

Inspection handbook: inspections of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers

Reviews of Local Safeguarding Children Boards

This guidance is to assist inspectors when they conduct inspections of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers and when they undertake a review of a Local Safeguarding Children Board.

It should be read alongside the Framework and evaluation schedule for the inspections of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers.

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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

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Section 1. Introduction

1. This guidance is to assist inspectors when they conduct inspections of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers in local authorities in England and separate but concurrent reviews of Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCB). It should be read alongside the *Framework for the inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers and reviews of LSCBs*.
2. Local authorities and LSCBs can use this guidance to understand how inspections and reviews will be conducted. They may also find it useful when carrying out their self-evaluations or improvement planning. Ofsted publishes all guidance for inspectors.
3. Inspections and reviews are carried out according to the published inspection framework. This guidance document sets out the principles of inspection and the code of conduct, which all inspectors know and apply.
4. With this guidance, we want to achieve inspection of the highest quality and balance consistency in inspections and reviews with the flexibility to respond to each local authority's individual circumstances. As such, it is not a set of inflexible rules, but guidance on the procedures normally governing inspection.

Section 2. Inspection of local authorities

Scheduling and team deployment

5. Local authorities will be notified of the inspection the day before inspectors arrive on-site. When scheduling inspections, we will take account of: previous inspection outcomes; information from other sources such as whistleblowing, complaints and serious case reviews; and any other relevant information.
6. Normally seven suitably qualified and experienced HMI will carry out the inspection. Six will be experienced in both the delivery and inspection of social care; one inspector will be experienced in the inspection of education provision. The inspection will always be led by a social care HMI. The inspection team will normally be on-site for 11 working days across a four-week period.

Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Small inspection team on-site Wednesday to Friday (3 days)	Inspection team off site	Full inspection team on-site all week (5 days)	Full inspection team on-site Monday to Wednesday (3 days)

7. Inspections will not normally take place during August or over the Christmas and New Year period.

8. The size of the inspection team may be adjusted, for example to take account of the geography and demography of the local authority being inspected. Additional inspectors may be added to the team, taking account of previous inspection findings or the size/complexity of the local authority area being inspected. This decision will be made by the Deputy Director, Social Care Delivery, who is responsible for the inspection programme.

Deferrals

9. As inspectors arrive on-site within one day of notifying the local authority of the inspection, they are likely to encounter a variety of complex situations. However, inspections will not normally be deferred. Illness or non-availability of an inspector must be reported immediately to the Ofsted manager with lead responsibility. This will not usually result in rescheduling of the inspection, as a replacement inspector will be sought.
10. Inspections will only be deferred in exceptional circumstances. Staff absence, including the absence of the Director of Children’s Services (DCS), is not a reason for deferral. Deferrals will only be made where there is a strong case that, if the inspection went ahead, it might place staff at risk, or if inspectors are severely restricted in their ability to gather secure evidence. Such conditions might be:
 - serious weather conditions that make access to sites for inspectors and staff difficult and/or dangerous
 - a power failure meaning that inspectors cannot access electronic records for a prolonged period.

Structure and overview of the inspection¹

11. The timeframe for inspection, including preparation, on-site work and the publication of the inspection report, is set out below. Inspectors must remember that there will be usually be a review of the LSCB taking place at the same time.

Example day of week	Working day	Activity	
Week one Monday	0	Preparation (off-site).	Lead inspector

¹ A separate timeline for the LSCB review is included in section 3 of this document (page 34). This review takes place at the same time. Ofsted’s power to combine reports is in section 152 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. The reports will be combined at the pre-publication stage.

Example day of week	Working day	Activity	
Week one Tuesday	1	Lead inspector notifies the DCS of the inspection by 9.30am and asks the local authority to begin to prepare the information outlined in Annex A. Preparation (off-site).	Lead inspector and initial inspection team
Week one Wednesday	2	Lead inspector and initial inspection team arrive on-site by 9 am. Local authority makes available the first tranche of child-level data across the 10 child-level data fields in Table 1 of Annex A. Fields 1–7 on arrival and fields 8–11 by the end of the day. ² Lead inspector meets with the DCS/ senior leaders to outline how the inspection will run, in line with paragraphs 28 to 31. Lead inspector: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ starts to identify the cases of children and young people that the local authority will be asked to audit ■ gathers information as outlined in Annex A of this document ■ begins to plan the remainder of the inspection. The rest of the inspection team focuses primarily on evaluating the effectiveness of the contact, referral and assessment arrangements.	Lead inspector and initial inspection team (on-site)
Week one Thursday	3	Lead inspector and initial inspection team on-site (as day one). Lead inspector informs the local authority of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ the 18 children and young people they are being asked to audit ■ the two or more children and young people looked after who are placed out of area whose experiences will be part of the inspection and makes consent arrangements 	Lead inspector and initial inspection team (on-site)

² Where the local authority is unable to provide all of the child level data requested, they should provide all the information they have readily available within this timeframe and provide the remainder by the Tuesday of week two.

Example day of week	Working day	Activity	
Week one Friday	4	Lead inspector and initial inspection team on-site (as day one). Local authority provides all Annex A performance information. Feedback of initial findings to DCS/senior leaders. Team leave by 2pm.	Lead inspector and initial inspection team (on-site)
Week two Monday to Friday	5–9	Local authority audits the experiences of the cohort of children and young people identified by the lead inspector. Lead inspector uses off-site time to analyse Annex A information and update records of evidence. Remainder of inspection team all have a minimum of one day to read the pre-inspection briefing and undertake tasks as allocated by the lead inspector.	Local authority (case file auditing) and inspection team (off-site)
Week two Tuesday	6	Any child-level data that has not previously been given to the lead inspector is made available by the end of Tuesday.	
Week two Wednesday	7	Lead inspector receives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ information from the local authority to plan observations of practice ■ outcome of the case file auditing. Lead inspector informs the local authority of the remainder of the children and young people whose experiences will be tracked and asks the local authority to prepare the documentation for week three (as outlined in paragraphs 35 to 36).	
Week three Monday to Week four Tuesday	10–16	On-site days.	Inspection team
Week four Tuesday	16	Tuesday pm. Lead inspector and inspection team meet to agree provisional judgements.	

Example day of week	Working day	Activity	
Week four Wednesday	17	The lead inspector, inspection team, quality assurance (QA) manager (where QA manager is on-site) and DCS and key senior leaders in the local authority take part in the improvement and next steps meeting. There will also be formal feedback to the DCS, Chief Executive, lead member, chair of the LSCB and partner agencies.	Full inspection team
Week four Thursday to Friday	18–19	Report drafting.	Identified inspectors coordinated by the lead inspector
Week five Monday to Week seven Tuesday	20–31	Report quality assurance process. A draft report is agreed between the QA manager, the lead inspector and the national director social care or deputy. (The review of the LSCB will be sent separately.)	Lead inspector and QA manager
Week seven Wednesday	32	A draft report is sent to the DCS within 15 working days of the end of fieldwork for a factual accuracy check. The DCS has five working days to respond.	
Week seven Thursday to Week eight Wednesday	33–37	Factual accuracy check by the local authority	
Week eight Thursday	38–41	Comments received from the DCS by 9.30am on day 38. Consideration of the comments on factual accuracy, amendments and final stages of QA. Lead inspector and quality assurance manager to agree final report by day 41 before pre-publication version sent to DCS.	

Example day of week	Working day	Activity	
Week nine Wednesday	42	Pre-publication report sent to the DCS, chair of the LSCB, local authority Chief Executive, lead member and Department for Education (within 25 working days of the end of fieldwork). At this point the inspection report and review of the LSCB will be combined into one report with two distinct sections.	
Week nine Friday	44	The inspection report is published on Ofsted's website (within 27 working days of the end of fieldwork).	

Pre-inspection activity

12. Pre-inspection analysis and planning are an important part of all inspections. The Ofsted senior analytical officer will coordinate the data and provide a pre-inspection briefing for the lead inspector that will be shared with the inspection team. The Ofsted senior analytical officer will ensure that the briefing contains all the information the lead inspector and team will need to inform the inspection planning and on-site activity. This will summarise:
- findings from relevant inspections and regulatory activity
 - relevant nationally collected data
 - the annual quality and data returns from the local authority's fostering service and the adoption agency
 - analysed returns from the annual surveys of children, young people, birth relatives, foster carers, adopters, local authority staff, panel chairs and service providers
 - the Joint Strategic Needs Analysis
 - the local authority sufficiency strategy
 - serious incidents notifications
 - the findings from any published serious case reviews undertaken
 - evidence from whistle-blowing to Ofsted
 - any other related published documentation, such as the LSCB or independent reviewing officer annual reports.
13. Ofsted will maintain an updated list of the relevant offices and agencies, such as all contact, referral and assessment sites and the arrangements for out-of-hours services. This information will be used to inform the pre-inspection briefing.

14. Lead inspectors will use this information to decide which site(s) in the local authority to visit at the beginning of the inspection.
15. Lead inspectors will have one and a half days allocated, before fieldwork begins, to review documents and to ensure that the fieldwork is properly focused and used to best effect in collecting first-hand evidence.
16. The lead inspector will assimilate the pre-inspection briefing and identify initial lines of enquiry for the inspection. Only initial lines of enquiry will be generated at this point. These will be shared with the local authority at the beginning of the inspection; in week one they will be focused mostly on the lines of enquiry generated in relation to the contact, referral and assessment arrangements in the local authority.
17. The lead inspector will further develop the briefing. The briefing should be a sharp and concise document indicating the main issues for the inspection. It must be completed against the main headings of the evaluation schedule.
18. The final document will be emailed to the inspection team and is a critical part of their preparation before their on-site inspection activity.
19. All inspectors have a minimum of one day to prepare for the inspection. All team inspectors must have read the briefing and familiarised themselves with the relevant material and profile of the local authority area before arriving on-site. In addition the lead inspector is likely to email other documents to inspectors prior to the on-site activity.
20. The Annex A material provided by the local authority must be read. The lead inspector will allocate material across the team. Key points will be disseminated to inform the inspection.

Week one: on-site inspection

Day 1: notifying the local authority and requesting information

21. The lead inspector will ensure that the local authority (usually the DCS) is notified by telephone of the inspection by 9.30am on the day before the fieldwork is scheduled to begin.
22. Immediately following the telephone call to the local authority the lead inspector will email the DCS to confirm the start of the inspection and data requirements (see Annex A and Annex B). If the DCS is not available, the lead inspector will speak with/email the most senior manager available and ask them to notify the DCS or, if the DCS is not available, the Chief Executive. The non-availability of the DCS or a senior manager will not delay the start of the inspection.
23. The lead inspector will ask the local authority to provide, from their internal electronic records, the information required to identify the children and young

people that will have their experiences tracked and sampled during the inspection. Local authorities should use unique identification numbers rather than full names. Ideally this will be on an Excel spreadsheet.

