

Residential family centre inspection framework 2013

A report on the responses to the consultation

This is a report on the outcomes of the consultation about the new residential family centre inspection arrangements to be introduced in April 2013 and an evaluation of the pilot inspections undertaken in November 2012.

If you would like a version of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231 or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

Published: March 2013

Reference no: 130052



Corporate member of
Plain English Campaign
Committed to clearer communication

361

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/130052.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

No. 130052

© Crown copyright 2013



Contents

Introduction	4
The consultation method	4
Summary of findings	5
Notice given before inspection	5
Inspection time	5
The frequency of inspection	5
The evaluation schedule judgement areas	5
The views of children, adults and professionals involved with residential family centres	6
Findings in full	6
The way forward	12
Annex A: Responses to the consultation	13

Introduction

'Placements of this nature play a vital part in the key decision as to whether a family can change sufficiently and in a timely manner in order to care for their children'¹

1. This report summarises the responses to Ofsted's consultation on the proposals for a new framework for the inspection of residential family centres. Residential family centres are inspected by Ofsted under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service and to consider how well they comply with the relevant regulations and meet the national minimum standards (NMS).
2. The Department for Education (DfE) are introducing amended regulations and new NMS which requires a revision of the inspection framework to ensure that it remains fully consistent with the regulatory and legislative requirements.
3. The consultation ran from 17 July until 9 October 2012 on nine key questions in relation to the proposed framework. The questions asked about the extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed with proposals about the:
 - notice given before inspection
 - frequency of inspection
 - inspection judgement areas
 - issues to evaluate under the quality of assessment judgement
 - issues to evaluate under the quality of care, support and guidance judgement
 - issues to evaluate under the safeguarding children and parents judgement
 - issues to evaluate under the leadership and management judgement
 - use of annual online questionnaires to gather user views.
4. The results of the consultation will help us to inform the proposals for a new inspection framework to support improvement and focus on what makes the greatest contribution to helping families, including a greater focus on the quality of assessment, and quality of care, support and guidance offered to parents and their children. The new framework and accompanying guidance is to be published in March 2013. Inspections under the new framework will begin when the amended Regulations and new NMS are introduced in April 2013.

The consultation method

5. The consultation used a range of methods, including a public online questionnaire, and a focus group with key stakeholders and providers in

¹ Comment received through online consultation.

September 2012. To provide further opportunity to engage with parents we also held a number of meetings and telephone consultations with parents currently staying, or who had recently stayed, at residential family centres. We also tested the consultation proposals and inspection methodology through a small number of pilot inspections in November 2012.

Summary of findings

6. We had nine responses to the online questionnaire and ten provider organisations attended the focus group. Not all respondents answered all the questions. We also had 17 parents represented through consultation meetings. Overall, the responses to the consultation were strongly in favour of the proposals outlined in the new inspection framework. The key findings are provided below.

Notice given before inspection

7. Of those responding to the online questionnaire, six strongly agreed and two agreed to the proposal for residential family centres inspections to continue to be unannounced. Organisations attending the focus group were also in general agreement, although it was recognised that there are pros and cons of unannounced inspections.

Inspection time

8. The pilot inspections highlighted that the number of days we intended to allocate for inspections did not allow sufficient time for the inspector to read one or more full assessments in order to evaluate their quality. In response to this finding Ofsted propose to increase the on-site inspection time by half a day to ensure that inspectors have sufficient time to evaluate this important evidence.

The frequency of inspection

9. Nearly all of those responding to the online questionnaire strongly agreed or agreed with the matters identified for Ofsted to consider when deciding whether to bring an inspection forward.
10. Of those responding to the online questionnaire, five strongly agreed and two agreed that Ofsted should re-inspect residential family centres judged overall to be inadequate within 12 months.

The evaluation schedule judgement areas

11. All of those responding online strongly agreed or agreed that the proposed judgement areas are the right ones for Ofsted to inspect. There was unanimous agreement that the proposed issues were the right ones for Ofsted to evaluate in making a judgement on quality of assessment; quality of care, support and guidance; safeguarding children and parents; and leadership and management.

The views of children, adults and professionals involved with residential family centres

12. The majority of online respondents strongly agreed or agreed that we should send online questionnaires annually to all those involved with residential family centres.

Findings in full

Q1 Do you agree or disagree that inspections of residential family centres should continue to be unannounced?

