

Conducting looked after children inspections

Guidance for the inspections of looked after children services

This guidance is designed to assist inspectors from the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) when conducting inspections of looked after children services in local authorities in England.

Age group: 0–18

Published: April 2013

Reference no: 130143



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/130143.

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. 130143

© Crown copyright 2013



Contents

Introduction	4
Scheduling and team deployment	4
Timeframe	5
Pre-inspection activity	5
Deferrals	6
Inspection activity	7
Meeting with the manager(s) set up meeting	7
Practice observation and assessment	8
Interviews with staff	9
Consulting with children and young people	10
Surveys	10
Case file scrutiny	10
Issues of concern	12
Sharing information	13
Recording evidence	13
Judgements	14
Feedback	14
Writing the report	14
Quality assurance	15
Complaints	15
Annex A. Information for staff in agencies being inspected	17
Annex B. Additional fieldwork guidance	19

Introduction

1. This guidance is designed to assist inspectors from the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) when conducting inspections of looked after children services in local authorities in England. Local authorities, other providers and organisations can use this guidance to see how inspections will be conducted and may find it useful when carrying out their self-evaluation. Ofsted is committed to ensuring that all guidance used by inspectors is published.
2. The team of inspectors will gather evidence across the evaluation schedule and all evidence will contribute to the final judgements made.
3. Inspections are carried out in accordance with the inspection framework for looked after children. The principles of inspection and the code of conduct for inspectors are set out in the framework. All inspectors should know these and apply them rigorously.
4. This guidance seeks to balance the need for consistency in inspections with the flexibility required to respond to the individual circumstances of each local authority to be inspected. It should be regarded as guidance on the procedures normally governing inspection, rather than a set of inflexible rules.

Scheduling and team deployment

5. Decisions on scheduling inspections will take account of Ofsted inspections and regulatory work, performance indicators, serious case reviews and information from whistleblowers. A notice period of 10 working days will be given for these inspections.
6. Inspections of looked after children services will normally take place over five working days (one week). Suitably experienced inspectors from Ofsted will carry out the inspections of looked after children services.
7. The team will consist of at least three social care HMI and an education HMI. The size of the team may be increased if this is needed, such as to take account of the size of the local authority or the history of previous concerns. The Ofsted regional director responsible for the inspection programme will make this decision.
8. Inspectors will undertake either the role of lead inspector or team inspector in the inspection. Within each team the lead inspector will allocate tasks, in consultation with the team inspector(s) where possible; for example, different inspectors will visit different sites.

Timeframe

9. The timeframe for inspection, including preparation, on-site work and the publication of the letter is as follows. Inspectors will normally spend five days on site.

Day	Activity
1	Notification of the inspection and accompanying documentation sent by email to Director of Children's Services, including arrangements for children's surveys. Lead inspector telephones office of Director of Children's Services to agree date and time of set-up meeting.
2	Local authority sends lead inspector copy of core set of documents as set out in this guidance. Local authority sends Ofsted letter to looked after children and children who have left care in the past 12 months, which explains how their views are to be gathered and invites them to complete a children's survey.
4	Local authority provides the lead inspector with a list of current cases, including any analysis.
5	Set-up meeting with the lead inspector includes outline of particular areas for enquiry. Inspector informs local authority of initial case files selected for audit and review.
6–10	Local authority prepares audit of initial case file selection.
11–14	Fieldwork starts and inspectors on site. Additional case files selected by inspectors. Case file audits received by inspectors.
15	Inspectors conclude fieldwork in the morning and provide feedback to local authority and its partners in the afternoon. Feedback of results of children's surveys provided to local authority.
16–25	Drafting and quality assurance of report. Day 25 report sent to local authority for factual accuracy check.
30	Deadline for local authority comments.
35	Local authority sent pre-publication version of report.
40	Inspection report published on website.

Pre-inspection activity

10. Pre-inspection analysis and planning are vital to the success of all inspections. Lead inspectors will have time allocated, before fieldwork begins, to review documents, to ensure that the follow-up fieldwork is properly focused and used to best effect in collecting first-hand evidence. Team inspectors will also have one day to read the pre-inspection briefing and prepare for the inspection.

