance information required to support the inspection: items 1.03, 1.09, 2.07</p>
<p>Girls at risk of or who are known to have suffered female genital mutilation (FGM)</p> <p>Applicable across the H&P judgement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ how effectively the local authority, with other agencies, identifies girls (including unborn girls) at risk of or who have suffered FGM and how effectively the girls are protected 	<p>Performance information required to support the inspection: items 1.03, 1.09</p>
<p>Children who are looked after and are living outside of the local authority area</p> <p>CLA – 37</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ the experiences and progress of children looked after who live out of area, including choice of placement, support from social workers, access to timely support and services, and the effectiveness and impact of the IRO service. ■ whether children living out of the area have the same opportunities as all other children looked after (for example, involvement with children in care 	<p>Child level data lists: 8</p> <p>Performance information required to support the inspection: items 1.03, 1.09, 3.01, 3.03, 3.06</p>

Reporting area and evaluation schedule number/s ⁴⁴	Inspectors should always report the key strengths and weaknesses in relation to the issues outlined in this column	Annex A (documents and data)
	panel, access to leisure activities and attendance at celebration events).	Information about the local authority area (context page for the report): Children looked after in this area
Achieving permanence Applicable across the CLA judgement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ the extent to which all children and young people are helped to achieve permanence (including long term fostering and SGOs where appropriate) without delay. ■ how well children, families and foster carers are supported where the plan is for the child to return home. ■ whether there is an effective permanence plan in place for all children looked after by the time of their second review ■ the rigour of tracking permanence plans for children. ■ the quality and effectiveness of family-finding ■ the quality and effectiveness of matching ■ whether support is effective and provided for as long as it is needed ■ the effectiveness of the independent reviewing officer's role in overseeing plans. 	Child level data lists: 8, 9 and 10 Performance information required to support the inspection: items 1.03, 1.09, 3.01, 3.03, 3.06, 3.10 Information about the local authority area (context page for the report): Children looked after in this area
Educational progress of looked after children CLA – 30, 31, 32, 33	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ the educational progress of children looked after, including the extent to which the attainment gap between looked after children and their peers is narrowing. ■ the effectiveness of multi-agency support, to help looked after children achieve at school, including the quality and impact of personal education plans, and whether they are disproportionately excluded. ■ whether looked after children are helped to remain in their current school or whether an appropriate school is found quickly when they become looked after or change placement 	Child level data lists: 8 and 9 Performance information required to support the inspection: items 1.03, 1.09, 3.01, 3.04, 3.08

Reporting area and evaluation schedule number/s ⁴⁴	Inspectors should always report the key strengths and weaknesses in relation to the issues outlined in this column	Annex A (documents and data)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ the effectiveness of the support provided by the virtual school and its head teacher. ■ the effectiveness of support to young people to achieve successful transitions into higher and further education, training and employment. ■ the effectiveness of the IRO in reviewing educational progress. ■ how ambitious corporate parents are for children and young people's educational progress ■ how well pupil premium funding is targeted to help looked after children achieve well and in accordance with the grant conditions 	
<p>Rights and entitlements as a looked after child or care leaver</p> <p>CLA – 26 Care leavers – 65</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ the extent to which children looked after and care leavers are aware of, and receive, their rights and entitlements ■ how well children and young people are enabled to negotiate how and when they receive their entitlements. 	<p>Child level data lists: 8 and 9</p> <p>Performance information required to support the inspection: items 1.03, 1.08, 3.01, 3.06, 3.07</p>
<p>Those waiting for adoption and those in need of adoption support services</p> <p>Applicable across the adoption judgement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ the number of children waiting for adoption, the length of time they wait and the number of adopters approved. ■ performance against the scorecard, including trajectory. ■ evaluate the recruitment, assessment and approval process. ■ the effectiveness of the agency decision maker with regard to the quality and timeliness of assessments and the decision to place brothers and sisters together or apart and maintain contact. ■ the extent to which the adoption agency uses nationally available systems to maintain the interest of prospective adopters post approval and prior to children being matched ■ the effectiveness of the arrangements for identifying children in need of adoption support services, the number of children who receive adoption support and the effectiveness of intervention. 	<p>Child level data lists: 10 and 11</p> <p>Performance information required to support the inspection: items 1.03, 1.09, 3.01, 3.03</p> <p>Information about the local authority area (context page for the report): Children looked after in this area</p>