13. All respondents agreed with the proposal that inspections should continue to be unannounced. Of the eight who responded to the online question, six strongly agreed and two agreed with the proposal. One respondent commented that:

‘It is important that inspections are unannounced so that any inspection outcome is representative of the day to day performance of the centre.’

14. There were also suggestions about the advantages of varied inspection intervals and the importance of inspectors being able to get a balanced view of the centre during usual operation, and when managing a crisis. We will aim to take this into account in scheduling inspections.
15. All parents who took part in the consultation meetings strongly agreed that inspections should continue to be unannounced.
16. The pilot inspections highlighted that there was not time during the on-site inspection for inspectors to read and evaluate the quality of one or more full assessments as well as carrying out all the other elements of the inspection.
17. Having considered the views expressed and the experience of the pilots we intend to allocate an additional half day to each inspection, in order to give inspectors sufficient time to read and evaluate the assessments.

Q2 Do you agree that the matters set out below are the right ones for Ofsted to consider when deciding whether to bring forward an inspection?

- Complaints and concerns received about the residential family centre
 - Evidence that performance has deteriorated
 - Changes in the ownership or management of the centre
 - Information contained in notifications and in reports produced in accordance with Regulations 23 and 25 of the Residential Family Centres Regulations 2002.
18. Of the eight who responded to this question online, nearly all agreed that the issues set out above were the right ones for Ofsted to consider when deciding whether to bring forward an inspection. One respondent disagreed that

changes in the ownership or management of the centre should be included in those decisions. Another suggested the impact that new provider service developments could have on the management of the centre should be considered.

19. Parents consulted strongly agreed or agreed with the reasons that may result in an earlier inspection.
20. Stakeholders attending the focus group raised the issue that the triggers to bring forward an inspection were all negative and questioned if inspections could be brought forward to show what has improved. Ofsted is considering this as part of a wider review of triggers for inspection.

Q3 Do you agree or disagree that Ofsted should re-inspect residential family centres judged to be inadequate for overall effectiveness within 12 months?

21. Nearly all respondents agreed with Ofsted's proposal to re-inspect residential family centres judged to be inadequate for overall effectiveness within 12 months. However, a small number of respondents expressed concern about the timeframe; considering placing authorities may not be prepared to use those services and the impact on business. Respondents were concerned that waiting 12 months for a further inspection was likely to result in the closure of the centre because no local authority would be prepared to use it. They considered that if improvement and excellent services for children and families are to be achieved this timeframe must be reduced.
22. It was also felt that in the current climate and in view of the three yearly inspection cycle Ofsted should consider re-inspecting adequate provision within six months as local authorities will be placing with those achieving 'good' or 'outstanding'. A judgement of 'adequate' (lasting three years) was felt a significant risk which may force the centre to close through lack of placements.
23. It was also felt that communication with inspectors about making improvements was very important. The new framework outlines that there should be opportunity for this at the feedback meeting.
24. A respondent also commented that 'It might be worth considering peer support between residential family assessment centres to enable best practice to be shared as appropriate'.
25. All parents who took part in the consultation meetings strongly agreed that inadequate centres should be re-inspected within 12 months.
26. We appreciate the impact on business and will base decisions about the timing of inspections on risk assessments. However, we also need to allow time for providers to implement changes before we re-inspect, to give them an opportunity to evidence improvement.

Q4 Do you agree or disagree that these are the right issues for Ofsted to evaluate in making a judgement in the area of quality of assessment?

27. Five on-line respondents strongly agreed and three agreed with this proposal. When asked if there were any other issues we should include we received a small number of individual comments about:
- referencing local authority requirements as appropriate, because not all placements are court directed
 - placement plans being tailor made for the individual family
 - evidence of regular reviews
 - inspectors considering how conflict with a parent is managed
 - acknowledging that when we refer to children, this usually means babies
 - recognising that outcomes for children and parents are also based on the support received in the community
 - whether the assessment includes evidence of the child's/family's journey to a safe and nurturing family life, for example setting out the reduction of support provided as the placement progresses.
28. Parents strongly agreed with the evaluation criteria under quality of assessment. When asked about other issues to include, they suggested residents would find it helpful if: assessments allowed a gradual increase in independence (if the parents demonstrated competence); relationships between residents were managed to ensure there wasn't a negative impact on assessment; and assessment included daily feedback.
29. Comments by those attending the focus group also included the need for tailor made placement plans, which should be revised during the assessment. A national organisation commented that assessments should not only be evidence based but demonstrate that staff have used a clear theoretical and research based knowledge which shows they understand approaches to assessment, child development, and models of change. They also commented that the assessment must be child focussed throughout, linked to the overall plan for the child and require a high level of skill from staff, who should also effectively liaise with the social worker for the child. We have reviewed the evaluation schedule and grade descriptors in the light of these comments and we have made revisions to ensure these points are reflected clearly.