11. The lead inspector will prepare a pre-inspection briefing. This should be a sharp and concise document indicating the main issues and preliminary hypotheses for both of the inspections and completed against the main headings of the evaluation schedule. The pre-inspection briefing will identify the themes for the inspection and give clear direction to all inspection team members about its focus. The content of the briefing will be shared orally with the local authority at the set-up meeting.
12. The pre-inspection briefing will take account of the information prepared by a senior data analyst. This will summarise:
 - performance information held by Ofsted
 - the relevant National Indicator Set performance indicators
 - information in relation to serious case reviews and serious incident notifications
 - relevant recommendations and findings from previous inspection reports
 - evidence from contacts with Ofsted's whistleblowing service
 - any relevant serious incident notifications relating to the local authority being inspected.

In addition, inspectors will have access to:

- local area, multi-area agreements and other related published documents.
13. Inspectors must be able to confirm their identities by producing Ofsted identity badges. It is not necessary to carry evidence of Disclosure and Barring Service or Criminal Records Bureau checks.

Deferrals

14. Inspections will not normally be deferred. The absence or unavailability of local authority staff, or accommodation issues such as refurbishment, will not constitute reasons for deferral. Illness or non-availability of an inspector must be reported immediately to the Senior HMI with lead responsibility. This may result in rescheduling the inspection, unless a replacement inspector is available. In an extreme circumstance, where a deferral may be warranted, this will be agreed by the Deputy Director, Social Care. If a deferral is being considered, the quality assurance manager for the inspection should be kept fully informed.
15. Deferrals will only be made where there is a strong reason for supposing that if the inspection went ahead it might place staff at risk, or if the ability to gather secure evidence is severely restricted. Such conditions might be:
 - serious weather conditions make access to sites for inspectors and staff difficult and/or dangerous

- power failure means that access to electronic records cannot be obtained for a prolonged period.

Inspection activity

Meeting with the manager(s) set up meeting

16. A meeting will normally be held between the lead inspector and representative(s) of the local authority four days after notification of the inspection. It is for the local authority to determine who is present at the meeting.
17. The purpose of the meeting is to:
 - provide further information about the scope of the inspection
 - discuss the indicative timetable. The agenda for enquiry may evolve over the course of the inspection
 - agree practical arrangements, including survey arrangements, initial interviews and scrutiny of case files with appropriate workers, and provide other clarification as necessary
 - provide an opportunity for inspectors to discuss any issues or concerns which have arisen from the pre-inspection reading
 - discuss how service users and their families can be directly engaged in the inspection
 - outline the initial hypotheses based on the pre-inspection briefing document. This will enable the fieldwork activity to be appropriately planned
 - make arrangements for selecting the eight case files for initial scrutiny.
18. This discussion will be recorded by the lead inspector and will form part of the inspection record of evidence.
19. The meeting will assist in planning the inspection by:
 - confirming arrangements for interviewing staff/practice observation and assessment
 - confirming arrangements for contacting the nominated manager, if required, during the pre-inspection process
 - gaining an understanding of how the looked after children services, including out-of-hours arrangements, operate, and issues specific to the site being inspected
 - gaining an understanding of the roles and responsibilities of all relevant managers in the local authority

- agreeing arrangements for access to: files, information technology systems with staff support, staff supervision files, performance monitoring information, procedures manual, service structure chart with staffing details and complaints information
 - clarifying whether there are any outstanding serious incidents that are awaiting notification or have been notified to Ofsted already.
20. When planning the timetable, inspectors and the local authority should ensure that:
- meetings/interviews are for a maximum period of 60 minutes except where specified
 - where possible the timetable should allow 30 minutes between meetings/interviews
 - the timetable factors in travel time if a site visit is some way away from the base
 - if the need for additional meetings arises the lead inspector will ask for these as soon as they become apparent
 - where sufficient information has been gathered to make judgements against the evaluation schedule and lines of enquiry may be closed, lead inspectors will advise the local authorities where scheduled meetings are no longer required
 - arrangements are made to meet with as many children, young people and parents/carers as is feasible within the time on site
 - names and job role of those attending the meetings/interviews are specified
 - staff are given the opportunity to provide their evidence separately to those that manage them
 - the timetable is reviewed with the local authority at appropriate intervals, for example at the end of week one.