Reporting area and evaluation schedule number/s ⁴⁴	Inspectors should always report the key strengths and weaknesses in relation to the issues outlined in this column	Annex A (documents and data)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ whether a sufficient range of support to meet need has been commissioned, including post adoption and therapeutic support where appropriate. 	
<p>The effectiveness of the local authority in meeting the 'Prevent Duty' in relation to safeguarding children</p> <p>(where the local authority has been identified as a Home Office priority area or the lines of enquiry have identified particular concerns)</p> <p>Applicable across the H&P judgement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The effectiveness of the local authority in meeting the 'Prevent Duty' and channel duties in relation to safeguarding children 	<p>Performance information required to support the inspection: items 1.09</p>
<p>Recruitment, retention and sufficiency in respect of foster carers</p> <p>H&P – 18 CLA – 34, 38, 39, 40, 44 Adoption – 51</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ the effectiveness of action taken by the local authority to recruit and retain a sufficient number of foster carers with the right skills to ensure a sufficient range of local placements to meet the needs of children. This should include the trajectory of recruitment and retention of foster carers. ■ the effectiveness of the response to allegations against foster carers, including how well the local authority protects and supports the children, young people and carers involved, and ensures that decisions are focused on children's needs. ■ the effectiveness of support for and oversight of foster carers ■ the extent to which information is shared with foster families prior to a child coming to live with them. ■ timeliness and quality of matching, including the placement of brothers and 	<p>Child level data lists: 8</p> <p>Performance information required to support the inspection: items 1.03, 1.09, 3.01 and 3.03</p> <p>Information about the local authority area (context page for the report): Children looked after in this</p>

Reporting area and evaluation schedule number/s ⁴⁴	Inspectors should always report the key strengths and weaknesses in relation to the issues outlined in this column	Annex A (documents and data)
	<p>sisters together wherever possible.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ the effectiveness of the 'foster to adopt' initiative. 	area
<p>the local authority's knowledge about domestic abuse, parental substance misuse and the mental ill health of parents or carers</p> <p>H&P – 15 Care leavers – 57</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The prevalence of children supported by a child protection plan or child in need plan where domestic abuse, parental substance misuse and/or mental ill health are a factor. Does the local authority have sufficient knowledge about these children? ■ The effectiveness of the local authority's work, including work with partners, on the experiences and progress of these children and young people. 	<p>Performance information required to support the inspection: items 1.03, 1.09, 2.01</p>
<p>How well the leaders and managers know the strengths and weaknesses of their services</p> <p>Leadership, management and governance (LMG) – 66, 71, 72, 73</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ How well senior leaders, including the DCS and lead member discharge their statutory responsibilities ■ How well the local authority understands its local community and the needs of specific communities. ■ Whether the local authority effectively identifies and addresses areas for development, deficiencies or new demands. ■ how well the local authority understands the strengths and weaknesses of frontline practice and how shortfalls are identified and addressed. 	<p>Performance information required to support the inspection: items 1.03, 1.08, 1.10, 2.01, 2.02, 3.04, 3.05, 3.06, 3.07, 3.08, 3.10</p>
<p>how effective leaders are at creating the right environment for social work to flourish (including management oversight, guidance and direction)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ the adequacy of the social work workforce in respect of vacancies, experience, training and development. ■ whether practice is informed by feedback, research and intelligence about the quality of services. ■ Is learning from Serious Case Reviews (SCRs) effective ■ how the experiences of children and families are used to inform practice. ■ how effectively supervision is used to quality assure practice and oversee decision making 	<p>Performance information required to support the inspection: items 1.02, 1.04, 1.05, 1.06</p>

Reporting area and evaluation schedule number/s ⁴⁴	Inspectors should always report the key strengths and weaknesses in relation to the issues outlined in this column	Annex A (documents and data)
LMG – 72, 75	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ whether social workers have manageable caseloads 	
<p>The impact of commissioning and sufficiency arrangements</p> <p>LMG – 40, 67, 68, 76</p> <p>LMG – 67, 68, 76</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ describe how effectively the council is meeting its sufficiency duty.⁴⁷ ■ the impact of commissioning across early help, children in need, children in need of protection, looked after children and care leavers. ■ how effectively commissioning is informed by the JSNA. ■ do commissioned placements ensure that the individual needs of children are effectively met by the provider ■ Where social care functions have been delegated <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – do third party providers offer services which meet the needs of children who are in need of help and protection, and/or in their care. – the effectiveness of contract management arrangements between a local authority and a third party provider to which local authority functions have been delegated. 	<p>Performance information required to support the inspection: items 1.03, 2.01 and 3.03</p> <p>Information about the local authority area (context page for the report): Local leadership</p>
<p>The effectiveness of leadership, management and governance arrangements where social care functions have been delegated</p> <p>(if applicable) LMG – 66</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ How effective are leadership, management and governance arrangements between the Chief Executive and DCS in the local authority, and the leadership structure of any third party provider to which statutory functions have been delegated ■ Whether effective contract monitoring arrangements by the local authority are in place to ensure that children receive services which meet their needs and such arrangements are reviewed regularly by the local authority to ensure they remain effective ■ Whether effective scrutiny arrangements by the local authority are in place to ensure the role of the local authority as the corporate parent is effective 	<p>Performance information required to support the inspection: item 1.01</p> <p>Information about the local authority area (context page for the report): Local leadership</p>