24. The local authority will be asked to provide this information on the first day on-site.
25. Annex A lists all the supplementary information that we request from the local authority to inform the inspection. The lead inspector will receive this information as soon as is practicable, but it must be made available to the lead inspector before the team leaves the site at the end of week one.
26. It is expected that the local authority will maintain this information to inform their oversight and management of the service. On this basis Ofsted does not consider that the request for supporting information is unreasonable.
27. The local authority will also be asked for a list of opportunities for inspectors to directly observe practice – for example child protection conferences, placement panels, foster carers’ support groups and children’s reviews – taking place during the on-site inspection (weeks three and four). Ideally this will be on another Excel spreadsheet. This information should be provided to the lead inspector by email by the end of Wednesday of week two.

Day two

28. The lead inspector and two social care HMI will arrive on-site no earlier than 9am. All inspectors will confirm their identities by producing their inspector identity badges. It is not necessary for inspectors to carry copies of Criminal Records Bureau/Disclosure and Barring Service checks.
29. The lead inspector will ask to meet with the DCS and/or the most senior manager available for an initial meeting on arrival.
30. The lead inspector will:
 - provide an opportunity for the local authority representatives to explain the authority’s local context, key strengths and challenges
 - provide further information about the scope of the inspection
 - outline the format and methodology of the inspection – practice observations and shadowing meetings and visits, and scrutiny of case files with appropriate workers – clarifying that evidence gathering will be focused on tracking children and young people’s experiences and any meetings will be kept to a minimum and concerned with matters arising from case-tracking at the lead inspector’s request
 - explain the process and arrangements for visits to children living in residential children’s homes out of the local authority’s area

- ensure the DCS is aware of the data and information requirements in Annex A and agree when and how these will be shared
- discuss arrangements to meet regularly with the DCS and his/her senior leadership team, including the scope and timing of the meetings, the final improvement and next steps meeting and feedback
- agree practical arrangements as needed, such as work space and arrangements for access to files and information technology systems, including staff support to access the systems
- identify a link support person for the inspection and arrangements for interviewing staff
- gain an understanding of how the local area services are structured, as well as any issues specific to the site being inspected
- advise the local authority of the contact details of the lead inspector, inspection team members and the allocated Ofsted senior HMI responsible for quality assurance
- provide information for affected/relevant staff such as copies of the summary of the framework explaining the purpose of the inspection (see Annex C)
- clarify whether there are any serious incidents that are awaiting notification or have been notified to Ofsted recently
- discuss how the experiences of children, young people and families can be directly part of the inspection. The local authority will be asked to make contact with the children, young people and families and to obtain their consent to observe any meetings and speak to inspectors.

31. The inspection team will begin the inspection of the contact, referral and assessment arrangements in the local authority. The team will remain on-site inspecting until early afternoon on Friday.

Week two: case file auditing

32. During week two the local authority will be asked to audit the experiences of a cohort of children and young people identified by the lead inspector in week one.
33. The lead inspector will select the cases for 18 children and young people as outlined in paragraph 53 and ask that the local authority provides the completed audit by the end of Wednesday in week two.
34. The local authority will be asked to consider the strengths of the practice they audit and where they identify areas for improvement in individual cases and as themes. It is anticipated that the local authority will use the inspection evaluation schedule as a benchmark of good practice.

35. The local authority will ensure the lead inspector receives the outcome of the audits by the end of Wednesday of week two. In addition, for each of these cases the authority will be asked to provide the following key documents where recent examples exist:
- initial referral/contact (where applicable)
 - most recent assessment, including a common or early help assessment
 - section 47 report or equivalent
 - most recent plan (child protection or child in need or care plan or pathway plan)
 - most recent review
 - most applicable court report
 - chronology of significant events.
36. The lead inspector will identify the remainder of the cases to be tracked by Thursday of week two and notify the local authority. The local authority should make the documents identified in the list above available for inspectors to read on the Monday of week three. The cases to be tracked will be a combination of these cases and those already audited by the local authority.

Weeks three and four: the main fieldwork

37. When planning the inspection, inspectors should ensure that:
- support is provided to facilitate communication with children, young people, care leavers, carers and parents who require additional support
 - practice observations should not be carried out if the time needed to travel is excessive
 - practice observation at children and young people's reviews or meetings allows enough time before/after to speak to social workers and where appropriate to children, young people, their carers and their birth families. Consent of children, young people and birth families is sought.
 - the planning allows 30 minutes and travel time between any observations, meetings and interviews
 - names and job roles of those attending meetings are specified for the inspector attending to observe practice
 - staff are given the opportunity to provide their evidence separately to those who manage them
 - if the need for any meeting arises as a result of the case-tracking, the lead inspector asks for this as soon as the need becomes apparent; such meetings may be held by telephone as well as in person

- where sufficient information has been gathered to make judgements against the evaluation schedule and lines of enquiry may be closed, the lead inspector will advise the local authority if scheduled meetings are no longer required.

Team briefing at the start of the inspection

38. The full inspection team will meet on-site at lunchtime on Monday (day 10 of the inspection). The purpose of this briefing is to:
- provide information about the key issues arising from the preparatory work, including any lines of enquiry
 - share knowledge of the local area and local priorities
 - allocate tasks and responsibilities, ensuring that team members are supported and able to provide challenge to each other
 - agree practicalities and arrangements for team meetings and keeping in touch with the DCS
 - consider any health and safety risks for individual inspectors (inspectors should use the generic hazard assessment form)
 - identify which inspector will observe any scheduled meetings or visits
 - ensure inspectors are clear which children and young people they will be tracking and/or where within the scope of the inspection they will focus their attention.

The roles of the lead inspector, deputy lead inspector and team inspector

39. The lead inspector will:
- co-ordinate the inspection between the team and with the local authority area leaders
 - ensure inspectors are clear which children and young people they will be tracking and/or where within the scope of the inspection they will focus their attention
 - oversee the quality assurance of the work of the inspection team
 - ensure that all areas of the evaluation schedule are inspected
 - develop lines of enquiry alongside the team
 - ensure evidence is sufficiently robust to support judgements
 - provide support and advice to the team
 - consider any health and safety risks for individual inspectors.

40. During the inspection, if further external support and advice is needed this will usually be through the Ofsted quality assurance senior HMI assigned to the inspection.
41. The deputy lead inspector will:
- provide leadership capacity to the team both in the relationship with the local authority and the management and quality assurance of the inspection
 - provide an important 'check and balance', offering support and challenge to the lead inspector
 - ensure that the learning from children's experiences informs the consideration of leadership, management and governance; linking children's experiences to strategy
 - support the lead inspector in assuring the quality of the final inspection report
 - contribute to the lead inspector's quality assurance of their own and other inspectors' work during inspections.
42. The team inspector will:
- act flexibly in undertaking tasks and activities within the inspection team
 - work across judgement areas to provide challenge and scrutiny to each other's work
 - take individual responsibility for the quality of the inspection and inspection report
 - undertake quality assurance of their own and other inspectors' work during inspections.

Inspection team meetings

43. Team meetings will usually take place in the morning to maximise inspection time. The team should meet briefly to:
- share findings and evidence
 - triangulate findings and evidence
 - develop and close down lines of enquiry as a joint team
 - provide time to reflect as a team
 - build up an evidence-based view of the quality of practice within the local authority area
 - keep the lead inspector fully aware of any key developments
 - enable the lead to coordinate the inspection effectively
 - identify which inspector will observe any scheduled meetings or visits.

Meetings should reflect key themes identified through evidence gathering and ensure that a holistic view of children and young people's experiences in the local authority area are being collated.

44. It is expected that:
- team meetings will be focused and effectively chaired, enabling each team member to contribute effectively within agreed timescales for the meeting
 - all inspectors will contribute
 - all inspectors will keep the lead inspector informed of emerging issues and areas of strength and potential areas for improvement
 - all inspectors will distil their evidence in preparation for the team meeting and develop clear, evidence-based headlines to share with the team.
45. The team should meet for a more extended period in the middle of week three (usually Wednesday afternoon). This is a meeting about key lines of enquiry, for inspectors to discuss their evaluation so far of the experiences of children and young people being tracked. This meeting will confirm where good practice has been identified. The lead will also agree further key lines of enquiry arising from the case-tracking and how the team will explore these, for example further case-tracking and sampling or interviews with individual practitioners and managers. In tracking individual children and young people's experience inspectors may gather evidence across more than one judgement area.
46. The team will also meet for an extended period on the penultimate day on-site to discuss emerging findings, agree provisional judgements and identify areas for improvement.

Inspection methodology

Inspection activity and gathering evidence

47. Most inspection evidence will be gathered by looking at individual children and young people's experiences. This will be through a combination of case-tracking and case sampling.
48. In the case of a social work provider where functions have been delegated, the inspectors will evaluate the experiences of children and young people in the same way as they do in areas where there is no social work provider.³
49. Inspections will focus on direct practice by:
- scrutinising and discussing the sample of children's cases that reflect the scope of the inspection alongside practitioners working with the child or young person – this should include social workers and representatives of

³ More detailed guidance will follow.

commissioned services as well as any representatives of the local authority's in house fostering service, the fostering panel chair, the adoption panel chair and the Virtual School Head; these discussions do not have to be in person and may be by telephone

- meeting with children, young people, care leavers, parents and carers, foster carers and adopters⁴
- shadowing staff in their day-to-day work, for example observing: work in the duty team; the work of social workers with children looked after and care leavers; the social worker in the fostering or adoption team; a family group conference; the work of independent reviewing officer; and the work of child protection conference chairs
- observing practice in multi-agency/single agency meetings that relate to the protection of children and young people and in reviews for children looked after.

