

# Responses to Ofsted's consultation on proposed changes to the inspection of residential provision in colleges of further education: an evaluation report

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Beginning in October 2011, Ofsted undertook a wide-ranging consultation on the proposals for new inspection arrangements for the inspection of residential provision for students under eighteen years of age in colleges of further education. The consultation included the publication of a consultation document and a formal three-month online consultation process. This evaluation report summarises the responses to Ofsted's consultation on the proposals for inspections from September 2012.

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## Introduction

1. This evaluation report summarises the responses to Ofsted's consultation on the proposals to revise the inspection of residential provision for students under eighteen years of age in further education colleges<sup>1</sup>. The new framework will commence in September 2012. There are currently 43 colleges with residential provision that is in scope for Ofsted inspection.
2. The consultation ran between 4 October 2011 and 27 December 2011. Ofsted also carried out a consultative pilot inspection to test the proposals in September 2011, followed by two live pilot inspections in February 2012, where the inspection reports were published on the Ofsted website. We received feedback during a consultation event where the colleges with residential provision were invited to hear our proposals and discuss any questions or issues with the Ofsted National Director, Learning and Skills. Around half of all the colleges attended the event in November 2011.
3. Following recent announcements about Ofsted's proposal to remove the satisfactory judgement in other remits, we have been considering whether the term 'satisfactory' in social care judgements continues to be appropriate. In line with other social care remits, colleges with residential provision that does not go beyond minimum requirements are more accurately described as 'adequate'. We will therefore be applying the following four point scale, to coincide with other changes to the framework, from September 2012.
  - Outstanding – a service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements
  - Good – a service that exceeds minimum requirements
  - Adequate – a service that meets minimum requirements
  - Inadequate – a service that does not meet minimum requirements.

## Background

4. Ofsted aims to raise expectations for residential provision in colleges by revising the inspection framework, while having a consistent approach to the inspection of residential or boarding provision across colleges and schools. This will help learners and parents to compare the quality of provision more accurately. The revised framework will be launched in September 2012.
5. The new framework is based on the current national minimum standards for further education colleges, which are published by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.

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<sup>1</sup> Please see the original consultation document on our website:  
<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/consultations/inspection-of-residential-provision-for-students-under-eighteen-years-of-age-further-education-colle>

## Summary of the main findings from the online consultation

6. We received 22 responses to the consultation and these were generally in favour of the proposals (See Annex A). Respondents included
  - colleges
  - the three key provider representative bodies: the Association of Colleges, Landex (Land Based Colleges Aspiring to Excellence) and Natspec (The Association of National Specialist Colleges)
  - the funding agency (the Young People's Learning Agency)
  - and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.
7. Learners' views on the proposals were considered through a submission by the National Union of Students. These were largely positive, with some helpful suggestions.

### Key findings

- The key findings from the responses to the consultation are below. Responses showed strong support for the proposed overall effectiveness grade and the four grades of
  - quality of service
  - outcomes for young people
  - safeguarding
  - leadership and management.
- There were mixed responses to our proposals to reduce the notice period of inspections. Several respondents told us that notice periods should be consistent across inspections. Some respondents were concerned that no-notice inspections may mean key staff are unavailable to meet the inspectors, and that host families may be unavailable at short notice.
- There was strong support for Ofsted's proposal to use the college's own self-assessment.
- There was strong support for Ofsted to feed back the results of the inspection to residential learners. Some respondents told us that there may be more effective ways than a letter of providing feedback to learners and we should consider other ways of communicating with them.
- The highest levels of support were recorded in relation to the following four questions:
  - Q3. To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposal to judge the quality of service in residential inspections?

- Q4. To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposal to judge safeguarding in residential inspections?
- Q5. To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposal to judge leadership and management in residential inspections?
- Q6. To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposal to judge equality and diversity in residential inspections?
- The lowest levels of support were recorded in relation to the following question:
  - Q9. To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposal to give no notice to colleges for standalone residential inspections?

