

# Involvement strategy 2011–15

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## Executive summary

1. This strategy sets out how we will encourage and promote the involvement of the people who use the services we inspect. We do this as a driver for improvement in the services we inspect and in how Ofsted works as an organisation. We aim to ensure that:
  - people feel able to contribute effectively to the development and shaping of the way we inspect and regulate
  - views, experiences and expectations are at the centre of all our inspection and regulation activity
  - regular feedback is provided, which enables people to see how their views have influenced outcomes
  - our consultation and involvement activity is efficient and effective, and delivers value for money and impact.
2. We will do this by:
  - developing a wide range of approaches to the involvement of people who use the services we inspect, increasing our ability to provide choices in how far they want to be involved both during and between inspections
  - strengthening our use of interactive involvement opportunities and piloting new ways of doing this
  - strengthening our involvement structures for key groups such as employers, parents and carers, adult learners, and children and young people
  - enhancing the skills, competencies and confidence of staff to innovate and undertake consultation and involvement activities.

## Our vision

3. Ofsted works to raise standards and improve lives. It does this through: rigorous and independent inspection of services for children, young people and learners; supporting improvement; securing value for money; and promoting excellence. It can only achieve these goals by involving and working with a wide range of people who use the services we inspect.
4. This strategy sets out how we will work to improve the way we consult and involve children and young people, parents and carers, learners, and employers across England and support the delivery of Ofsted's vision and purpose.

## Our strategic priorities

5. Our first priority is to achieve 'Better outcomes' for children and learners of all ages. We will work to make this a reality through:
  - Better inspection and regulation:
    - providing sharper, more focused inspection and regulation, and acting in a proportionate way that targets underperformance and ensures those using services can hold them to account
  - Better public involvement:
    - ensuring people's views and experiences inform how and when we inspect and regulate, and empowering people with the information they need
  - Better ways of working:
    - using our resources responsibly in an effective, efficient and sustainable way that focuses on the front-line.
6. In line with the Education and Inspection Act 2006, Ofsted's work is to improve services for:
  - children and young people
  - parents and carers
  - employers
  - adult learners.
7. Ofsted inspects and regulates over 40 types of service delivered by a range of providers, including:
  - schools, colleges, early years and childcare
  - children's homes, and fostering and adoption services
  - adult, community, work-based and other learning
  - secure estate and judicial services
  - local authorities.

## What we mean by involvement

8. Ofsted listens carefully to the views of those using the services we inspect and regulate. We want to make sure that we involve them in the most convenient and effective ways possible. These views are crucial in helping us understand where we need to focus our efforts; they tell us what works and what doesn't.

9. We will do this through:
  - information – providing information about Ofsted (including information about how to engage with Ofsted) and its inspection and regulatory findings
  - consultation – seeking opinions about areas of Ofsted's work and about the services it inspects and regulates
  - involvement – listening to views and using them to bring about improvement.

## **Involvement with providers**

10. We know from our inspection evidence that the very best providers understand and respond to the views and experiences of the people using the service. All inspection arrangements include an evaluation of how well the provider involves the people who use their services, be they children, young people, adult learners or parents and carers. We will continue to assess how providers involve these people during inspection and highlight any good practice.

## **What's different?**

11. We produced our first *User and stakeholder strategy* in 2008. The 2008 strategy has shaped activity effectively over the last two years. We now feel it is timely to revise and update the strategy to take account of new priorities and technological developments that should enable greater efficiency. We will continue to deliver the key aims and objectives of the 2008 strategy on involving parents and carers, children and young people, adult learners and employers during inspection, and also hearing the views of nationally representative user groups and panels.
12. Our new strategy will broaden our approach and has a stronger emphasis on more creative, flexible, and increasingly interactive methods of consultation and engagement. It will offer more choices about channels for consultation and engagement and quicker feedback, as well as a clearer emphasis on value for money. We will have a stronger focus on how people's views can influence the timing and outcome of inspections, and how we can encourage providers to show that they are listening and responding to views as part of their work. A clear action plan is required to set out priorities and targets over the next two years.

## Priorities

13. Consultation has informed three main priorities for this strategy.
  1. Further enable those using services to feed back on their quality between inspections.
  2. Broaden the involvement of those using services during inspection.
  3. Increase the impact of consultation and involvement through enhanced techniques.
  
14. Underpinning all the actions to achieve these three priorities will be our work to ensure better:
  - impact – we will actively promote involvement as a driver for improvement and use the results to scrutinise performance, identify risk and increase efficiency and effectiveness
  - feedback – we will give feedback that is clear, coherent and consistent on the results and impact of all consultation
  - representation – we will target recognised under-represented groups and individuals and make sure that the quality of our consultation is more meaningful and influential
  - digital interaction – we will strengthen our use of digital involvement opportunities by utilising social media, phone/text, email and online options.