Tracking and sampling individual children's experiences

50. The inspection team will track and sample the individual experiences of children and young people based on the scope of the inspection. The sample will include:

- children and young people who are at risk of harm (but who have not yet reached the 'significant harm' threshold) and for whom a preventative service would provide the help that they and their family need to reduce the likelihood of that risk of harm escalating and reduce the need for statutory intervention⁵
- children and young people referred to the local authority, including those for whom urgent action has to be taken to protect them; those subject to further assessment;⁶ and those subject to child protection enquiries
- children who become the subject of a multi-agency child protection plan setting out the help that will be provided for them and their families to keep them safe and to promote their welfare
- children and young people who have been assessed as no longer needing a child protection plan, but who may have continuing needs for help and support

⁴ Throughout this handbook, reference to 'adopters' includes those who have applied to adopt a child, prospective adopters who have been approved for adoption and those who have adopted.

⁵ These children may be known by any person with a duty under section 11 of the Children Act 2004; section 40 of the Childcare Act 2006; under section 175 or any regulations made under 157 of the Education Act 2002; section 55 of the Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009, a member of the Local Safeguarding Children Board; or a person associated with a commissioned service, including local voluntary services.

⁶ This includes children subject to private fostering arrangements.

- children and young people who are receiving (or whose families are receiving) social work services where there are significant levels of concern about the children's safety and welfare, but these have not reached the significant harm threshold or the threshold to become looked after
- children and young people who are missing from education or being offered alternative provision
- children and young people looked after either by being accommodated⁷ under section 20 or by being placed 'in care' during or as a result of proceedings under section 31 of the Children Act 1989 and those accommodated through the police powers of protection and emergency protection orders
- children aged 16 or 17 who are preparing to leave care and qualify as 'eligible';⁸ those aged 16 or 17 who have left care and qualify as 'relevant';⁹ young people aged 18 and above and qualify as 'former relevant';¹⁰ and young people aged 18 to 25 who qualify as 'former relevant children pursuing further education or training',¹¹ including children living in homes of multiple occupation
- children and young people who have left care to return home, or are living with families under a special guardianship order, residence order or adoption order.

Identifying the children and young people whose experiences will be audited, tracked and sampled

51. Inspectors will track the individual experiences of at least 25–30 children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers. They will take an in-depth look at the quality of the help, care and protection children and young people have experienced and the implementation of children in need, child protection, care, placement and pathway plans.
52. There are three routes to evaluating the experiences of children and young people: through the case file auditing undertaken by the local authority; through the cases tracked by the inspection team and through the cases sampled by the inspection team.
53. The local authority will be asked to audit the case files for 18 children and young people:

⁷ Including those children and young people who are detained, unaccompanied child migrants or asylum seekers.

⁸ Defined in paragraph 19B of Schedule 2 to the Children Act 1989, and regulation 40 of the Care Planning, Placement and Care Review (England) Regulations 2010 (as amended).

⁹ Defined in section 23A(2) of the Children Act 1989.

¹⁰ Defined in section 23C(1) of the Children Act 1989.

¹¹ Defined in section 23CA(1) as a former relevant child in relation to whom the duties in 23C(2)(3) and (4) no longer apply, and s/he has informed the local authority that s/he wants to pursue or is pursuing a programme of education or training.

- Six children and young people in need of help and protection:
 - a. to include one child under three years
 - b. to include one adolescent
 - c. to include a child who has been subject to multiple referrals
 - d. at least five of the children will have been subject to an initial child protection conference and at least two of the cases will be post review:
 - i. to include one child that has been subject to an initial child protection conference but who did not become subject to a child protection plan
 - ii. to include a child who has been subject a child protection plan for more than 12 months.
 - Ten children looked after, to include:
 - a. at least two children placed out of authority
 - b. at least one child who has a plan for adoption
 - c. at least one child who lives with a foster family provided by the local authority
 - d. one child who has recently returned home in the last three to six months
 - e. One child for whom the plan is to return home.
 - Two care leavers: one relevant and one former relevant.
54. In most instances this cohort of children and young people whose cases are audited by the local authority will inform the overall 25–30 cases that are tracked by the inspection team. The lead inspector will select the remainder of those to be tracked and this will take into account the opportunities to observe practice that are available throughout the inspection.
55. The cohort of children and young people who will be tracked and sampled will be adjusted to ensure a balance of:
- age, gender, disability and ethnicity
 - children at risk of harm from physical, emotional and sexual abuse and neglect; inspectors will also want to identify those children and young people where the local authority have concerns that they may be vulnerable to child sexual exploitation and those children and young people who have been missing from care, home and education
 - educational achievement and ability

- type of placement, including out-of-area placements, placed in a kinship care or 'connected person'¹² arrangement and children placed at home and subject to a care order
 - children and young people at different stages of their journey, for example: children in need of early help; children living at home in need of protection; children who have been the subject of multiple referrals/repeat assessments/multiple episodes of care; children very recently looked after; children who have experienced placement moves/disruption; children placed out of authority; those waiting or placed for adoption; and those who have returned to care following an adoption breakdown
 - at least one child from a large sibling group
 - practitioner and team
 - children and young people supported by a third party social work provider.¹³
56. Some of the children and young people identified will be based on available opportunities to observe practice during the inspection. The lead inspector will also take into account any lines of enquiry identified before arrival on-site, or particular children and young people who are identified through the sample information, such as children that appear to have experienced significant delay.
57. The lead inspector may request a small number of additional cases for examination during weeks three and four to test the quality of service for groups of children and young people where there is a high prevalence of a particular need in the local authority being inspected.
58. It is important that inspectors examine good and best practice as part of the inspection. The local authority is encouraged to provide examples of cases which demonstrate best practice that it has identified, for example through local case audit activity.
59. In tracking and sampling children and young people's experiences, inspectors will be testing the following thresholds:
- early help – including early help assessments
 - referral and assessment
 - children in need
 - child protection (for investigation and for a plan)
 - continuing help and support for families
 - the decision to accommodate
 - the decision to remove

¹² Regulation 24(3) Care Planning, Placement and Care Review (England) Regulations 2010.

¹³ Where the local authority has delegated functions to such a provider of social work services under Part 1 of the Children and Young Persons Act 2008.

- permanence planning
- placement decisions, including work to support return home
- leaving care.

Case-tracking

60. Case files are only one aspect of tracking the child's looked after journey. Inspectors will enhance their understanding of the child's experience through evidence from other sources, such as observation of practice, from the young person themselves, their carers, where appropriate the young person's birth family, the social worker, the children's guardian, health and education professionals and other practitioners involved in their care. Providers of commissioned services should also be contacted, for example independent fostering agencies, social work providers, children's homes and voluntary adoption agencies.
61. When tracking the case of a looked after child the independent reviewing officer, the placing social worker and the keyworker (where they live in a children's home) must always be consulted.
62. In most cases, case files (either electronic or paper-based) will be examined in the presence of a relevant staff member, using their knowledge of the case, file structure and recording systems. In the absence of the allocated worker, a suitable colleague may be asked to assist.
63. Where the child's journey is looked at retrospectively, judgements will be based on contemporary practice. Judgements will generally be based on practice that has an impact on the child's or young person's current situation, although inspectors will read some historical information to understand the child's journey, their progress and how this relates to the plans for their future.
64. Where case files are wholly or partly electronic, the local authority should arrange for each inspector to have individual access to their electronic system. During the course of case file reading, inspectors must return any paper case files when they are needed by the staff working with the child and/or family.
65. Inspectors will examine, discuss and evaluate cases in line with the criteria set out in the evaluation schedule. Annex F should be used as a recording pro-forma for individual cases.
66. The HMI with an education or learning background will contribute across the scope of the inspection, with a particular focus on tracking the experiences of children and young people receiving early help, the experiences of children missing and absent from education, the education of looked after children and care leaver access to education, employment and training.

67. Inspectors will review a sample of supervision records and carers' records (where appropriate) related to the sample of children and young people.
68. Each social care HMI will track at least five cases and sample further cases as the key lines of enquiry emerge throughout the inspection.

Tracking children and young people placed out of authority

69. The lead inspector will identify a minimum of two children and young people living in a children's home that is not in the local authority area. Those young people who live furthest from the authority and those most vulnerable will be prioritised. Where two or more young people from the authority are placed in the same children's home, the lead inspector will include all those young people in this activity.
70. The lead inspector, or nominated team inspector, will make contact with each of the children's homes during the first week of the inspection. The young person's keyworker, or equivalent, will be asked to talk to the young person to ask if they consent to an inspector from Ofsted visiting them in their home to talk about how their social worker and local authority supports them. The lead inspector will confirm arrangements by letter to the registered manager of the children's home and include a leaflet for the keyworker to share with the young person. The registered manager will be asked to consent to the visit and confirm this along with the young person's consent in writing, by email to the lead inspector.
71. The lead inspector will then contact the appropriate regional social care regulatory inspection manager (RIM) or in their absence the duty RIM. The RIM will identify the social care regulatory inspectors (SCRI) to visit the two children's homes during the course of the local authority inspection. This will always be before the end of week three.
72. The SCRI will contact the children's home to make the appointment to visit at a time that is convenient to the young person.
73. The SCRI visiting the child will be acting under section 136 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and evaluating the exercise of the local authority functions.¹⁴ If the SCRI has concerns about the functioning of the children's home they will ensure these are addressed through a triggered inspection within 24 hours or in the case of more urgent concerns will inform the registered manager that an inspection of the children's home will commence with immediate effect.

¹⁴ These are the social services functions of the authority (within the meaning of the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970 (c. 42)) that relate to persons aged under 18.

74. The SCRI will gather evidence for the local authority inspection by talking to the young person, keyworker and/or registered manager to triangulate the actual experience of the young person in relation to his/her care plan.
75. The SCRI will email a completed pro-forma (Annex L) for each young person to the lead inspector. This will evaluate:
- the plan for the child's future, establishing that it is clear and acceptable, including to the young person
 - that any plan for the young person to go home is appropriate, well planned and in their best interests
 - the relationship between the placement and care plans with particular regard to any specific issues of vulnerability
 - the young person's relationship with their social worker
 - the appropriateness of contact with the young person's birth and wider family
 - the effectiveness of placement matching for each young person.

Foster carers' and adopters' records

Foster carers

76. Inspectors will review at least four foster carers' records, linked to the cases tracked where possible. Annex I details the information that should be found in a foster carer's record as outlined in regulation. The purpose of this will be to assess the impact of the placement on outcomes for children and young people and how well the service promotes children's progress.
77. Foster carers and providers should always be asked about:
- the information provided to them regarding children's needs and how the child coming to live with them could be cared for by the family according to the needs they have
 - the service they receive: training, support and supervision
 - how delegated authority is managed
 - how permanence, including special guardianship orders, are supported.
78. If the placement is made with a local authority foster carer, inspectors will assess:
- the recruitment, preparation and assessment
 - training
 - supervision and support

- review of foster carers including kinship carers (connected persons) and the extent to which children and young people have contributed to their foster carer's review.
79. If the foster carer has been recruited recently, the assessment and preparation of the carer should be discussed with the fostering team manager and/or fostering social worker, the assessment report reviewed and, if needed, checks should be seen. If the foster carer is a long-standing carer, then the annual review and on-going training and support should be evaluated through similar discussions.