⁴⁷ Sufficiency: statutory guidance on securing sufficient accommodation for looked after children, Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2010; www.gov.uk/government/publications/securing-sufficient-accommodation-for-looked-after-children

Annex N. Case tracking identification and consent for meetings with children, young people, parents and carers

This template is for inspectors to identify the cases to be tracked and the children and young people that inspectors wish to meet. Local authorities should subsequently record whether consent to speak with inspectors has been given by the children and young people. This will support inspectors and the local authority to timetable the programme of meetings during the inspection.

Lead inspectors will identify and record details of the cases to be tracked using this template following the guidance on selecting and tracking cases in paragraph 62 of the inspection handbook. Following case selection lead inspectors will provide a copy of the completed template to the local authority so that it can secure parental and child consent.

Inspectors will seek to talk to the child in most if not all of the 25–30 tracked cases. Where this is not the case the local authority will record the reasons why this does not occur in the last two columns.

Tracked Case ID	Case detail (e.g. child subject to multiple CP plans – DOB/Gender)	Social work team and Social worker allocated to (include date of conversation)	IRO/CP chair allocated to (include date of conversation)	Inspector allocated to case track	For Local authority completion Consent parent/carer Y/N (include date of conversation where consent is given or explanation where consent is not given)	For Local authority completion Consent child/young person Y/N (include date of conversation where consent is given or explanation where consent is not given)

Annex O. Best practice log

Where inspectors observe best and/or innovative practice in a local authority it should be recorded in this template. It could relate to a particular case or a service being provided. Inspectors will evaluate the improved outcomes for children, young people, families or carers and provide detail about what difference this is making.

The lead inspector will provide the local authority with a copy of the collated best practice template following the end of fieldwork. Where inspectors identify innovative practice and following local authority agreement best practice case studies may be undertaken and published on the Ofsted website.

Inspectors will ensure that the detail is also recorded in their evidence notebooks and the SEA.

Best practice log

Detail of best practice observed	Related strand/Local authority service area/name of social worker/manager (identify case number if applicable)	Evaluation of improved outcome(s) for CYP/families/carers (what difference has this made?)

Annex P. Links to legislation, regulations and statutory guidance

Acts of Parliament

Children Act 1989

www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents

Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000

www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/35/contents

Adoption and Children Act 2002

www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/38/contents

Children Act 2004

www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/31/contents

Education and Inspections Act 2006

www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/40/contents

Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006

www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/47/contents

Children and Young Persons Act 2008

www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/23/contents

Equality Act 2010

www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents

Children and Families Act 2014

www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/6/contents/enacted

Care Standards Act 2000

www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/14/contents

Regulations

Separate sections below cover regulations in relation to fostering and adoption

Visits to Former Children in care in Detention (England) Regulations 2010

www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/2797/contents/made

Visits to Children in Long-Term Residential Care Regulations 2011

www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2011/1010/made

The Arrangements for Placement of Children by Voluntary Organisations and Others (England) Regulations 2011

www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2011/582/contents/made

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills (Fees and Frequency of Inspections) (Children's Homes etc.) Regulations 2007 (as amended)

www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2007/694/contents/made

The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010

www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/959/contents/made

The Children and Young Persons Act 2008 (Relevant Care Functions) (England) Regulations 2014

www.legislation.gov.uk/id/uksi/2014/2407

The Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015

www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2015/541/contents/made

The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 1: Court Orders

www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-act-1989-court-orders--2

The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 2: Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (2010)

www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-act-1989-care-planning-placement-and-case-review

The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 3: Planning Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers

www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-act-1989-transition-to-adulthood-for-care-leavers

Statutory guidance

Separate sections below cover statutory guidance in relation to fostering and adoption