**Priority 1 – Further enable those using services to feed back on their quality between inspections**

### What we know

15. We currently offer a range of opportunities to hear views between inspections through post-inspection surveys, sample pilot studies, annual questionnaires and risk assessment analysis. We also take into account complaints and in some areas of our work these can trigger or bring forward inspection visits.
  
16. Listening to views between inspections on a consistent basis will offer another credible source of evidence to impact on the timing of inspections. This is an area of increasing importance as we move to more risk-based inspection schedules, and means that the views of people who use the services we inspect will have an increased qualitative importance in drawing attention to poor performance and future scheduling.
  
17. We know that people are keen to give their views on services they use on an ongoing basis and not just as part of inspection. Consultation data from 2010, for example, showed that 90% of the Ofsted Parents' Panel and 84% of the National Learners' Panel thought it would be useful to be able to give their

views between inspections.<sup>1</sup> Sixty per cent of the Ofsted Parents' Panel also agreed that Ofsted should take account of parental views when they decide on the timing of a school inspection.

### **What we will do**

18. We will aim to provide opportunities for views to influence the timing of inspections. We are currently developing a web-based approach to collecting feedback from parents about their children's school, which may be used to inform decisions about inspection. We aim to make this available from September 2011, before the new School Inspection Framework is introduced in January 2012.
19. We will use the lessons learnt from this new development to consider how we might better engage with parents and carers, children and young people, adult learners and employers in relation to other areas of our work.

### **What will have happened by the end of 2013**

20. We will have:
  - increased the variety of ways in which people can feedback their views between inspections
  - piloted and introduced new ways to gather parents' and carers' views to influence inspection selection
  - considered and, where appropriate, piloted new ways of gathering the views of adult learners, children and young people, and employers between inspections.

## **Priority 2 – Broaden the involvement of those using services during inspection**

### **What we know**

21. As part of all our inspections, we offer opportunities for those using services to give their views in a number of different ways including questionnaires, focus groups and through one-to-one and group meetings. The format for the completion of questionnaires or surveys is mainly by paper or email. As part of the inspection process, we currently offer some opportunities for users to give their views online. This includes adult learners being able to email comments to inspectors, in some learning and skills remits, ahead of and during inspection.

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<sup>1</sup> Ofsted Parents' Panel Survey: Engagement with the inspection process April 2010 (407 returns) and March 2011 (461 returns). National Learners' Panel Survey January 2011 (1000 responses).



22. Some types of provider receive notice of inspection and so have time to organise feedback. Further education colleges, for example, usually receive up to three weeks' notice of inspection and so can have a significant amount of time to gather the views of their adult learners. It can be more difficult to obtain input for remit areas with unannounced inspections.
23. We know that those using the services that we inspect and regulate are keen to get more involved in giving their views during inspection and as part of the wider inspection process. Consultation from 2010, for example, showed that 74% of Ofsted Parents' Panel members would like to have more opportunity to contribute during inspections. We also know from pilot approaches to inspection that we need to increase the number of ways in which users can give their views during inspection, particularly through interactive online methods. Consultation data from 2011, for example, showed that 60% (606) of members of the National Learners' Panel would prefer to give their views online during an inspection.<sup>2</sup>

### **What we will do**

24. We will pilot new ways of hearing the views of all parents and carers, children and young people, adult learners and employers during inspections and ensure that there is a coordinated approach to post-inspection satisfaction. In 2011/12, we will pilot interactive options for people to give their views during inspection via text, email and online. We will ensure that different options are available for different inspection areas to capture these views at the point of inspection, including those areas that have no prior notice that inspection will take place.
25. We will encourage providers to involve the people using their services. We will ensure that these views inform our inspection and regulatory decisions and judgements.
26. We will review the methods of how views are gathered across all the inspection areas we regulate and propose improvements particularly for those whose circumstances mean we find it hard to reach them. All our inspectors are fully equipped and trained to speak to our users during inspection and we will continue to provide specialist learning and development to ensure the views of all users are gathered. We will broaden our approach whilst also being clear on our limits.

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<sup>2</sup> Survey of 1000 members of the National Learners' Panel, January 2011 on the Common Inspection Framework.

## What will have happened by the end of 2013

27. We will have:

- piloted new interactive methods of gathering the views of parents and carers, children and young people, adult learners and employers during inspection and agreed preferred approaches
- increased the quality and impact of responses to consultation of new inspection frameworks
- enhanced the skills, competencies and confidence of staff to innovate and undertake consultation and involvement activities.