Adopters

80. Inspectors will review at least four adopters' records linked to the cases tracked where possible. Annex J details the information that should be part of a prospective adopter's record as outlined in the regulations. The purpose of this will be to assess the impact of the placement on outcomes for the child/ren and how well the adoptive family and those who support the placement prioritise the child/ren's needs and progress. Adopters and the adoption service providers should always be asked about the information provided for them regarding children's needs and the effectiveness of the matching process. Inspectors may also consider records of prospective adopters who have been unsuccessful in the process.
81. If the placement is made with one of the local authority's approved adopters inspectors will assess:
- the effectiveness and impact of recruitment, preparation, training, assessment and support of adopters
 - the provision of adoption support and any promise of future adoption support
 - the quality of the assessment report and rigour of checks as appropriate.
82. The adoption team manager, adoption social worker and adoption panel chair should be involved in discussions where necessary to triangulate evidence.

Case sampling

83. In addition to detailed tracking of individual children's experiences, inspectors will also evaluate thresholds in the children's journeys to further test the effectiveness of the services and arrangements to help, care for and protect children and young people. This will be through more targeted sampling of case files. The inspection team will look at the experiences of at least 50 children and young people in this way.
84. Case sampling will also be used to pursue areas of both weak and good practice raised through tracking individual children's cases, and triangulate

evidence, for example to establish whether weaknesses in practice reflect weaknesses that are widespread or serious. Inspectors will record whether a case has been sampled or tracked.

Observations of practice

85. Observation of practice is a key evidence-gathering activity. Observations will be evaluated in line with the criteria set out in the evaluation schedule and as exemplified in Annex G.
86. During any observations of practice, inspectors will be sensitive to the potential pressures on, and the apprehension of, children, young people, families and staff. Inspectors will consider and discuss the appropriateness of each observation and whether they should observe whole or part of the activity. Any observation of planned meetings will be with the explicit and informed consent of the children, young people and families. The relevant practitioners will be asked to gain this consent and inspectors will confirm it with the children, young people and families. Inspectors will explain that the purpose of the inspection is to assess the effectiveness of help, care and protection for children, young people, their families and carers; it is not to make judgements about individuals.
87. Inspectors will target their inspection activity where they are most likely to gather robust evidence within the time available. This may involve observing meetings such as:
 - child protection conferences: initial and review
 - core groups
 - adult service meetings such as those led by mental health teams and drug and alcohol services where children who may be at risk of harm are discussed
 - strategy discussions/meetings
 - multi-agency panels and risk management meetings
 - planned child protection monitoring visits
 - children in need reviews
 - looked after children reviews
 - legal planning meetings¹⁵
 - secure accommodation panels
 - multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARAC) meetings

¹⁵ Should there be any question of legal privilege, it is for the client (the local authority) to waive legal privilege rather than their legal advisor.

- early support and preventative work such as multi-agency 'team around the child'.
88. Inspectors will ask managers to observe practice alongside them in some instances, in order to provide opportunities to discuss with managers their own evaluation of practice. After any observation of practice, the inspector is likely to have a brief discussion with the child, young person and family about their experience of the services received and their impact.
89. The inspector will have a brief discussion with the practitioner (and manager if present) about what they have just observed. They will not provide judgements about the practice observed, but will evaluate what they have seen and discuss their overall impression.

Hearing the views of children and young people and their families

90. There are various ways to hear the views of children, young people and their families. These include:
- direct testimony, for example inspectors visiting and talking to children placed a long way out of their authority area
 - views of representative groups – for example inspectors will always invite the Children in Care Council to meet with them
 - views expressed by others advocating for children looked after and care leavers including foster carers and residential staff
 - views directly recorded in case files and meeting minutes
 - views expressed by practitioners
 - views expressed by others advocating for children, young people and their families
 - analysis of the annual questionnaires
 - reviewing complaints made by children.
91. Inspectors will discuss any risks or ethical issues concerned with meeting children and birth family members with the child's social worker or lead practitioner in order to determine whether it is in the best interests of the individual concerned.
92. An inspector will always meet with a group of foster carers – this will be either an established group or a group identified through an open invitation to meet the inspection team.

93. Inspectors will provide the local authority with guidance to help prepare children, young people, carers and families to be involved in the inspection.¹⁶ Local authorities should gain the consent of the children and young people and birth families before involving them in the inspection and they should be given the option of a discussion by telephone.
94. The lead inspector will also want to see and hear the impact of local consultation with all children and young people including those looked after, care leavers, carers and birth families to demonstrate how their feedback has been asked for both individually and collectively, taken into account and, where appropriate, impacts on practice, strategy, service development and design.
95. Inspectors will work with agencies to ensure that any child or young person with communication difficulties has access to the necessary support to facilitate her/his full involvement in the inspection.

Interviews with practitioners and/or managers and stakeholders

96. Inspectors will triangulate evidence by talking to practitioners and/or managers, either by telephone or in person. Where children and young people are supported by a third party social work provider, inspectors will talk to the practitioners and managers of that provider in the same way as local authority staff. Lead inspectors will only request that groups of people are brought together for discussion where this is the only way to triangulate evidence and is based on lines of enquiry arising from case-tracking. The local authority will not be asked to schedule a plan of meetings.
97. The focus on tracking children and young people's experiences is the spine of this inspection. Meetings with groups are likely to arise only as a consequence of case-tracking and will be limited in number. Where meetings do occur, the inspector leading the group will usually identify the key practitioners and agencies to be represented.
98. Inspectors will create opportunities to engage with middle managers. This is likely to be through individual discussions relating to practice issues to consider how policy translates into practice.
99. Inspectors will always interview the DCS, the Chief Executive and the chair of the LSCB.
100. Inspectors will usually talk, by telephone where necessary, with:

¹⁶ *Will you help us with our inspection? Information for children and young people;* www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/inspection-handbook-inspections-of-services-for-children-need-of-help-and-protection-children-looked.

- staff and managers responsible for ensuring commissioning activity meets the authority's sufficiency duty¹⁷
- the lead member for children's services
- the LSCB business manager and LSCB members
- the corporate parenting group or senior officers in partner agencies responsible for corporate parenting
- local authority adoption panel chair
- fostering panel chair
- the local authority fostering association chair or equivalent body and/or members
- lead manager for emergency placements
- virtual school head
- the responsible individual and registered manager for a social work provider where functions are delegated
- children in care council and/or group of children looked after
- care leavers.

101. Given the short notice given before these inspections, where these individuals are not available, inspectors may talk to those who are deputising for them in their absence. The lead inspector will determine which other managers or practitioners they need to make contact with, such as representatives from youth offending services.

102. Where, as part of the assessment of the quality and effectiveness of local authority leadership and management, inspectors identify an issue arising from the arrangements for discharging the functions of the DCS and lead member for children's services, inspectors will look at the quality and effectiveness of the authority's assurance and compliance process.

Local family justice system

103. In evaluating services for children subject to care, supervision and adoption proceedings it is important to understand local authority performance in the context of the local family justice system and to offer a wide range of valuable evidence, particularly in reviewing the child's journey into the looked after system and plans for permanence. Inspectors will always make contact with the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass) as part of their evidence-gathering process to hear their experience of local authority performance and a perspective on the local family justice system.

¹⁷ Section 22G of the Children Act 1989 and *Sufficiency: statutory guidance on securing sufficient accommodation for looked after children*, Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2010; <http://www.education.gov.uk/aboutdfe/statutory/g00222838/secure-accomm-looked-after>.

104. Inspectors may in some circumstances also decide to speak with the local judiciary (likely to be the local Designated Family Judge and/or the chair of the family proceedings court bench) and/or court administration (court manager, family court listing officer or clerk to the family justices). Interviews will usually be by telephone.
105. Ofsted will not make judgements about family justice partner organisations or the judiciary in the report, but will report system-wide strengths and weaknesses.
106. Examining the local family justice system will elicit evidence for other parts of the framework in relation to partnership working, effectiveness of the LSCB and quality of information sharing. The range of information gathering will vary according to the lines of enquiry in each area and will need to be proportionate. However, the following may be helpful to consider:
- Minutes of the Local Family Justice Board – this board is influential as a catalyst for change in the family justice system. Review of minutes will enable inspectors to understand the priorities of the board and the involvement of the local authority and their engagement and influence in improvement activities.
 - Most recent data on the duration of care cases – nationally and by local authority within the area. Cafcass ‘heat maps’ can provide data on trends for up to five years. Where this has not been included in the pre-inspection briefing, it can be requested from Cafcass. This should show time from application to conclusion, but will need inspectors to explore the local authority’s influence on issues of tackling delay.
107. Contact with the local Cafcass service area will add to the evidence base. Cafcass will have data on:
- response to referrals and requests for information
 - the appropriateness of thresholds for care applications and timeliness of applications
 - level and appropriateness of applications for section 25 secure orders and emergency protection orders
 - the quality of the local authority’s pre-proceeding work within the Public Law Outline
 - timeliness and quality of assessments and reports to court, including quality assurance processes
 - the effectiveness of independent reviewing officers
 - the local authority’s engagement with the Local Family Justice Board
 - the involvement of Cafcass in the LSCB and their view of its effectiveness

- the appropriate allocation of requests for section 7 reports¹⁸ to Cafcass or the local authority
 - the quality of the local authority's legal advice and representation.
108. A telephone call with the chair of Family Justice Board¹⁹ may be useful to triangulate information from the minutes of the Local Family Justice Board and to discuss the local authority's commitment to the family justice review and performance targets, if these are not clear.
109. Where there are specific areas of concern, or if there are issues where Cafcass is unable to offer a definitive response, then contact with the Designated Family Judge (DFJ) for the area may be helpful. However, in many cases, they sit as judge on work from a number of local authorities and as the throughput between authorities will vary, this can distort their views of relative quality and effectiveness. They would also act as the spokesperson for a number of judges across the circuit. In the recent past, DFJs have been asked about the local authority's performance at the Local Family Justice Board. As they attend as observers, this may not be an appropriate use for this contact.
110. The chair of the Family Proceeding Court (FPC) or their legal advisor could offer added value in some cases. As FPCs are locally based, this would be a more reliable source of local evidence about the performance of the local authority, particularly if there are concerns about the use of emergency protection orders or secure accommodation order applications.

