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Introduction

This official statistics release reports on the outcomes of local authority children’s services inspections that took place up to 31 December 2011 under the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and the Children Act 2004 and which have subsequently been published.

Ofsted undertakes a number of activities in relation to assessing local authority children’s services. These include annual unannounced inspections of contact, referral and assessment arrangements, three-yearly inspections of safeguarding and of services for looked after children and an annual assessment of local authority children’s services.

On 29 February 2012, Ofsted published a management report containing information on inspections up to 24 February 2012. This was produced for presentation to a Select Committee and some of the information contained within that report will be more recent than that contained in this publication.

This report includes information on all inspections that took place up to 31 December 2011 and that had been published as at 2 February 2012. It also includes findings from four unannounced inspections of contacts referrals and assessments that took place outside of this time period, in early 2012. These are included in this release as this completes the cycle of inspections under this framework. This will be the last time these inspections are included in this release.

Outcomes for Children’s Services Assessments are not included in this release as this is an annual inspection and findings were published in December.

Some inspections that took place in this period may not have been published at the time of this release so data are, therefore, provisional. The next release will be published on 28 June 2012

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Key findings

Safeguarding and looked after children inspections since June 2009

- Between 1 June 2009 and 31 December 2011, there had been 99 inspections of safeguarding and 95 inspections of services for looked after children. The total number of local authorities inspected was smaller, at 93, because six local authorities received re-inspections of safeguarding and/or looked after children. (Tables 1 and 2)
- Of the 99 inspections of safeguarding, 30% were good or outstanding for *Overall effectiveness* and 70% were adequate or inadequate. Of the 95 inspections of services for looked after children, 46% were good or outstanding and 54% were adequate or inadequate. (Table 1)
- Two local authority inspections found *Overall effectiveness* of safeguarding to be outstanding and 19 found it to be inadequate. This latter figure accounts for 17 local authorities, as two of them had been re-inspected and were found to be inadequate for a second time. There were no local authorities found to be outstanding for *Overall effectiveness* of services for looked after children and three were found to be inadequate. (Tables 1 and 2)
- Of the 19 inspections of local authorities that found *Overall effectiveness* of safeguarding to be inadequate, two also found *Overall effectiveness* of services for looked after children to be inadequate. One of these was re-inspected and found to be adequate for services for looked after children. (Table 2)

Safeguarding inspections in the last quarter

- There were 14 inspections of safeguarding between 1 October 2011 and 31 December 2011 that have subsequently been published. Of these, one was found to be outstanding for *Overall effectiveness* while four were good and nine were adequate. The outstanding judgement was only the second one in the period since June 2009. (Tables 1 and 3)
- The authority judged as being outstanding for *Overall effectiveness* was also judged to be outstanding for all of the sub-judgements apart from *Quality of Provision* and *Contribution of health agencies* which were both good. The only other judgement of outstanding in the last quarter was *Equality and diversity* in one other local authority. (Tables 3 and 4)
- A noticeable majority of inspections in the last quarter (11 out of 14) found *Ambition and prioritisation* and *Partnership working* to be good. For both of these sub-judgements, one local authority was outstanding and two were adequate. (Tables 3 and 4)
- No local authorities were found to be inadequate for any of the sub-judgements for safeguarding in the last quarter. (Tables 3 and 4)

Services for looked after children inspections in the last quarter

- Between 1 October and 31 December 2011, there were 14 inspections of services for looked after children. Of these, nine authorities were found to be good for *Overall effectiveness* and five were adequate. No local authorities were judged as being either outstanding or inadequate. Six local authorities were rated as being outstanding for at least one sub-judgement. (Tables 5 and 6)
- Although no local authorities were judged as outstanding for *Overall effectiveness*, a number of authorities were judged outstanding for at least one sub-judgement, including one that was found to be outstanding for five of the sub-judgements. Two local authorities were rated as being inadequate for one sub-judgement of services for looked after children (both *Being healthy*). (Table 6)

Unannounced inspections of contact, referral and assessment arrangements

- The second, and final, cycle of inspections began in September 2010. As at 31 December 2011, 148 local authorities had had their second year inspections which had subsequently been published. (Tables 8)
- There were four inspections that were published outside of the time period covered in this report. One inspection took place in November 2011 but had not been published and the remaining three inspections took place in early 2012. By 1 March 2012 inspection reports had been published for two unannounced inspections for all 152 local authorities. The completion of the second cycle of these inspections also signifies the end of this framework of inspections, which is being replaced by new Inspections of the arrangements to protect children from May 2012. (Tables 7 and 8)

Methodology

1. There have been a number of revisions to the various frameworks over the period and these are reflected in the relevant table footnotes. For a more detailed explanation, please see the official statistics published on 29 September 2011:
www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/official-statistics-local-authority-childrens-services-inspections-and-outcomes
2. Full inspections of safeguarding and of looked after children are run on a three-year cycle, so that by the end of a three year period, all 152 local authorities should have been inspected once. The first inspection took place in June 2009 and, as at 31 December 2011, 93 local authorities had been inspected.
3. The unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements was introduced in June 2009 with the first inspection report being published on 17 July 2009. In April 2010, the criteria for meeting a 'Priority action' were revised to only include 'serious failings which place children at risk of inadequate protection and of significant harm'. Data for priority actions are not, therefore, included for inspections that took place in the first year.