## Proposals on the way forward

8. Following our face-to-face consultations, the evaluation of the autumn and spring term pilot inspections (see Annex B), and the analysis of the online responses (Annex A), we intend to take action on the proposals in the following way. We will:
  - grade overall effectiveness using the following four headline grades:
    - quality of service
    - outcomes for young people
    - safeguarding
    - leadership and management
  - publish an evaluation schedule for the inspection of residential provision with clear information about the evidence that inspectors will consider and the grade descriptors that they will use to reach consistent and accurate judgements
  - continue to focus on the effectiveness of a college's safeguarding practice and procedures. Inspectors will make a separate judgement on safeguarding
  - report on how the college manages complaints and takes account of learners' views to improve the quality of their residential experience and care
  - consider equality and diversity in every aspect of the inspection and when reaching key judgements
  - continue to regard self-assessment as important and we will ask providers to share the most recent self-assessment report with the inspection team
  - carry out inspections of a college's education provision and residential provision separately. We no longer carry out coordinated inspections of education and residential provision in colleges
  - normally give providers up to two days' notice of their inspection

- re-inspect where there are serious concerns about a provision
- work with the Data Service to develop a system to collect up-to-date information annually about learner numbers, residential sites and host family accommodation
- develop a system to capture the view of parents, learners and staff, so that this information is available in advance of the inspections.

## Annex A: Analysis of consultation responses

The following provides an analysis of the response to the 12 questions in the consultation documents.

**Q1 To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposal to judge overall effectiveness plus the following four key judgements in residential inspections: outcomes for young people, the quality of service, safeguarding, and leadership and management?**

Twenty respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the proposed overall effectiveness grade and four key judgements. One respondent disagreed with the proposal.

There were several concerns raised about the different types of residential provision across the college sector and the need for the framework to ensure that a college is judged according to the type of residential accommodation.

One commented, 'In the case of young people with learning difficulties it will be an integral part of their learning towards independence, whereas for other students it is a safe and secure place to study away from home because of geography and circumstance.'

### Proposals on the way forward

The evaluation schedule for the inspection of residential provision for students under eighteen years of age in further education colleges will contain clear information about the evidence that inspectors will consider and the grade descriptors that they will use to reach consistent and accurate judgements.

The evaluation schedule will make it clear that inspectors will take into account the nature and purpose of the residential accommodation at the college and the college's policies and practice in meeting the particular needs of residential students.

**Q2. To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposed approach to judging outcomes for learners?**

Eighteen respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the proposal to judge outcomes for young people in residential inspections, but several asked for clarity on how this would be judged. Two respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Some respondents were concerned that it would be difficult to judge the progress that young people make in their education, personal and social development, where learners are in residence for one academic year or less, taking into account their starting points when they joined the college. One respondent said this would be



especially difficult if the inspection was carried out when all the residents had just started at the college.

### **Proposals on the way forward**

The guidance for inspectors will make it clear that inspectors should take into account the length of the time residents have been living at the college when judging the progress made. The evaluation schedule will make it clear how outcomes for learners will be judged.

#### **Q3. To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposal to judge the quality of service in residential inspections?**

All respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the proposal. Several commented on the different types of provision and the wide variance in the numbers of residents.

One respondent said 'Inspection must consider the size of the facilities, recognising that there will be very different expectations in a small residential facility to a large one. Size will affect the range of activities on offer as well as the facilities.'

### **Proposals on the way forward**

The guidance for inspectors will make it clear that inspectors will take into account the nature and purpose of the residential provision when making judgements.

#### **Q4. To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposal to judge safeguarding in residential inspections?**

All respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this proposal. One commented 'This judgement is highly relevant and appropriate for making an overall judgement on effectiveness.'

### **Proposals on the way forward**

The effectiveness of a college's safeguarding practice and procedures will continue to be an important focus in residential inspections. Inspectors will make a separate judgement on safeguarding.

#### **Q5. To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposal to judge leadership and management in residential inspections?**

All respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the proposal to judge leadership and management. One representative association commented, 'We agree with this proposal. It is essential that there is a clear link between the quality of the students' residential experience and the leadership of the college, including governance.'

Another respondent said, 'In particular, it might be helpful to signal a focus on how successfully the learner voice is embedded in college decision-making and what systems exist (and how robust are they) for ensuring that learners can help shape their residential experience.'

## Proposals on the way forward

Ofsted will require inspectors to report on how the college manages complaints and takes account of learners' views to improve the quality of their residential experience and care.