Documentation

111. The inspection team will review the documentation requested in Annex A. In exceptional circumstances, the lead inspector or other members of the inspection team may request additional evidence. Where documentation is presented but has not been requested by an inspector, it will only be evaluated where it directly relates to the evaluation schedule for the inspection. The local authority will be expected to be explicit about what it believes to be the relevance of other material provided and direct inspectors to specific aspects of the documents presented.

¹⁸ When a court is considering any question with respect to a child under the Children Act 1989 it can 'ask' (a) a Cafcass officer or (b) a local authority to report to the court. These often relate to questions of where a child should live or with whom they should have contact with in circumstances where parents are divorcing or separating. A national protocol (*Protocol for allocating responsibilities for court reporting in private law Children Act 1989 proceedings between Cafcass and local authority children's services*; <http://adcs.org.uk/download/position-statements/aug-10/adcs-cafcass-protocol-for-allocation-reponsibilities-final-august-2010.pdf>) states that if the child is an open case to a local authority or a closed case of less than a month, the report should be prepared by the local authority.

¹⁹ This is often the Cafcass head of service or a senior officer from Her Majesty's Court and Tribunal Services.

Engaging the Director of Children's Services during the inspection

112. The DCS or another member of the senior staff will be informed of emerging findings throughout the inspection. This is likely to be on a daily basis in the form of brief face-to-face meetings which may involve any other inspectors from the team. This gives the local authority the opportunity to challenge and understand emerging findings.
113. Although the lead inspector should offer the DCS opportunities for engagement, this is not mandatory. The DCS may choose whether or not to accept; they may not be available to meet with the lead inspector due to other commitments. The extent to which the DCS engages with the inspection team will not influence inspection judgements.
114. These meetings will be informed by the headlines from the team meeting. Where there are concerns about individual children and young people these will be shared at the earliest opportunity and written feedback requested on the action taken and/or current circumstance for the young person (Annex H).
115. They will be sharp, focused meetings. The lead inspector should check that the DCS is clear about the relationship between the evidence and the emerging and/or substantiated judgements.

Finalising evidence

116. The inspection team will meet off-site on the Tuesday afternoon in the final fieldwork week to finalise their evidence and agree their judgements, including the judgement for the review of the LSCB. Inspectors will weigh the evidence against the grade descriptors outlined in the evaluation schedule. Inspectors will make a judgement of 'good' where the characteristics set out in the framework are widespread and common practice and are demonstrably leading to improved outcomes. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings. A judgement of 'good' will be made where the inspection team concludes that the evidence overall sits most appropriately with a finding of 'good'. This is what Ofsted describes as 'best fit'.

The improvement and next steps meeting

117. On the final on-site day, the DCS and senior leaders will be invited to meet with the inspection team to hear the judgements and, most importantly, the evidence that supports these judgements. There should be 'no surprises' as key strengths and areas for improvement should have been part of the daily meetings. This is not a feedback meeting. The DCS will be informed of the judgements prior to the meeting.
118. Only four attendees will be invited. This will usually be the DCS and two other local authority representatives and the LSCB chair.

119. The LSCB chair will usually be invited to this meeting unless the DCS decides otherwise. Where the LSCB chair is invited, the review of the LSCB will form part of this meeting; where this is not the case then the lead inspector will meet with the LSCB chair separately.
120. The DCS, LSCB chair and senior leaders are invited to engage in this final discussion about the evidence and the areas for improvement and areas of good practice in order to:
- fully understand the detail of the evidence that the team used to reach judgements to support improvement
 - take the opportunity to clarify any outstanding issues
 - have a clear understanding of the areas for improvement that are likely to follow the inspection
 - provide transparency about the inspection and next steps
 - reduce the need for extended feedback.
121. So that judgements are clear and to inform the discussion with the local authority, inspectors should produce bullet-pointed summary evidence that highlights strengths and areas for improvement across the scope of the inspection in preparation.
122. The lead inspector will outline the team's final judgements. Then the inspection team will describe to the local authority the detail of the evidence that supports their judgements and the areas where they have had debate. They will invite dialogue and discussion about what this means. The discussion should be child-focused and clearly relate to the scope of the inspection, looking at the experience of children and young people through evidenced examples. The lead inspector will ask each inspector to identify aspects of good practice that they have seen and have evidence for, and areas that they have identified that require improvement.
123. The local authority should be engaged in the discussion about the evidence so that the areas for improvement are clear. The inspection team should be clear about what will make the most difference in this local authority and the children, young people and families that it serves.

Formal headline feedback at the end of the inspection

124. Before leaving the local authority area on the last day of fieldwork, the lead inspector must make clear:
- the provisional grades for each judgement as set out in the evaluation schedule

- that the grades may be subject to change because of quality assurance checks and should, therefore, be treated as confidential until the local authority receives a copy of the final inspection report
 - the key strengths and areas for improvement that support the overall judgement including any areas for priority action
 - the procedures for publishing the report
 - the complaints procedure.
125. As there will be regular dialogue or close engagement with the DCS during the inspection, there should be no need for a lengthy or formal final feedback session. There should be no new information presented at this stage. Where the DCS has been involved in discussion with inspectors at the improvement and next steps meeting, they should already have a clear and detailed understanding of the inspection outcomes before the feedback. However there will always be at least a short meeting focusing on the key headline findings. Ofsted strongly advises that the Chief Executive, the leader of the council, the lead member and the LSCB chair are invited for the feedback
126. In the event that the DCS has declined the opportunities to engage with the inspection team or has been unavailable for other reasons, the lead inspector should prepare a more extended formal feedback meeting. In such circumstances, the lead inspector should inform the DCS of the main findings in advance of the extended formal feedback meeting.
127. All inspectors may have a role in feedback, affording the opportunity for dialogue and clarification where appropriate. Roles will be determined by the lead inspector. A team inspector will compile a contemporaneous note of the attendees and the content of the feedback.
128. The lead inspector will confirm that the draft inspection reports will be sent to the DCS, chair of LSCB and the Chief Executive.

Section 3. The review of the LSCB

129. A review of the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) will usually be undertaken at the same time as the inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers. However, the review can be undertaken as a stand-alone review. The LSCB chair will be notified about the review at the same time as the Director of Children's Services (DCS).

130. Inspectors will review and evaluate:

- minutes of LSCB meetings from the previous 12 months (including executive board meetings where applicable)
- sub-group minutes as appropriate – for example, where there is a juvenile secure setting in the local authority area, the inspector may review the minutes of the relevant sub-group to assess how the LSCB independently monitors and evaluates the response to the needs of this potentially vulnerable group
- any evaluation of multi-agency safeguarding training and the LSCB training strategy
- any serious case review action plans
- scrutinise any recent auditing undertaken by the LSCB
- the learning improvement framework
- the Child Death Overview Process annual report
- the LSCB business plan
- the LSCB annual report.

131. Inspectors will request a full list of contact details for all LSCB members.

132. Inspectors will:

- interview the LSCB chair, the LSCB business manager, the DCS, the Chief Executive and at least two other statutory LSCB partners. This would usually be a health and a police representative as a minimum. They will also, wherever possible, interview the lay members
- scrutinise any recent auditing undertaken by the LSCB
- evaluate the progress and impact of any serious case reviews
- evaluate the impact and effectiveness of the child death overview panel
- evaluate the LSCB's understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of local multi-agency practice, the effectiveness of their monitoring and evaluation and how well they have identified areas for improvement

- evaluate the quality and impact of the policies and procedures produced by the LSCB, such as the local thresholds document and the child sexual exploitation action plan.

133. Inspectors will use inspection evidence to inform their discussions with LSCB members and the LSCB business manager. Where possible, the inspectors will want to speak to the chair or their representative early in the four-week period to understand how the LSCB is constructed, recognising that each LSCB will be different, and to understand the local priorities.

134. They will evaluate the LSCB's understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of multi-agency practice; the effectiveness of their monitoring and evaluation; and how well they have identified areas for improvement. Where possible, they are likely to also want to talk to the chair or their representative towards the end of the four-week period in light of inspection evidence about practice.

135. Inspectors will take opportunities to gather evidence for the review from our conversations with other key stakeholders and LSCB and sub-group members as part of the single inspection. This will include discussions with practitioners, the education sector and Cafcass. This will give inspectors the opportunity to understand the influence and impact of the LSCB locally in sharing learning with front-line practitioners through newsletters, bulletins and the website.

Example day of week	Working day	Activity
Week one Monday	0	Preparation (off-site).
Week one Tuesday	1	Lead inspector notifies the chair of the LSCB and the LSCB business manager following notification to the DCS of the start of the single inspection. The lead inspector will begin to make the arrangements for the review of the LSCB, including arrangements to interview the chair, the business manager and representatives of the LSCB where applicable.
Week one Wednesday	2	Lead inspector and initial inspection team arrives on-site in the local authority by 9am to start the single inspection. The team will undertake the review of the LSCB at the same time.
Week one Thursday	3	Lead inspector and initial inspection team on-site (as day one).
Week one Friday	4	Lead inspector and initial inspection team leave the local authority by 2pm.
Week two Monday to Friday	5–9	Inspection team are off-site. Inspectors use off-site time to analyse Annex A information and update records of evidence.

Example day of week	Working day	Activity
Week three Monday to Week four Tuesday	10–16	On-site days.
Week four Tuesday	16	Tuesday pm. Lead inspector and inspection team meet to agree provisional judgement.
Week four Wednesday	17	The lead inspector, inspection team and quality assurance (QA) manager (where QA manager is on-site) provide feedback to the LSCB chair.
Week four Thursday to Friday	18–19	Report drafting.
Week five Monday to Week seven Tuesday	20–31	QA process. A draft report is agreed between the QA manager, the lead inspector and the national director social care or deputy.
Week seven Wednesday	32	A draft report of the review is sent to the chair of LSCB and board members within 15 working days of the end of fieldwork for a factual accuracy check. Allow five working days for the LSCB chair to coordinate the response.
Week seven Thursday To Week eight Wednesday	33–37	Factual accuracy check with the chair of the LSCB.
Week eight Thursday	38	Comments received from the chair of the LSCB by 9.30 am on day 38. Consideration of the comments on factual accuracy, amendments and final stages of QA. Lead inspector and QA manager to agree final report by day 41 before pre-publication version sent to all parties.
Week nine Wednesday	42	Pre-publication report (combined single inspection report and the review of the LSCB) sent to the DCS, the chair of the LSCB, the local authority Chief Executive, lead member and Department for Education (within 25 working days of the end of fieldwork).