Q5 Do you agree or disagree that these are the right issues for Ofsted to evaluate in making a judgement in the area of the quality of care, support and guidance?

30. All on-line responses were in favour of this proposal. One respondent suggested that clarification was needed on the responsibility (between parents and the centre) about providing appropriate play materials. Another respondent suggested including the quality and experience of staff, the quality of their

supervision and evidence of staff challenging others appropriately, for example, placing authorities, fellow professionals or parents.

31. A national organisation commented that it is important to be clear that the focus of the work will be to assess and support the development of a secure attachment for the child to the parent/s and the responsiveness of parents to their child's needs. It was suggested that in order to assess the quality of parenting effectively, staff and managers of a centre must have a good understanding of attachment theory. In response to this we have amended the wording in the evaluation schedule.
32. Quality of care, support and guidance was also discussed during the provider focus group, which commented and suggested some clarification to the text in the evaluation schedule. They suggested it should include more detail on a parent who is also a young person and how their needs are met.
33. Parents strongly agreed with the issues under quality of care, support and guidance, and considered that the following would signify a good centre:
 - information for parents (prior to admission)
 - opportunities for families to have contact with other family members (through visits, or via phone or instant/video messaging)
 - support and contact after families leave the centre
 - suitable premises (including adequate kitchen facilities for the number of families resident, and clean premises in good repair)
 - play equipment for all ages of children
 - care and support for older children
 - trips and outings and support to attend individual cultural events.
34. One group of parents also commented that when staff go out of their way to support residents' individual needs, this is evidence of outstanding practice.
35. We have considered all these points carefully and made some changes to the evaluation schedule as a result. For example we have amended the wording of the evaluation criteria to emphasise the importance of any parenting support helping children to develop appropriate and secure attachments to their parent or parents, and for parents to be supported to develop skills, emotional resilience and self-esteem that prepare them to care safely for their children and to be responsive to their emotional, social, educational and health needs. We have also added reference to 'a selection of age-appropriate toys and equipment' being available in the centre.

Q6 Do you agree or disagree that these are the right issues for Ofsted to evaluate in making a judgement in the area of safeguarding children and parents?

36. There was agreement to this question from those who responded to the online questionnaire (four strongly agreed and four agreed). A small number of respondents wanted to see further consideration given to the mix of families placed within a centre at any one time, how their individual needs are managed and the risk assessments to ensure that young or particularly vulnerable parents are safeguarded.
37. An organisation also commented that:

‘Assessing risk is the core of what we do and therefore when we do observe poor parenting, it is unrealistic to say that children ‘feel safe’, we are trying to bring about change by working through the parent. We do intervene to protect immediate safety of a child, but generally do not seek to remove responsibility from the parent’.
38. During the focus group participants requested clearer definitions of some of the wording about safeguarding, including: a definition of ‘harm’, as it has to be put into context of the situation; and further clarification about ‘surveillance’ and the use of video.
39. During the meetings with parents there was strong agreement for this proposal. Parents were in favour of inspections looking at the use of surveillance and how any incidences of discrimination or bullying would be tackled. When asked about other issues to include one group of parents commented about safety where different age-groups are mixed, and how centres manage situations where families are not compatible.
40. We have considered all these points carefully and made some changes to the evaluation schedule as a result. For example a point has been added in relation to risk assessments being reviewed and updated in response to changes in the resident group.

Q7 Do you agree or disagree that these are the right issues for Ofsted to evaluate in making a judgement in the area of leadership and management?