Practice observation and assessment

21. This is a key evidence gathering activity. Inspectors will be sensitive to the potential pressures on, and the apprehension of, staff being interviewed. They will explain that the purpose of the inspection is to assess the effectiveness of front-line practice in working with looked after children. It is not to make judgements about individuals.
22. Inspectors will spend time with social care staff to:
- observe practice
 - assess the quality of work on active, recently closed and recently transferred cases

- assess the effectiveness of systems for responding to safeguarding issues for looked after children
- assess the impact of practice on improving outcomes for children and young people looked after and care leavers
- assess the effectiveness of partnership working in communicating information, sharing concerns and planning and taking action.

Interviews with staff

23. Inspectors will usually interview a representative sample of staff at all levels, including any agency staff. Staff will be provided with an explanation of the process (Annex A), together with the contact details of the inspectors, should they wish to make contact to discuss any issues outside this interview. Most interviews and meetings will be to explore the issues arising from case tracking and assessment of practice.

Function versus theme led meetings

24. Gathering evidence most effectively, by interviewing representatives of the local authority and partner agencies, can be structured by function or by theme. Each method has its strengths and inspections are likely to use a combination of both to gather evidence against the schedule. For example, it is likely that an interview with Independent Reviewing Officers will cut across a number of aspects of the schedule. However to explore the issues relating to commissioning placements, it may be more appropriate to be clear with the local authority that the focus of the group is this and ask the local authority to make the best people available for the meeting. There is no prescriptive list of interviews that need to be undertaken at inspection.

Using resources effectively

25. It is anticipated that meetings will be a maximum of 60 minutes although they may often be shorter. Inspectors should have a clear focus for each meeting/group. This should be agreed, wherever possible, at the pre-meeting so that participants can come prepared. This will ensure that meetings are purposeful and effective minimising the inspection burden on the inspected body. Sharing a clear focus for each meeting with the local authority will also enable them to ensure that they are able to field the most relevant people. Wherever possible no individual members of staff will be interviewed on more than one occasion. There should be no more than four meetings for an inspector in any one day, with fewer meetings scheduled for the lead inspector.

Agenda for enquiry

26. Each meeting needs to be set up with a clear line of enquiry. Indicative timetables may need to be revised in light of emerging themes. Meetings should not take place when sufficient evidence has been gathered to make a judgement. It is recognised that local authorities will be keen to showcase

different aspects of their service. While it is important to see a range of aspects of local authority services and personnel, it is equally important to ensure that resources are most effectively targeted at open lines of enquiry.

Consulting with children and young people

27. The lead inspector will ensure a representative sample of children and young people are consulted as part of the inspection. These may include:
 - a group of younger looked after children
 - a group of older looked after children
 - young people involved in corporate parenting
 - care leavers.
28. Where possible, inspectors should join groups of children and young people who are already meeting on a regular basis. In planning such meetings the best ways for children and young people to give their views will need to be sensitively considered. Some may feel restricted in what they tell us if staff are present, while others benefit from the physical presence of trusted professionals. It can be very helpful if adults such as advocates and participation workers operating from a 'neutral position' undertake some advance preparation with children and young people, and consideration should be given to them acting as facilitators should children and young people require this type of support.
29. Inspectors will work with local authorities to ensure that any child or young person with communication difficulties will have access to the necessary support to facilitate their full involvement.

Surveys

30. Inspections will draw upon evidence gathered from surveys of looked after children and recent care leavers in the local area through the Office of the Children's Rights Director at Ofsted.