Example day of week	Working day	Activity
Week nine Friday	44	The inspection report is published on Ofsted’s website (within 27 working days of the end of fieldwork).

136. A report of the review will be produced and this will be a separate section of the single inspection report to the local authority. The report of the review will be a separate report until the pre-publication stage. At this point, it will be combined with the inspection of the local authority wherever this has taken place at the same time.
137. The LSCB chair (or their representative) will usually be invited to the improvement and next steps meeting at the end of the single inspection unless the DCS decides that they should not be invited. Where this happens, the final evidence that underpins the judgement will be outlined in line with paragraphs 117–123.
138. If the review is undertaken separately or the chair is unable to attend the single inspection improvement meeting, the lead inspector will meet with the chair of the LSCB separately taking these principles into account and provide verbal feedback.
139. The chair and representatives of the LSCB will also be invited to the final formal feedback meeting as outlined in paragraphs 124 to 128.

Section 4. Supplementary guidance

Issues of concern

140. 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.
141. Inspectors should be aware of Ofsted's safeguarding policy and procedures²⁰ and follow their own appropriate reporting procedure ensuring that Ofsted's compliance, investigation and enforcement team are always notified via the National Business Unit helpline: 0300 123 1231 if they need advice. The quality assurance manager 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 explanation. The concern and request for a response will be confirmed in writing to the DCS at the earliest opportunity.
142. Where there is evidence of significant concerns relating to the practice of other agencies the relevant inspectorate will receive a pre-publication copy of the inspection report with a letter from HMCI setting out the concerns as laid out in the report and our advice that they may wish to inspect under their powers. There may be occasions where, due to the serious nature of the concern, we will share information with other inspectorates during the course of the inspection.
143. Where inspection evidence suggests that there are weaknesses in practice in other providers or agencies that Ofsted regulates or inspects, this information will be documented clearly in every inspection and will inform future inspections.

Recording evidence

144. Throughout the inspection process, each inspector will maintain contemporaneous records of the evidence obtained from all aspects of the inspection process. The record of evidence will be in a bound book (the evidence notebook) used for that inspection only that is dated, legible and signed by the inspector. Evidence may be scrutinised for quality assurance monitoring and will be considered in the event of any complaint.
145. Inspectors should take account of the following when compiling their evidence notebooks:
- Evidence should be clear, and the source, date and time of the meeting/recording of the evidence should be noted.

²⁰ *Ofsted safeguarding policy and procedures* (100183), Ofsted, 2010;
www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/ofsted-safeguarding-policy-and-procedures.

- Evidence should be outcome-focused, evaluative and clearly linked to the evaluation schedule.
146. In addition, inspectors should maintain a summary of evidence and analysis (the SEA) that becomes part of the shared evidence for the inspection. The detailed evidence is held in the inspection notebook; the SEA is a summary of the inspector's evaluation and individual entries may relate to more than one source of evidence or more than one case. This will be co-ordinated by the lead inspector. Reports must be based on robust inspection evidence; to ensure this is the case, final judgements will not be made until the lead inspector is satisfied that the record of shared evidence for the inspection is complete.
147. As far as possible, the SEA should not include anything that could identify individual staff, individual children, young people or family members. Only job titles of staff and only case reference numbers and/or initials of cases should be recorded.
148. Ofsted will retain the summary of evidence in accordance with its published retention policy.²¹

Writing the report

149. The lead inspector will identify specific inspectors for writing sections of the report. It is the lead inspector's responsibility to collate all the information into a final report following the fieldwork. The draft report should be of a quality that requires little or no further editing.
150. Reports should be:
- concise, evaluative documents, written in clear, straightforward language and free of jargon
 - a fair and accurate reflection of the local area being inspected, with text, balance and tone that reflect the quality of children's experiences
 - aligned closely to the inspection requirements as set out in the relevant guidance, framework and evaluation schedule
 - written so that they highlight outstanding practice and identify clear areas of strength and improvement for the local authority; the report must strike a balance between being accessible to a wider audience and being of value to the local authority
 - based on robust inspection evidence and outline judgements in line with published criteria from the evaluation schedule
 - accessible and include a summary section that is written for children and young people

²¹ Handling and retention of inspection evidence (100122), Ofsted, 2010; www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/100122.

- sufficiently clear, precise and detailed about areas for development to give the local authority a good basis for subsequent action to lead to improvement.

The summary of key findings section

151. This section should be a brief summary of the local authority's strengths and where improvement is required why this is the case. The order of this section will depend on the overall judgement. The lead inspector must use the appropriate template: for those authorities judged to be inadequate or requiring improvement the section will start with the key weaknesses and the reverse for those judged good or outstanding.
152. The summary should highlight any outstanding practice and state the strengths clearly. It should be final section of the report to be written and will be based on the detailed information in the body of the report. This section should be accessible to children and young people and relate to their experiences in the local authority area.

Areas for improvement/areas for priority action

153. Areas for improvement should be precise, specific and detailed. Where there is a judgement of inadequate, the report must clearly indicate the areas for priority action for the local authority.
154. If appropriate, areas for improvement may also focus on helping local authorities to maintain and further develop areas of good and outstanding performance.

All other sections of the report

155. Inspectors should inspect against the full evaluation schedule, identifying the key aspects of practice that support the judgements, including strengths and weaknesses.
156. While all areas of the evaluation schedule must be inspected, the report should focus on the key strengths and weaknesses. Inspectors do not need to write a section of the report about each of the evaluation schedule's criteria, but they must include enough detail in the report to support their judgement. Reports should focus on the experiences of children and young people in line with the scope of the inspection. Where children and young people are supported by a third party social work provider, strengths and weaknesses associated with the experiences and progress of these children should be reflected. The leadership, management and governance section should include strengths and weaknesses associated with the effectiveness of the contract monitoring and quality assurance arrangements the authority has concerning a social work provider.

157. Inspectors must always report on the experiences and progress of children and young people:

- at all the key threshold/decision-making points (including any emerging themes relating to specific age groups of children and young people, for example very young children or those of primary school age)
- missing from home, care or education
- at risk of sexual exploitation
- living out of the authority area
- in achieving the right permanence option for their needs
- in receiving and being aware of their rights and entitlements as a child or young person looked after or as a care leaver²²
- waiting for adoption
- in need of adoption support services.

158. Inspectors must also report on the recruitment, retention and sufficiency of foster carers. In leadership, management and governance they should always report on:

- how well the leaders and managers know the strengths and weaknesses of their services and practice
- the quality and the impact of their action planning
- the impact of commissioning arrangements.

159. The final version of the reports will be published on the Ofsted website and a copy will be sent to the local authority and to either the chair of Children in Care Council and/or the worker who supports the council to share with children and young people and their families.

Quality assurance

160. All inspectors are responsible for the quality of the inspection and inspection report, with the lead inspector taking overall responsibility. As the inspection team is responsible for the inspection, all issues should, wherever possible, be resolved within the team, with oversight by the lead.

161. Each inspection will have a lead quality assurance manager assigned by Ofsted (usually the line manager of the lead inspector).

162. The role of the QA manager is to challenge the evidence to ensure judgements are robust and that evidence has been gathered in line with the expected

²² *The Entitlements Inquiry*, The All Party Parliamentary Group for Looked After Children and Care Leavers, 2013; <http://www.thewhocarestrust.org.uk/pages/entitlements-inquiry-2013.html>.

methodology; to provide support and guidance to the lead/team and to oversee the final report to publication.

163. In some instances the QA manager will not be on-site, although in early inspections there may be more on-site activity. Likely reasons for on-site QA are:

- managing consistency
- a lead inspector is undertaking their first lead inspection and/or requires specific support from an on-site quality assurance manager to ensure a robust process
- part of performance management processes for individual inspectors such as annual performance assessment visits
- emerging concerns about inspection evidence
- possible inadequate judgements
- assessment of new framework in practice.

164. All inspectors are expected to quality assure their own and other inspectors' work during inspections. The lead inspector has overall responsibility for ensuring that all the evidence gathered is robust, reliable and secure.

165. A QA manager will speak to the lead inspector and inspection team. They will also attend any inspection team meetings taking place during their visit. This inspector will always seek views from the local authority on the conduct of the inspection. The QA manager will sample the way that evidence is being gathered and test the local authority's understanding of the emerging findings.

166. Ofsted will ask the local authority to complete a short evaluation form following each inspection, which will be used to improve the quality of inspections.

167. All inspection reports will be subject to quality assurance procedures, which include a central consistency check and moderation of the draft and final reports against the evidence and evaluation schedule.

Complaints

168. The great majority of Ofsted's work is carried out smoothly and without incident. If concerns arise during an inspection, these should be raised with the lead inspector or quality assurance manager as soon as possible during the inspection visit. This provides an opportunity to resolve the matter before the inspection is completed. Any concerns about the factual accuracy of the findings in the report can be raised after the inspection and will be considered as part of the quality assurance process.

169. If it has not been possible to resolve concerns through these means, a formal complaint can be raised under Ofsted's complaints procedure:
www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/130128.

Annex A. Identifying cases for tracking and sampling, including management and performance information

Introduction

This annex sets out a number of requirements for local authorities in respect of the inspection. It includes a request to provide child-level data so that the lead inspector can establish those that will be tracked and sampled.

In addition, the lead inspector will also require the most up-to-date performance information used by the local authority to manage services for looked after children and child protection (including early help for families).

Details of planned multi-agency meetings

The details of multi-agency meetings planned to take place during the fieldwork period – including initial and review child protection conferences, looked after children reviews, multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARAC), core groups, planned strategy discussions and legal planning meetings – should be provided to the lead inspector, who may specify the geographical areas to be covered. These will be reviewed on a regular basis between the lead inspector and the local authority during the inspection.

Child-level data for the case sample and case tracking

When the lead inspector makes contact with the local authority, she/he will ask for a series of lists containing child-level data. These lists should be provided in an Excel spreadsheet format that is clearly set out with the agreed field names and provided to the lead inspector in accordance with the target date for each list. The lead inspector will confirm details of how the lists will be provided to them for their use.

Table 1 below provides details of the time period to be covered for each list and the submission date(s) required for each of the lists. Table 2, also below, confirms the information required within each list. This is supported by detailed guidance at field level for each list. The detailed guidance document is available at www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/130216.