41. There was also agreement to this question from those who responded to the online questionnaire (six strongly agreed and two agreed). Comments received about other issues to include centred around staffing, including:
 - person-centred quality supervision where the management have a pro-active approach to supervision
 - professional development
 - staff receiving emotional support where needed

- how the staff team work together to meet organisational objectives
 - that there should be capacity to recruit newly qualified/less experienced staff if the centre has effective supervision, training, and professional development.
42. The parents we consulted with also strongly agreed with the issues under leadership and management, and commented on the importance of a complaints procedure and residents' suggestion box.
43. We have reviewed and amended the evaluation schedule to ensure that these comments are reflected. For example there are specific criteria in relation to staff receiving quality supervision, and adequate support to enable them to meet the needs of children and parents accommodated. We have also included reference to parents being able to influence and contribute to the development of the service.

Q8 Do you agree or disagree that the following judgement areas are the right ones for Ofsted to inspect?

- Overall effectiveness
 - The quality of assessment
 - The quality of care, support and guidance
 - Safeguarding children and parents
 - Leadership and management
44. Of the eight online respondents there was full agreement with all the proposed judgement areas. A national organisation also agreed with the proposed judgement areas, however suggested some adjustment was required to place a greater emphasis on the promotion of children's wellbeing and emotional needs.
45. All parents we consulted strongly agreed with the proposed judgement areas. One parent highlighted that careful consideration should be given to the environment and the health and safety within the centre.
46. At the focus group there was also a helpful discussion about making good and outstanding judgements and what evidence we would be looking for in each of the judgements areas.

Q9 Do you agree or disagree that Ofsted should send online questionnaires annually to those involved with residential family centres to enable them to provide feedback?

47. Responses to this question online were: four strongly agreed; three agreed; and one answered 'neither agree nor disagree'. Some respondents expressed concerns that although the views of parents and children are vital they were not sure online questionnaires would achieve the required response due to

issues like access to a computer. Another respondent commented that the residential family centre should have a right to respond to the views being expressed by residents. Those attending the focus group also asked what happens with the responses and whether these would be shared with the provider and manager of the centre.

48. A national organisation expressed views that there should be a clear process for seeking views from children and young people, and suggested observation approaches to gain insight into how small children experience the centre. This highlights the fact that skills in observation are vital for staff. The organisation felt it is important for inspectors to know how the centre manager/staff understand the impact on families of the care provided and that there should always be ways in which children and parents can raise concerns about their experiences straight away.
49. Parents we consulted with answered 'neither agree nor disagree' about the use of online questionnaires.
50. One provider suggested it would be helpful to have the views of the courts and solicitors. As a result we have produced and piloted a questionnaire which includes seeking the views of solicitors/court representatives.
51. The online questionnaires were also tested during the pilot inspections. Overall providers and respondents felt the questionnaires were appropriate, however they suggested that we could ensure more questionnaires were completed if hard copies were made available for residents at least. We are including this proposal in the future arrangements for questionnaires.

Q10 Do you have any further comments?

52. Although a national organisation highlighted some additions and amendments, overall they welcomed the framework and commented:

'It provides a helpful basis for inspecting the quality of this important provision and the safeguarding measures which are needed'.
53. A provider taking part in the pilot inspections commented that the changes are timely and welcomed as they focus on the purpose and experience of the family assessment service as well as the internal organisation and processes.

The way forward

54. We are grateful to all those who responded to our online consultation, spoke to us on the telephone and attended face-to-face meetings with us. We are also extremely grateful to those providers who took part in the pilot inspections which enabled us to test the proposed inspection methodology.

55. Overall most respondents strongly supported our proposals. They also highlighted aspects that we have reconsidered in light of the very constructive views that have been expressed, enabling us to revise our key documentation. As one respondent commented: 'Placements of this nature play a vital part in the key decision as to whether a family can change sufficiently and in a timely manner in order to care for their children'. Our aim is that inspection supports improvement and focuses on what makes the greatest contribution to safeguarding children and helping families.
56. We aim to publish our framework and supporting documents in March 2013, subject to the introduction of the amended Regulations and NMS. We will inform all those who responded to this consultation, as well as all residential family centre providers and other stakeholders, when these documents are published.

Annex A: Responses to the consultation

Consultation method	Total number of responses
Online consultation	Nine responses. This included a local authority commissioner, a charity, a national organisation, two providers and two anonymous responses.
Focus group	Ten provider organisations were represented by a total of 12 delegates
Face-to-face or telephone consultation meetings	Five meetings collected responses from 17 parents