Case file scrutiny

31. The main purpose of case file scrutiny is to assess how effectively the welfare of looked after children is safeguarded and how well they are cared for. In addition to using the content of case files as evidence of social care practice and the quality of management oversight and decision making, inspectors will use their content as a basis for direct discussion and interviews with managers and front-line workers.
32. During the inspection, the inspection team will undertake case file scrutiny. In managing this activity, the lead inspector will deploy the team to make best use of their individual expertise. Normally the majority of case file scrutiny will be

carried out by social care HMI but HMI with education experience undertake some focused reading.

33. The principles for case file identification are fully set out in the framework document. In most instances, case file analysis will consist of three key elements:
 - at least eight cases (three of which will be care leavers) selected by inspectors from the local authority caseload before fieldwork begins
 - at least a further 12 cases (four of which will be care leavers selected by inspectors at the start of the fieldwork element of the inspection
 - scrutiny of analysis and evaluation of case file audits undertaken by the local authority.
34. Inspectors are not normally expected to follow up the analysis of individual records, through interviews with the service users concerned, except by exception where a critical line of enquiry can only be pursued in this way. It is anticipated that, in the majority of inspections, this case file sample will provide sufficient evidence to support inspectors in making judgements against the evaluation schedule. If required, inspectors may request to see additional case files.

Access to case files

35. The council should arrange for any paper files to be available at 9am on the Monday of fieldwork. They should be housed in suitable secure storage, at a central point, close to the accommodation provided for inspectors. Where case files are wholly or partly electronic, the council should arrange for each inspector to have individual access to the council's electronic system in a confidential area. If during the course of case file reading, access to a paper case file is needed by the service, inspectors must ensure that it is returned.
36. The audit reports relating to individual children should be made available to the lead inspector on the Monday morning of fieldwork.
37. Inspectors reviewing individual case files will have access to the relevant audit reports which will form part of the evidence base for inspection in their own right, particularly in relation to performance management, including the quality of management oversight. The audit will also provide evidence of the local authority's ability to review the quality of its work which will in turn inform the capacity to improve inspection judgement.

Making arrangements to view the case files

38. Lead inspectors will need to consider a number of practical issues:
 - Where the reading will take place. As far as possible arrangements should ensure that inspectors can be on the same site for this activity.

- The limited amount of time available means that inspectors will want to conduct interviews with key workers in one location to minimise travelling time.
- Access to computers so that each inspector can access online files.

Case file reading

39. In addition to hearing and considering the views of children and young people inspectors will each read key documents and a number of case files. In all inspections a set of key documents will be reviewed. These are likely to include an evaluation of the quality and impact of some or all of the following:
- core assessments
 - care plans and looked after reviews
 - adoption plans and permanence reports
 - personal education plans and reviews
 - any health care related correspondence on children's social care files.
40. In each case inspectors will review evidence of management oversight, including supervision records and appropriate involvement in decision-making by senior managers.
41. In exceptional circumstances inspectors may request access to additional case records.

Follow-up activities

42. Case file scrutiny will assist inspectors in making judgements in relation to the quality of practice, recording, multi-agency working and performance management, as detailed above. The findings will identify particular lines of enquiry which will be pursued in visits, interviews and meetings.

Issues of concern

43. Where serious issues of concern arise, for example in relation to the 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. Inspectors should be aware of the *Ofsted safeguarding policy and procedures*¹ and contact the national compliance, investigation and enforcement team via the NBU helpline (telephone: 0300 123 1231) should they be in need of advice. The quality assurance HMI will also be informed. Where the matter relates to the immediate safety of children, the local authority will be asked to provide a response and

¹ *Ofsted safeguarding policy and procedures* (100183), Ofsted, 2010; www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/100183.

explanation. The concern and request for a response will be confirmed in writing to the Director of Children's Services at the earliest opportunity.