When providing the required lists please note that:

- We are asking the local authority to provide us with the best information they have available within the limited time they have available to provide the data requested and set out below. We fully recognise there are likely to be gaps in the information and that these will vary from one authority to another. Where data are unavailable the local authority will be asked to demonstrate in other ways how they have sufficient management oversight of the specific issue. The additional guidance includes examples of where we recognise that this may be the case.

- Many of the child-level data fields are in line with current statutory data returns to the Department for Education, but we are aware that some of the fields are not and, therefore, may take longer to complete. To allow for this we have provided the option of a two-stage submission for several of the lists.
- Stage 1 is for the reporting of those fields that should be more readily available because they are already in DfE data returns. It is anticipated that the majority of data will be provided in this stage. Where the local authority cannot meet this timescale, there is a stage 2 submission date. Within the detailed guidance for each of the lists, we have indicated which fields are aligned with the statutory returns and where we are requesting information that is not currently part of the statutory returns. We would encourage all local authorities to submit each list as soon as they are available to support the inspection process.
- It is accepted that some children may appear on more than one list. The consistent use of the child ID across the various lists will enable the lead inspector to recognise where this occurs.
- Some of the requested data – particularly in relation to list 1 ‘contacts’ and list 2 ‘early help assessments’ – are not necessarily recorded on the main ICT systems and, consequently, the local authority is free to use the solution that suits it best and that enables the local authority to provide the data in the timeframe requested. Whatever the format, the data should be clearly identifiable.
- For lists 3 to 10 please provide only one row for each unique child ID where possible.
- All lists may also be provided in hard copy, but this should be in addition to the Excel spreadsheets, which should be considered as the primary source for inspectors.
- Queries in respect of the child-level data should be sent to the social care data team mailbox (socialcaredata@ofsted.gov.uk). However, if you have any queries once you have been notified that an inspection is to take place, please contact the lead inspector rather than the social care data team mailbox.
- Ofsted has established secure means to enable local authorities to share the child-level lists and other sensitive information. The lead inspector will confirm details when a local authority is notified that an inspection will take place.

Table 1		
Child protection		
List	Submission date – stage 1	Submission date – stage 2
1. All those who have been the subject of a contact in the three months prior to inspection	Week 1 (Wednesday am)	Not applicable
2. All those who have been the subject of an early help assessment, a common assessment or a targeted intervention in the six months prior to inspection	Week 1 (Friday am)	Not applicable

3. All those who have been the subject of a referral in the three months prior to inspection	Week 1 (Wednesday am)	Not applicable
4. All those who have been the subject of a statutory assessment in accordance with section 17 or section 47 of the Children Act 1989 in the six months prior to inspection	Week 1 (Wednesday am)	Week 1 (end of Friday)
5. All those who have been the subject of a section 47 enquiry in the six months prior to inspection	Week 1 (Wednesday am)	Week 1 (end of Friday)
6. All those in receipt of services as a child in need at the point of inspection and those who ceased to receive services as a child in need in the three months prior to inspection	Week 1 (Wednesday am)	Week 1 (end of Friday)
7. All those who are the subject of a child protection plan at the point of inspection and those who ceased to be the subject of a child protection plan in the three months prior to inspection	Week 1 (Wednesday am)	Week 1 (end of Friday)
Children looked after and care leavers		
List	Submission date – stage 1	Submission date – stage 2
8. All those children looked after as at the point of inspection and all those children who ceased to be looked after in the six months prior to inspection	Week 1 (end of Wednesday)	Week 2 (end of Tuesday)
9. All those care leavers who are receiving leaving care services as at the point of inspection	Week 1 (end of Wednesday)	Week 2 (end of Tuesday)
10. All those children who have been adopted in the 12 months prior to inspection, those where the decision that the child should be placed for adoption has been made but they have not yet been adopted, and those who had an adoption decision which was subsequently reversed during the period.	Week 1 (end of Wednesday)	Week 2 (end of Tuesday)
11. All those individuals who in the last 12 months have had contact with the local authority adoption agency by having: (a) made an enquiry, received an information pack and attended a follow-up interview; and/or (b) had an enquiry or application in progress 12 months ago and have subsequently been approved/rejected; and/or (c) had a child placed with them in the last 12 months	Week 1 (end of Wednesday)	Week 2 (end of Tuesday)

TABLE 2	
Child protection	
List	Detail required
1. All those who have been the subject of a contact in the three months prior to inspection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Child unique ID ■ Gender ■ Ethnicity ■ Date of birth ■ If unborn: expected date of birth ■ Age of child (years) ■ Date of contact ■ Contact source
2. All those who have been the subject of an early help assessment, a common assessment or a targeted intervention in the six months prior to inspection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Child unique ID ■ Gender ■ Ethnicity ■ Date of birth ■ If unborn: expected date of birth ■ Age of child (years) ■ Assessment completion date ■ Organisation completing assessment
3. All those who have been the subject of a referral in the three months prior to inspection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Child unique ID ■ Gender ■ Ethnicity ■ Date of birth ■ If unborn: expected date of birth ■ Age of child (years) ■ Date of the most recent referral ■ Referral source ■ Referral NFA? (Y/N) ■ Number of referrals in last 12 months ■ Date of the child's first referral ■ Allocated team ■ Allocated worker
4. All those who have been the subject of a statutory assessment in accordance with section 17 or section 47 of the Children Act 1989 in the six months prior to inspection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Child unique ID ■ Gender ■ Ethnicity ■ Date of birth ■ If unborn: expected date of birth ■ Age of child (Years) ■ UASC within the last 12 months (Y/N) ■ Privately fostered (Y/N)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Does the child have a disability? (Y/N) ■ Does the child have a special educational need (school action plus or statement), education health and social care plan or additional special educational needs support? (Y/N) ■ Are there concerns about this child’s school place (or alternative provision), or their attendance? (Y/N) ■ Continuous assessment start date ■ Child seen during continuous assessment (Y/N) ■ Continuous assessment date of authorisation ■ Initial assessment start date ■ Child seen during initial assessment (Y/N) ■ Initial assessment date of authorisation ■ Core assessment start date ■ Child seen during core assessment (Y/N) ■ Core assessment date of authorisation ■ Allocated team ■ Allocated worker
<p>5. All those who have been the subject of a section 47 enquiry in the six months prior to inspection</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Child unique ID ■ Gender ■ Ethnicity ■ Date of birth ■ If unborn: expected date of birth ■ Age of child (years) ■ UASC within the last 12 months (Y/N) ■ Privately fostered (Y/N) ■ Does the child have a disability? (Y/N) ■ Does the child have a special educational need (school action plus or statement), education health and social care plan or additional special educational needs support? (Y/N) ■ Are there concerns about this child’s school place (or alternative provision), or their attendance? (Y/N) ■ Section 47 enquiry start date ■ Number of section 47 enquiries in the last 12 months ■ Initial child protection conference not required (Y/N) ■ Date of initial child protection conference ■ Did the initial child protection conference result in a child protection plan? (Y/N) ■ Allocated team ■ Allocated worker
<p>6. All those in receipt of services as a child in</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Child unique ID ■ Gender

<p>need at the point of inspection and those who ceased to receive services as a child in need in the three months prior to inspection</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ethnicity ■ Date of birth ■ If unborn: expected date of birth ■ Age of child (years) ■ UASC within the last 12 months (Y/N) ■ Privately fostered (Y/N) ■ Does the child have a disability? (Y/N) ■ Does the child have a special educational need (school action plus or statement), education health and social care plan or additional special educational needs support? (Y/N) ■ Are there concerns about this child's school place (or alternative provision), or their attendance? (Y/N) ■ CIN start date ■ Primary need code ■ Date child was last seen ■ CIN closure date ■ Reason for closure ■ Allocated team ■ Allocated worker
<p>7. All those who are the subject of a child protection plan at the point of inspection and those who ceased to be the subject of a child protection plan in the three months prior to inspection</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Child unique ID ■ Gender ■ Ethnicity ■ Date of birth ■ If unborn: expected date of birth ■ Age of child (Years) ■ UASC within the last 12 months (Y/N) ■ Privately fostered (Y/N) ■ Does the child have a disability? (Y/N) ■ Does the child have a special educational need (school action plus or statement), education health and social care plan or additional special educational needs support? (Y/N) ■ Are there concerns about this child's school place (or alternative provision), or their attendance? (Y/N) ■ Child protection plan start date ■ Initial category of abuse ■ Latest category of abuse ■ Date of the last statutory visit ■ Child seen in accordance with the timescales specified within their plan, by the lead social worker? (Y/N) ■ Was the child seen alone? ■ Child protection plan end date

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Subject to emergency protection/care/supervision order or protected under police powers in last six months (Y/N) ■ Number of previous child protection plans ■ Allocated team ■ Allocated worker
Children looked after and care leavers	
List	Detail required
8. All those children looked after as at the point of inspection and all those children who ceased to be looked after in the six months prior to inspection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Child unique ID ■ Gender ■ Ethnicity ■ Date of birth ■ Age of child (Years) ■ UASC within the last 12 months (Y/N) ■ Does the child have a disability? (Y/N) ■ Does the child have a special educational need (school action plus or statement), education health and social care plan or additional special educational needs support? (Y/N) ■ Are there concerns about this child's school place (or alternative provision), or their attendance? (Y/N) ■ Reason not attending school (if applicable) ■ Date of admission to current school ■ Number of schools attended in the last two years ■ Is the child making the 'expected level of progress' at school? (Y/N) ■ Date started to be looked after ■ Child's category of need ■ Second or subsequent episode of being a looked after child within the last 12 months? (Y/N) ■ Child's legal status ■ Date of latest statutory review ■ Statutory review in time (Y/N) ■ Date of last social work visit ■ Date of latest care plan on record ■ Plan for child to be reunified with their family? (Y/N) ■ Date of last IRO visit/contact to the child ■ Date of last health assessment ■ Date of last dental check ■ Number of placements in the last 12 months ■ Date ceased to be looked after ■ Reason ceased to be looked after