### **Q6. To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposal to judge equality and diversity in residential inspections?**

All respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this proposal.

Several respondents commented on rural isolation and deprivation, saying, 'It is important that these and other aspects of equality and diversity are recognised as being as important to residents from rural areas.'

## Proposals on the way forward

Ofsted recognises the important duty of colleges to understand and value diversity among their residential learners, promote equal opportunities for them and effectively tackle discrimination. Inspectors will consider equality and diversity in every aspect of the inspection and when reaching key judgements.

### **Q7. To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposal to use the college's own self-assessment?**

Twenty respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the proposal to use the college's own self-assessment. One disagreed.

One commented, 'We would expect colleges to incorporate an evaluation of their residential provision in their main self-assessment report. We would encourage Ofsted to expect this rather than require a separate report on residential provision.'

Another commented, 'We strongly agree with the proposal to use a college's own self-assessment process rather than a prescribed form.'

## Proposals on the way forward

Ofsted will not require a college to produce a self-assessment report for inspection purposes, or prescribe the format. However, we recognise the value of the self-assessment process as a valuable quality improvement tool and will ask providers to share a self-assessment report where available. We will comment on the accuracy of the report as part of judgements in leadership and management. This may cover the

residential provision only, or may be a section of the whole college report, depending on how the college wishes to present the information.

**Q8. To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposal to reduce the notice we give to colleges of an inspection to two to three weeks for coordinated inspections?**

Nineteen respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this proposal. One respondent who had been involved in a coordinated inspection said that more notice is needed for coordinated inspections than for standalone inspections.

Seven respondents commented that they were not in favour of different notice periods for standalone and coordinated inspections.

One commented, 'The coordination of inspections will result in a number of potential and actual inequalities and consistency between the published reports and outcomes for residential provision inspected in a standalone event compared to a co-ordinated event. Not least is the proposal that coordinated inspections will receive two to three weeks' notice compared to no notice for standalone events'.

## **Proposals on the way forward**

Ofsted will no longer carry out coordinated inspections of education and residential provision in colleges. The difference in the inspection cycles of education and residential provision inspections means that very few coordinated inspections can be carried out, because the inspections are rarely due to occur in the same academic year. In the small number of instances in the past two years where it has been possible to conduct a coordinated inspection, the coordinated approach has not added significant value to the inspection.

**Q9. To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposal to give no notice to colleges for standalone residential inspections?**

Eight respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this proposal. Twelve disagreed or strongly disagreed. Respondents who disagreed commented about the need for parity in inspection notice periods and raised concerns about key staff not being available and learners being away from college if no notice is given.

One commented, 'Our residential setting is host families. No notice would cause problems of availability of family members due to work, etc. Also the students may well be out on activities.'

The National Union of Students supported the proposal.

## Proposals on the way forward

Following concerns about no notice inspections expressed in the consultation responses, these practical considerations were tested out in live pilot inspections. The pilot inspections highlighted some practical issues to be resolved. These issues were more significant where the provider was not given prior notice than where the provider was given two days' notice. From September 2012 inspections will normally be conducted with up to two days' notice. However Ofsted reserve the right to conduct inspections of residential provision without notice where appropriate.

**Q10. To what extent do you agree or disagree that we should conduct a monitoring visit between inspections where there are serious concerns about the provision, and that this visit should be unannounced?**

Fifteen respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the proposal to conduct a monitoring visit between inspections where there are serious concerns about the provision and that this visit should be unannounced. Four disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Two respondents neither agreed nor disagreed. They commented that they agreed with the proposal to carry out monitoring visits but disagreed that the monitoring visits should be carried out with no notice.

## Proposals on the way forward

Ofsted will re-inspect where there are serious concerns about a provision.

**Q11. To what extent do you agree or disagree that we should produce a letter for learners/residential learners after the inspection?**

Eighteen respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this proposal. Two did not answer this question and one neither agreed nor disagreed.

One commented, 'Due to the diverse groups of learners in further education provision it is felt that a key message be drafted following the inspection from Ofsted. However, this information should be disseminated by the college in the most appropriate format/s for their groups of learners.'

Another said 'This will encourage learners to engage with Ofsted. Electronic communication might be the best method of conveying this information. It also raises student and parent awareness of reviews.'