Sharing information

44. During the inspections, inspectors will meet with local authority representatives to discuss emerging issues. This may lead to the identification of additional lines of enquiry. Where this occurs, the local authority will be notified of additional lines of enquiry at the first opportunity.
45. Emerging findings will be shared with appropriate local authority staff and managers during the course of the inspection.
46. In order to review evidence and secure judgements the inspection team will hold a number of team meetings.
47. Short daily team meetings will be used to share interview findings and to identify lines of enquiry in subsequent interviews. It will be for the lead inspector to decide the exact timing and focus of these meetings taking into account the circumstances of the inspection.
48. Daily discussions with the Director of Children's Services form an essential component of the inspection. These 'keeping in touch' meetings between the lead inspector and the Director provide the opportunity to discuss the progress of the inspection and to share and seek responses to emerging findings.
49. The team will hold a final meeting on the Friday of fieldwork week in order to secure its judgements and agree gradings. The judgements and gradings will be subject to scrutiny and challenge by the quality assurance manager.

Recording evidence

50. Throughout the inspection process, inspectors will maintain contemporaneous records, in accordance with Ofsted guidance, of the evidence obtained from all aspects of the inspection process, including the inspection feedback meeting. Evidence may be scrutinised for quality assurance monitoring and will be considered in the event of any complaint.
51. Inspectors should maintain a record of evidence and a record of all the case files they have seen. Inspectors should take account of the following points:
 - evidence should be clear and the date and time of the meeting/recording of the evidence should be noted
 - as far as possible, evidence should not include anything that could identify individual staff, individual children, young people or family members. Only job titles of staff should be recorded and only case reference numbers and/or initials of cases.

52. All inspections records will be retained by Ofsted in accordance with its published retention policy.²

Judgements

53. The lead inspector will ensure that all judgements are collectively agreed by the inspection team, with reference to the full evaluation schedule and the grade descriptors. All judgements will be supported by robust evidence. Emerging findings will be discussed with the Director of Children's Services at regular intervals. The Director of Children's Services will be given every opportunity to provide further evidence during the fieldwork phase of the inspection should they wish to do so.
54. The final overall judgements will reflect the body of evidence collated and evaluated by the inspection team. They will also have been subject to scrutiny and discussion with the quality assurance manager.

Feedback

55. Feedback to the local authority 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.
56. The lead inspector will feed back the team findings, affording the opportunity for dialogue and clarification where appropriate. The meeting is not a forum for lengthy discussions on inspection findings. The lead inspector will confirm the process for the post-inspection phases.
57. A contemporaneous note of attendees and content of the feedback will be compiled by the team inspector, which will be passed to the lead inspector for retention.
58. The lead inspector will confirm that the draft inspection report will be sent to the Director of Children's Service and for their comments on factual accuracy.

Writing the report

59. Following the inspection, the lead inspector will write a report of the findings of the inspection. Team inspectors will provide feedback to the lead inspector and this will form the basis of the inspection report. The report will be completed by the lead inspector following fieldwork. The text, balance and tone of the report must reflect the judgements made about the quality of services. Reports should be concise, well argued and based on robust evidence. They should be written in clear English and be free of unnecessary jargon.

² *Handling and retention of inspection evidence* (100122), Ofsted, 2010;
www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/100122

60. Inspectors should only report on areas that are covered in the evaluation schedule.

Quality assurance

61. The lead inspector, who will be appropriately qualified and experienced in children's social care work, will ensure that the inspection is conducted within the expectations of the framework, the evaluation schedule and this guidance.
62. Each inspection will also have an allocated quality assurance manager who will ensure that the inspection is conducted in line with all published guidance. A proportion of inspections will have a site visit by the quality assurance manager. This will be decided in advance by the Senior HMI with operational lead for the programme. In addition, where issues are identified in the preparation for the inspection or significant concerns arise out of the fieldwork, either from the local authority or from the inspectors, an on-site quality assurance visit may be arranged.
63. When a site visit is made, the quality assurance manager will arrange to meet with the Director of Children's Services or their representative as well as joining the inspection team members at the judgement meeting and, if appropriate, the feedback meeting.
64. The lead inspector will send the draft report to the local authority and this will be subject to a critical read by the quality assurance manager. The letter will also be subject to moderation before the draft version is sent to the local authority for their comments on factual accuracy.