### **Priority 3 – Increase the impact of consultation and involvement through enhanced techniques**

#### What we know

28. We know that consultation and involvement are integral to developing effective inspection and regulatory policies and procedures. We undertake formal consultation whenever developing new inspection frameworks. Formal consultation takes place when there is scope to influence the policy outcome and normally lasts for at least 12 weeks. In all of Ofsted's involvement, we endeavour to be clear about what we want to achieve, the scope to influence and the expected costs and benefits of the proposals.
29. All formal Ofsted consultations can be completed in a number of different formats, including online. This was the most popular option for feedback in 2009/10 with 2629 (out of 4211) users either completing an online survey or filling in a word document to send to us via email. The rest were through face-to-face engagement at conferences and focus groups (1468) with very few (only 44) choosing to send in paper copies of their feedback.
30. Ofsted is committed to promoting equality and diversity in all its work. We attempt to offer and introduce involvement opportunities that meet different needs, targeting those whose circumstances mean we find it hard to reach them.
31. Over the past two years, the number of responses to Ofsted consultations has increased significantly, particularly from people who are disabled or aged under 24, both of which previously had a low response rate. The number of respondents from a minority ethnic background also increased in 2010/11 to 14% from 9% in 2009/10, making respondents more representative of the population as a whole. However, there are still inequalities in the cross section of our respondents and we need to focus on reaching specific groups to mirror the national average.

32. We know that people want to have options in how they respond to consultations, particularly through technology. Consultation data from 2010 showed that in terms of social media, 90% of members of the National Learners' Panel use social networking sites; the most popular sites are Facebook (880), YouTube (532) and Twitter (246), and 413 (41%) would be interested if Ofsted had a social networking page. Around six in ten members of the Ofsted Parents' Panel said they used social networking sites either regularly (32%) or occasionally (29%), with Facebook (97%) being the most popular. Four in ten parents overall (41%) said they would be likely to use an Ofsted social networking site.
33. We also know we need to improve the level and speed of feedback we give to users following consultations. Consultation data from 2010, for example, showed that only 27% of the Ofsted Parents' Panel and 11% of the National Learners' Panel agreed that they receive enough feedback from Ofsted about what has changed as a result of them giving their views.

### **What we will do**

34. We will consult our representative panels to get a national perspective on what people think about the Ofsted services they use. We will gather their feedback and analyse the results of the consultation to help measure our success, report on the impact we are making, and inform our strategic planning and priority setting.
35. Our aim is not to just increase the numbers of people who take part in our consultations but to enhance the quality of our methods and techniques to understand their views.
36. We will utilise technology to enhance our involvement approaches. We will continue to use a hierarchy of techniques to gather user views including questionnaires, focus groups and representative panels depending on the criteria of the individual area of work. However, technological advances mean we can also meet the growing demand for a range of ways to respond through both the new Ofsted website and other interactive online opportunities. We will look at how social media could increase the ways in which people can give their views on consultations.
37. We will widen our approach to make interactive involvement attractive and more structured by introducing opportunities for people who use the services we inspect to give their views through email and text options.

38. We will also develop approaches that will encourage people to continue completing our consultations by making them fun, interesting and quick through:
- a new customised online survey tool that will improve the functionality and time taken to complete online surveys and questionnaires
  - new methods of gathering views, for example through interactive online focus groups.
39. Respondents to consultations will be contacted directly with the results where this is possible. We will publish the results of every consultation on our website. We will include questions in all our consultations to allow users to make comments on the process. We will analyse the responses of consultations and report annually on what's changed as a result.
40. In terms of representation, we will work with national representative organisations to implement targeted strategies to increase involvement with key equality groups.

### **What will have happened by the end of 2013**

41. We will have:
- developed a wide range of approaches to the involvement of parents and carers, children and young people, adult learners and employers increasing our ability to offer them choices in how they want to be involved
  - developed our involvement structures for these key groups making involvement easier, more effective and efficient
  - listened to and involved diverse communities in line with our values.

## **Roles and responsibilities**

### **The Ofsted Board**

42. The Ofsted Board sets the strategic direction that informs Ofsted about what we have to achieve through involvement with people who use the services we inspect.

### **HMCI and the Executive Board**

43. The Executive Board, led by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI), oversees all Ofsted's involvement in terms of inspection and frameworks and our key messages. Through monitoring Ofsted's departmental business plan and key performance indicators, the Executive Board evaluates involvement and its impact on meeting our strategic priorities.

## **Ofsted**

44. There will always be differences of opinion between people and we do not expect everyone to have the same view, particularly if the issue is complex. But we will weigh the views we receive and take them into account along with other evidence when making final decisions. We will report back to those we consulted on our decisions on our rationale.
45. This strategy will be monitored and reported to the Ofsted Board. We will evaluate this strategy and measure our success on an individual consultation basis and through regular satisfaction surveys with our representative panels demonstrating influence and impact.

## **Providing value for money**

46. Value for money will be a primary consideration in determining the level and methods used for consultation. All involvement activity will be an integral and essential part of Ofsted's core business, and clearly distinguished from communications and marketing activity. Effective consultation will inform the development of cost effective approaches to inspection, focusing on the things that matter and any associated procurement. The move towards using more interactive involvement and away from just relying on traditional methods should result not only in reduced costs but also in enhanced quality of responses through a more targeted approach.