4. There were four unannounced inspections that either took place or were published in early 2012. Although these are outside of the data period covered by this report (up to 31 December 2011) they have been included in this publication as they signify the end of this framework of inspections. A new framework of Inspections of the arrangements to protect children will begin in May 2012.
5. For more information on how Ofsted regulates and inspects children’s social care, please go to the Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Forms-and-guidance/Browse-all-by/Care-and-local-services/Children-s-social-care

Additional information

All the tables and charts shown in this release, along with additional analysis at regional and local authority level, are available in Excel format on the Ofsted website in the same location as this document. Underlying data are also available in Excel and comma separated values (.csv) formats.

The selected tables and charts included below are numbered according to the accompanying excel workbook.

Chart 1: Overall judgements for safeguarding and services for looked after children inspections taking place between 1 June 2009 and 31 December 2011 (number)

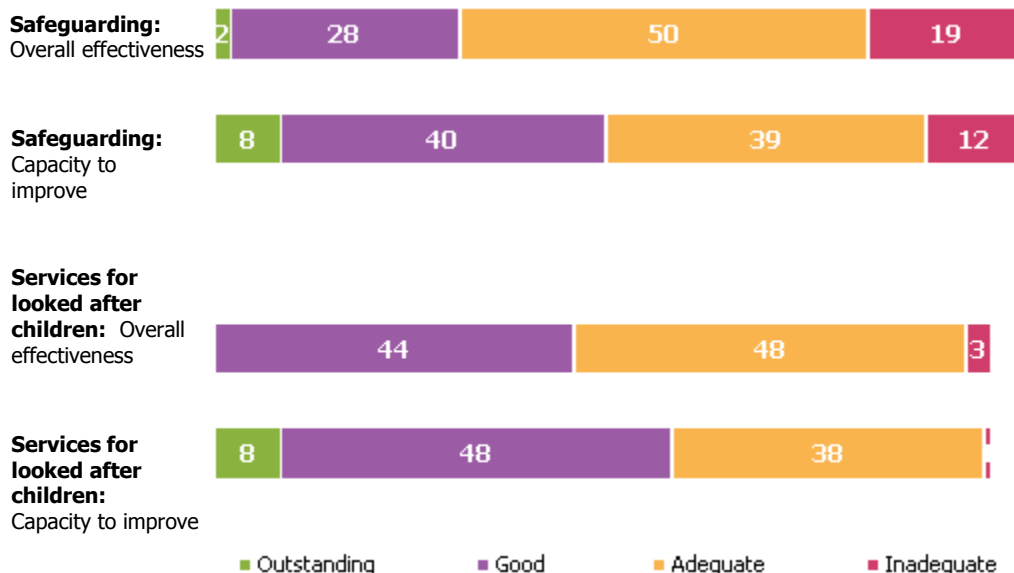


Table 1: Overall effectiveness and Capacity to improve grades¹ for safeguarding and services for looked after children inspections carried out between 1 June 2009 and 31 December 2011^{2,3} (number)

	Safeguarding		Services for Looked After Children	
	Overall effectiveness	Capacity to improve	Overall effectiveness	Capacity to improve
Outstanding	2	8	0	8
Good	28	40	44	48
Adequate	50	39	48	38
Inadequate	19	12	3	1
Total inspections	99	99	95	95

Source: Ofsted inspections

1. Local authorities were given the following grades for the judgements shown: 1 Outstanding, 2 Good, 3 Adequate and 4 Inadequate.

2. Announced inspections of safeguarding and services for looked after children run on a three-year cycle. The first inspections took place in June 2009 and, as at 31 December 2011, there had been 95 inspections of safeguarding and looked after children's services completed, including two re-inspections. There were an additional four re-inspections of safeguarding services only. Over the whole period a total of 93 local authorities have been inspected.

3. The framework for the safeguarding and the looked after children inspections was reviewed during the three-year inspection cycle and a revised framework, incorporating minor changes, was introduced in November 2010. The first inspections took place under the revised framework from week beginning 27 November 2010.

Glossary

Children's Services Assessment

The Children's Services Assessment was introduced as part of the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) in 2009 and all local authorities received a rating in December of that year. In 2010 the CAA was abolished, but Ofsted retains the legal duty to produce an annual children's services assessment.

Safeguarding and looked after children inspections

The full inspections of safeguarding and looked after children are run on a three-year cycle, so that by the end of a three year period all 152 local authorities should have been inspected once. The first inspection took place in June 2009 and as at 31 December 2011, 93 local authorities had been inspected.

Unannounced Inspections

Unannounced inspections of local authority contact, referral and assessment arrangements were introduced in June 2009 and had covered all local areas by August 2010. They are now in their second cycle. Contact, referral and assessment services are the front door of child protection services. Inspections focus on the local authority as the lead agency for child protection. They assess how well practice helps to manage the risk of harm to children and young people and minimises the incidence of abuse and neglect. Inspectors spend the majority of their time looking at direct practice, including scrutinising individual case files with front-line workers.

The unannounced inspection of children's services' contacts, referrals and assessments was introduced in June 2009 with the first inspection report being published on 17 July 2009. All 152 local authorities were inspected in the first year of the cycle and as at 31 December 2011, 148 had been completed in year two of the cycle. The final inspection of this framework was published on 1 March 2012.

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