Complaints

65. The great majority of inspections are carried out without any concerns on the part of the authority. If concerns do arise during an inspection, the lead inspector should consider the concern and do all that is possible to remedy the problem.
66. If the complainant is dissatisfied with the lead inspector's response, then they should be invited to raise the matter with the quality assurance manager. Should this remain unresolved, or in any case they wish to take the complaint further, the lead inspector or quality assurance manager should ensure that the complainant is fully informed of the procedures for making complaints.
67. The complaints procedure, which sets out how providers or users can complain about their inspection and what will happen to their complaint, is available at: www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/130128. Lodging a complaint will not normally delay the publication of the final inspection report.
68. Complaints should be made in writing (including by email to enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk) to:

Sue Aldridge
Principal Officer, Complaints
Ofsted National Business Unit
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

Annex A. Information for staff in agencies being inspected

Ofsted inspections of looked after children services

Introduction

This inspection is to evaluate the effectiveness of looked after children services in your local authority. Full details about the inspection are available in the *Framework for inspection and looked after children services* and the *Evaluation schedule for inspection of looked after children services*.

Inspectors will be sensitive to the potential pressures on, and the apprehension of, staff being interviewed. The purpose of the inspection is to assess the effectiveness of front-line practice in working with looked after children. It is not to make judgements about individuals.

Inspectors will usually interview a representative sample of staff at all levels, including any agency staff. 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 through a variety of means including:

- reading case files
- interviewing staff and partners
- meeting with key partners
- meeting with children, young people and their parents and carers.

Each meeting will be set up with clear lines of enquiry. Indicative timetables may need to be revised in light of emerging themes. This includes not holding meetings when sufficient evidence has been gathered to make a judgement. It is recognised that local authorities will be keen to showcase different aspects of their service. While it is important to see a range of aspects of local authority services and personnel, it is equally important that inspectors effectively focus their time on the key lines of enquiry.

Inspectors will spend time with social care staff to:

- observe practice
- assess the quality of work with children looked after
- assess the effectiveness of systems to respond to safeguarding issues for looked after children
- assess the impact of practice to improve outcomes for children and young people who are looked after or care leavers
- assess the effectiveness of partnership working in communicating information, sharing concerns and planning and taking action.

Inspectors will meet with senior managers throughout the fieldwork week, to ensure they understand the emerging findings. At the end of the inspection the final overall judgement will reflect the body of evidence collated and evaluated by the inspection team. They will also have been subject to scrutiny and discussion with the quality assurance manager.

Feedback to the local authority 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.

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

Thank you for your assistance with this inspection.

Confidentiality will be preserved wherever possible.

Ofsted inspectors are currently conducting a looked after children service in this authority. If you wish to speak to an inspector please contact either:

Name of inspector(s):.....

Mobile number:.....

Annex B. Additional fieldwork guidance

This is an illustrative outline of possible meetings and interviews only. It is not intended to be prescriptive or exhaustive. Each inspection is an individual event and will follow evidence-based lines of enquiry. The purpose of this annex is to provide lead inspectors with a guide to start planning their individual inspection, taking into account their lines of enquiry and their deployment of their team. Timetables may change as lines of enquiry emerge or sufficient robust evidence has been gathered to close down an area.

Principles:

- All inspection days will start and/or end with a brief inspection team meeting followed by the 'keeping in touch' meeting with the Director of Children's Services.
- It is for the local authority in conjunction with the lead inspector to determine which level of manager will be best placed to provide evidence against the key lines of enquiry.
- It is for the lead inspector to determine at each inspection who in the team will be best placed to pursue particular aspects of the evaluation schedule/lines of enquiry and at what point in the on-site inspection the session is most appropriate.
- Sessions may be of different lengths as appropriate but should not normally exceed 60 minutes.

During the course of the inspection, inspectors may wish to meet with:

- any existing groups of users
- the lead manager(s) for children's services
- managers responsible for commissioning, planning and monitoring looked after children's services
- the Director of Children's Services, Lead Member (and where appropriate support members) and Chief Executive
- the Virtual School Head
- independent reviewing officers
- designated health professionals for looked after children
- staff responsible for the education of young people looked after excluded from education or educated other than at school
- the manager/staff of the independent advocacy service.