Working together to safeguard children: a guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children (2015)

www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2

Statutory guidance on children who run away and go missing from home or care (2014)

www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-who-run-away-or-go-missing-from-home-or-care

Statutory guidance: Promoting the Health and Well-being of Children in care (2015)

www.gov.uk/government/publications/promoting-the-health-and-wellbeing-of-looked-after-children--2

Short Breaks: statutory guidance on how to safeguard and promote the welfare of disabled children using short breaks (2010)

www.gov.uk/government/publications/short-breaks-for-disabled-children

Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations: Local authority responsibilities towards former children in care in custody (2010)

www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-act-1989-former-looked-after-children-in-custody

IRO handbook: Statutory guidance for independent reviewing officers (IROs) and local authorities on their functions in relation to case management and review for children in care (2010)

www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-reviewing-officers-handbook

Statutory guidance on the roles and responsibilities of the Director of Children's Services and the Lead Member for Children's Services (2013)

www.gov.uk/government/publications/Directors-of-childrens-services-roles-and-responsibilities

Sufficiency: Statutory guidance on securing sufficient accommodation for children in care (2010)

www.gov.uk/government/publications/securing-sufficient-accommodation-for-looked-after-children

Promoting the education of children in care: statutory guidance for local authorities (2014)

www.gov.uk/government/publications/promoting-the-education-of-looked-after-children

Junior Individual Saving Accounts for Children in care: Statutory guidance for Local Authorities (2012);

www.gov.uk/government/publications/junior-individual-saving-accounts-for-looked-after-children

Special guardianship guidance and regulations (2012)

www.gov.uk/government/publications/special-guardianship-guidance

Provision of accommodation for 16 and 17 year old young people who may be homeless and/or require accommodation (2010)

www.gov.uk/government/publications/provision-of-accommodation-for-16-and-17-year-olds-who-may-be-homeless-and-or-require-accommodation

Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards

www.gov.uk/government/publications/childrens-homes-regulations-including-quality-standards-guide

Children missing education: statutory guidance for local authorities, Department for Education, 2013

www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-missing-education

Keeping children safe in education (2015)

www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2

Designated teacher for looked-after children

www.gov.uk/government/publications/designated-teacher-for-looked-after-children

Children's social care: getting the best from complaints

www.gov.uk/government/publications/childrens-social-care-getting-the-best-from-complaints

Placement of looked-after children in EU Member States

www.gov.uk/government/publications/placement-of-looked-after-children-in-eu-member-states

Care of unaccompanied migrant children and child victims of modern slavery (2017)

www.gov.uk/government/publications/care-of-unaccompanied-and-trafficked-children

Providing advocacy services for children and young people

www.gov.uk/government/publications/advocacy-services-for-children-and-young-people

Additional guidance

Safeguarding children who may have been trafficked: practice guidance (2011)

www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-children-who-may-have-been-trafficked-practice-guidance

Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation: Supplementary guidance (2009)

www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-children-and-young-people-from-sexual-exploitation-supplementary-guidance

Missing Children and Adults strategy (2011)

www.gov.uk/government/publications/missing-children-and-adults-strategy

Information sharing advice for safeguarding practitioners (2015)

www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-practitioners-information-sharing-advice

What to do if you're worried a child is being abused (2015)

www.gov.uk/government/publications/what-to-do-if-youre-worried-a-child-is-being-abused--2

Children in care and adoption performance tables

www.gov.uk/government/collections/children-in-care-and-adoption-performance-tables

Guidance on the Management, Recording and Investigation of Missing Persons
(College of Policing)

www.app.college.police.uk/app-content/major-investigation-and-public-protection/missing-persons/

Tackling child sexual exploitation: action plan (2011)

www.gov.uk/government/publications/tackling-child-sexual-exploitation-action-plan

What to do if you're worried a child is being abused: advice for practitioners (2015)

www.gov.uk/government/publications/what-to-do-if-you-suspect-a-child-is-being-sexually-exploited

Prospectus: delivering intensive interventions for children in care and those on the edge of care or custody and their families (2011)

www.gov.uk/government/publications/prospectus-delivering-intensive-interventions-for-looked-after-children-and-those-on-the-edge-of-care-or-custody-and-their-families

Improving the Outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Pupils: Final Report (2010)

www.gov.uk/government/publications/improving-the-outcomes-for-gypsy-roma-and-traveller-pupils-final-report