At the consultation event college managers suggested other methods to inform learners about the results of the inspection. One said, 'A more effective way of

providing feedback might be to feed back to student representatives, along with college managers, at the end of the inspection.'

At the consultation event some college managers told us that a letter for learners may be perceived as patronising and would not be useful. Alternative suggestions were:

- for Ofsted to supply a short, glossy report
- for colleges to disseminate inspection key findings by placing posters around the college or using screen savers on college computers.

The most popular suggestion at the event was for Ofsted to produce a set of bullet points summarising the findings. These could then be communicated by the college to the learners.

## Proposals on the way forward

We will further develop the format of residential reports to ensure that the front page provides a clear overview of the provision for learners and parents.

**Q12. Are there any other comments that you would like to make about our proposals for change?**

Two respondents commented on the need for inspection reports to be easily available on the Ofsted website and one commented that any future plans to collect learner or parent views online should take into account that paper questionnaires are necessary for learners and parents without access to a computer.

One respondent commented, 'In conclusion, we would reiterate the balance that needs to be struck between the 'value' of residential provision and its effect on outcomes, and the 'value' that a separate inspection for residential provision may have. Given there is a situation where academic and residential provision may be inspected separately, and have separate reports, the perception may be that they carry 50% weighting each as to an organisation's 'quality'. This latter term requires a significant amount of finesse to apply accurately, and indeed there is a risk that small residential provision may disproportionately affect general perceptions of the quality of the whole organisation, for good or ill. This requires very clear statements in the inspection reports on both sides in our view.'

## Proposals on the way forward

Ofsted will ensure this is clear when finalising the framework and guidance.

## **Annex B: Summary of the pilot inspection findings**

The following summarises the findings from the pilot inspections carried out. Ofsted carried out a consultative pilot inspection which was coordinated with the education inspection. Two live standalone pilot inspections were carried out and, of these, one had a two-day notice period and one was conducted with no notice. All three providers volunteered to take part in the pilots. Providers and inspectors were asked to provide feedback after the inspection.

### **The new framework and evaluation schedule**

The new framework, judgements, and evaluation schedule worked well in practice, and received positive feedback from providers.

One of the providers commented that the approach to inspecting outcomes for young people was very good, with 'excellent and extensive use of learner voice'. A provider also said that the approach to inspecting leadership and management had 'robust interviews with a sound evidence-based approach'.

### **Coordinated inspections of education and residential provision**

The college involved in the coordinated inspection felt that the inspection did not appear to be very coordinated. Separate meetings were still held with members of staff to discuss issues relating to residential or education provision.

Overall, coordinating the two inspections did not add sufficient extra value to the inspections. As a result of the feedback received, Ofsted has decided to cease coordinating education and residential provision inspections.

### **Notice periods**

The consultative pilot tested a three-week notice period, which was considerably shorter than the current five-week notice period. The only problem arising from this shorter notice period was that there was less time for learners, parents and staff to complete the questionnaires asking for their views on the provider. This resulted in a lower response rate.

For the two live inspections one provider was given two days' notice and the other received a phone call and the inspectors arrived on site later the same day.

In the inspection that had two days' notice the college was still able to complete a pre-inspection questionnaire (providing key information such as the number of learners, number living with host families, and the location of the accommodation provided by the college), and send their latest self-assessment report, before the inspectors arrived on site. This enabled the inspectors to plan the inspection activities required, and to agree a timetable of with the provider. However, for the no-notice inspection none of this was possible.

There was insufficient time to obtain questionnaires from learners, parents and staff and, consequently, inspectors spent more time than anticipated gathering learner views on site. Inspectors also felt that the individual questionnaires were the best way to ensure that learners can provide information anonymously if they prefer to do so.

## **Proposals on the way forward**

Inspectors will use a script to ensure that they make contact with the appropriate person at the college as quickly as possible when they call to give notice of the inspection.

We will work with the Data Service to develop a system to collect up-to-date information annually about learner numbers, residential sites and host family accommodation. This information will be used to help to plan the inspection, including the number of inspectors required and the activities that will take place on site.

We are developing a system to capture the view of parents, learners and staff, so that this information is available in advance of the inspections.

The proposed new framework worked well in practice. Further work is being done to develop the evaluation schedule and guidance prior to publication in the summer.