A framework of outcomes for young people (2012)

www.gov.uk/government/publications/framework-of-outcomes-for-young-people

What works re-engaging young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET)? Summary of evidence from the activity agreement pilots and the entry to learning pilots (2010)

www.gov.uk/government/publications/what-works-re-engaging-young-people-who-are-not-in-education-employment-or-training-neet-summary-of-evidence-from-the-activity-agreement-pilots-an

Maltreated children in the looked after system: a comparison of outcomes for those who go home and those who do not (2010)

www.gov.uk/government/publications/maltreated-children-in-the-looked-after-system-a-comparison-of-outcomes-for-those-who-go-home-and-those-who-do-not

Social mobility indicators (includes attainment gap at ages 11, 16 and 19)

www.gov.uk/government/publications/social-mobility-indicators/social-mobility-indicators

Care leavers in England data pack (2012)

www.gov.uk/government/publications/care-leavers-in-england-local-authority-data-pack

Care leaver strategy (2013)

www.gov.uk/government/publications/care-leaver-strategy

2010 to 2015 government policy: children's social workers

www.gov.uk/government/publications/2010-to-2015-government-policy-childrens-social-workers/2010-to-2015-government-policy-childrens-social-workers

Staying put: arrangements for care leavers aged 18 and above to stay on with their former foster carers (2013)

www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-put-arrangements-for-care-leavers-aged-18-years-and-above

Supporting looked-after children with communication needs

www.gov.uk/government/publications/supporting-looked-after-children-with-communication-needs

Railway Children Reach model: a best practice model which looks at support for those who run away or are missing from home care (before, during and after the incident)

www.railwaychildren.org.uk/our-solution/where-we-work/uk/reach-model

Adoption

Local Authority Social Services Act 1970;

www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1970/42/contents

Adoption Support Services Regulations 2005

www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2005/691/contents/made

Disclosure of Adoption Information (Post-Commencement Adoptions) Regulations 2005

www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2005/888/contents/made

The Adoption Agencies Regulations 2005

www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2005/389/contents/made

Adoption Support Agencies (England) and Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2005

www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2005/2720/contents/made

Adoption Information and Intermediary Services (Pre-Commencement Adoptions) Regulations 2005

www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2005/890/contents/made

Independent Review of Determinations (Adoption and Fostering) Regulations 2009

www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2009/395/introduction/made

Restriction on the Preparation of Adoption Reports Regulations 2005

www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2005/1711/made?view=plain

Adoption: National Minimum Standards (2011)

www.gov.uk/government/publications/adoption-national-minimum-standards

Statutory guidance on adoption (2013)

www.gov.uk/government/publications/adoption-statutory-guidance-2013

Right on time: exploring delays in adoption (2012)

www.gov.uk/government/publications/exploring-delays-in-adoption-right-on-time

Regionalising adoption (2015)

www.gov.uk/government/publications/regional-adoption-agencies-programme

Fostering

The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 (as amended)

www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2011/581/contents/made

Fostering services: national minimum standards (2011)

www.gov.uk/government/publications/fostering-services-national-minimum-standards

The Children Act 1989 guidance and regulations volume 4: fostering services (2011)

www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-act-1989-fostering-services

Assessment and approval of foster carers: amended guidance (2013)

www.gov.uk/government/publications/fostering-services-assessment-and-approval-of-foster-carers

Family and Friends Care: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities (2011)

www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-act-1989-family-and-friends-care

Children Act 1989: private fostering

www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-act-1989-private-fostering

Training, support and development standards for foster care: guidance for managers, supervising social workers (2012)

www.gov.uk/government/publications/training-support-and-development-standards-for-foster-care-evidence-workbook

The Foster Carers' Charter (2011)

www.gov.uk/government/publications/foster-carers-charter

The demographic characteristics of foster carers in the UK: motivations, barriers and messages for recruitment and retention (2012)

www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-demographic-characteristics-of-foster-carers-in-the-uk-motivations-barriers-and-messages-for-recruitment-and-retention

Local safeguarding children board

Local Safeguarding Children Boards Regulations 2006

www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2006/90/contents/made

Websites

Disclosure and Barring Service

www.gov.uk/government/organisations/disclosure-and-barring-service

Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) website

www.ceop.police.uk/

ChildLine

www.childline.org.uk/pages/home.aspx

NSPCC National Child Trafficking Advice Centre (CTAC)

www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-abuse-and-neglect/child-trafficking/

NSPCC ChildLine number (telephone: 0800 1111)

www.nspcc.org.uk/what-we-do/the-work-we-do/childline-services/childline-services-hub_wdh90503.html

Parents Against Child Sexual Exploitation (PACE)

www.paceuk.info/



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