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Start date of most recent placement ■ Placement type ■ Placement provider ■ Name of provider ■ Placement name ■ Placement address ■ Placement postcode ■ Placement location ■ Latest Ofsted 'overall effectiveness' judgement for the provider ■ Date of authorisation by the nominated officer/DCS for placements out of local authority area ■ Local authority of placement ■ Number of episodes the child has been 'missing' from their placement in the last 12 months ■ Number of episodes the child has been 'absent' from their placement in the last 12 months ■ Allocated team ■ Allocated worker
<p>9. All those care leavers who are receiving leaving care services as at the point of inspection</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Child unique ID ■ Gender ■ Ethnicity ■ Date of birth ■ Age of child (years) ■ Does the child have a disability? (Y/N) ■ Allocated team ■ Allocated worker ■ Eligibility category (relevant/former relevant/qualifying/other) ■ Local authority in touch ■ Type of accommodation ■ Suitability of accommodation ■ Activity status ■ Living in housing of multiple occupancy? (Y/N)
<p>10. All those children who have been adopted in the 12 months prior to inspection, those where the decision that the child should be placed for adoption has been made but they have not yet been adopted, and those who had an adoption</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Child unique ID ■ Gender ■ Ethnicity ■ Date of birth ■ Age of child (years) ■ UASC within the last 12 months (Y/N) ■ Does the child have a disability? (Y/N) ■ Does the child have a special educational need

<p>decision which was subsequently reversed during the period.</p>	<p>(school action plus or statement), education health and social care plan or additional special educational needs support? (Y/N)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Date of decision that child should be placed for adoption ■ Date of matching child and prospective adopters ■ Date placed for adoption ■ Date of placement order ■ Date of adoption order ■ Date of decision that child should no longer be placed for adoption ■ Reason why child no longer placed for adoption ■ Date of fostering to adopt placement ■ Date of latest adoption support assessment
<p>11. All those individuals who in the last 12 months have had contact with the local authority adoption agency by having: (a) made an enquiry, received an information pack and attended a follow up interview; and/or (b) had an enquiry or application in progress 12 months ago and have subsequently been approved/rejected; and/or (c) had a child placed with them in the last 12 months</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Reference ■ Type of individual ■ Date of first contact ■ Date of application ■ Date assessment started ■ Date assessment completed ■ Date of approval or refusal ■ Date referred to adoption register ■ Date placement made ■ Date order granted

Performance information required to support the inspection

The lead inspector will also ask for documented performance information to help understand the work of the local authority. It should not be all documents that the authority holds that refer to the topics listed below. This needs to be the local authority's **best**, and **most recent** evidence. The information provided should be the information that the local authority is currently using to understand and manage its own performance.

Each of the topics has been numbered sequentially. When the local authority provides the information to the inspection team they should include the number in the document name as a prefix. This will enable the easy identification and retrieval of information by the team and enable the local authority to link their evidence to the topic.

- **1.01 organisational structure** showing lines of reporting and accountability
- **1.02 arrangements for decision-making, workflow and case management**
- **1.03 monthly management information reports** for child protection and looked after children, at **both** team (locality) and departmental level
- **1.04 the workforce profile** for social care staff working with children in need, children subject to child protection plans, children looked after and care leavers (including: the number of qualified social workers and their post-qualifying experience; the number of vacancies for permanent staff; the number of locum/agency staff; the extent of staff turnover/stability and sickness levels; and average caseloads of staff by team)
- **1.05 the training and development strategy** for the workforce, including arrangements to accommodate **feedback from children and families** and **learning from case and serious case reviews**
- **1.06 social work caseload and supervision** policy
- **1.07 assessment and threshold criteria** for helping families, protecting children and looking after them
- **1.08 number of complaints and follow-up** activity
- **1.09 local strategic needs analysis**, including the number of children living in homes where there is a **parent/carer** known to be receiving treatment for **drug or alcohol misuse, known to be suffering from mental ill health and/or experiencing domestic abuse**. This should also include details of any commissioned services in support of children and families living in these circumstances. The number and needs of looked after children and care leavers should also be included in respect of the provision of **sufficient placements and choices** for care leavers.
- **1.10 details of findings from any peer review** type activity of child protection or services for looked after children within the last 12 months

Where a review of the LSCB is **not** undertaken at the same time as the single inspection, the local authority should provide documents 1.11 to 1.14 below. Where the LSCB review takes place concurrently to the local authority inspection please ignore items 1.11 to 1.14 and provide the more extensive list of documents shown later in this annex at 4.01 to 4.10.

- **1.11 LSCB annual report**
- **1.12 LSCB business plan**
- **1.13 LSCB minutes** from the last 12 months of meetings
- **1.14 the training strategy** from the **LSCB**

Children in need of help and/or protection

- **2.01 early help strategy and impact analysis**, including management information on **availability of services** (family support), **numbers of families receiving help** following an early help assessment or similar (CAF) in the last 12 months
- **2.02 sample practice audits, including some that are multi-agency** over the six months prior to inspection and associated **improvement/action plans**
- **2.03** a report on those children known to the local authority who are currently being **privately fostered**. This report should include for each child:
 - child unique ID, date of birth
 - date private fostering arrangement commenced
- **2.04 number of young people placed under secure accommodation welfare orders** (section 25 of the Children Act 1989)
- **2.05 number of children who are electively home educated** known to the authority
- **2.06** a report on children, for whom the local authority is responsible, who are of school age and **who are not in receipt of full-time school education** at the time of inspection. This report should include for each child:
 - child unique ID or UPN, date of birth
 - type of educational provision that they are receiving, including home tuition
 - number of hours provision per week (in particular whether they are receiving more or less than 25 hours per week)
 - type of exclusion (if the child has been excluded)
 - date when alternative provision commenced.

Children looked after and care leavers

- **3.01 strategic plan for looked after children, including corporate parenting objectives, education and housing priorities, planning for permanence and children's futures**
- **3.02 Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) strategy**, including length of waiting time and average length of help offered
- **3.03 commissioning and sufficiency** strategy
- **3.04** annual report of the **Virtual Head Teacher**
- **3.05 sample practice audits, including some that are multi-agency** over the six months prior to inspection and associated **improvement/action plans**
- **3.06** management report of the **independent reviewing officer service**
- **3.07** evidence from **complaints and feedback** from **children and families**
- **3.08** evidence on **educational progress and outcomes**, including data on attainment, progress, attendance, exclusion, personal education plans, alternative educational provision, employment and training at age 16
- **3.09** the local family justice board minutes from the last six months
- **3.10** evidence of children's health, including data on health (physical, psychological and emotional) assessments and dental checks.

*Information required to support the LSCB review **where the review is being undertaken at the same time as the single inspection.***

(Where the review is not being undertaken at the same time please only provide the documents listed under 1.11 to 1.14).

- **4.01** minutes of LSCB meetings from the previous 12 months (including executive board meetings where applicable)
- **4.02** structure of the LSCB and sub-groups; names and contact details for LSCB members
- **4.03** sub-group minutes as requested by the lead inspector
- **4.04** any evaluation of multi-agency safeguarding training and the LSCB training strategy
- **4.05** any serious case review action plans
- **4.06** any recent auditing undertaken by the LSCB
- **4.07** the learning improvement framework
- **4.08** the Child Death Overview Process annual report
- **4.09** the LSCB business plan
- **4.10** the LSCB annual report.

Annex B – Part 1. Email to notify the Director of Children’s Services of the start of the inspection

Dear **[insert name of Director of Children’s Services]**

Inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers and review of the Local Safeguarding Children Board – [insert name of council]

This email is to inform you that tomorrow **[insert date]** Ofsted inspectors will arrive on-site in **[insert LA name]** to begin an inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers. At the same time we will begin a review of the Local Safeguarding Children Board. The inspection will take place over a four-week period.

Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Small inspection team on-site Wednesday to Friday (3 days)	Inspection team off-site	Full inspection team on-site all week (5 days)	Full inspection team on-site Monday to Wednesday (3 days)

I have spoken to **[insert name and title of manager or ‘to you’]** to inform **him/her/you** that the inspection will commence in line with the guidance published on our website. The **[chair of the LSCB/name and title of LSCB manager]** has also been informed.

We will be tracking cases, which will involve visiting offices to talk to staff, reading files and considering and observing front-line practice.

To help identify cases to track and practice to observe, I will need lists of children and young people who are within the scope of the inspection and meetings that will take place during the inspection. When compiling this information please refer to Annex A of the framework and evaluation schedule and the supplementary guidance. These documents are available on Ofsted’s website via this link: <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/130216>.

Please provide this information in whatever format is easiest for you to produce. Once I have this data I will select a sample of cases and ask you to audit these during week two of the inspection.

All inspections are subject to a quality assurance process undertaken by a named quality assurance manager. If there are any issues the inspection team cannot resolve, you may wish to discuss these in the first instance with the manager for this inspection. This person is **[insert name]** and can be contacted on **[insert number/email]**.

Annex B – Part 2. Email to notify the chair of the LSCB of the start of the review

Dear **[insert name of LSCB chair]**

Inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers and review of the Local Safeguarding Children Board – [insert name of council]

This email is to inform you that tomorrow **[insert date]** Ofsted inspectors will arrive on-site in **[insert LA name]** to begin an inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers. At the same time we will begin a review of the Local Safeguarding Children Board.

I have spoken to **[insert name and title of LSCB manager or 'to you']** to inform **him/her/you** that the inspection will commence in line with the guidance published on our website. The **[Director of Children's Services/name and title of senior manager]** at the local authority has also been informed.

For further information, please see Annex A of the framework and evaluation schedule and the supplementary guidance. These are available on Ofsted's website via this link:

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/130216>

All inspections are subject to a quality assurance process undertaken by a named quality assurance manager. If there are any issues the inspection team cannot resolve, you may wish to discuss these in the first instance with the manager for this inspection. This person is **[insert name]** and can be contacted on **[insert number/email]**.

Yours sincerely

Annex C. Information for staff

Inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers.

This inspection is to evaluate the effectiveness of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers in your local authority area. Full details about the inspection are available in the framework and evaluation schedule for the inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers.

Inspectors will be sensitive to the potential pressures on, and the apprehension of, staff being interviewed. The purpose of the inspection is not to make judgements about individuals but to ascertain the extent to which the help, care and protection given to children and young people does protect them, does support their families and does improve the quality of their lives and futures.

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 in a variety of ways, including:

- reading case files
- directly observing practice
- attending meetings
- shadowing staff
- interviewing staff and partners
- meeting with key partners
- discussions with children looked after, care leavers, their carers and where appropriate members of their birth family
- discussions with providers of commissioned services.

Inspectors will spend time with staff to:

- observe practice
- assess the quality of work to support children looked after and care leavers to meet their potential
- examine the quality and impact of supervision and management oversight.

Inspectors will meet with senior managers throughout the fieldwork to ensure they understand the emerging findings. At the end of the inspection, the final overall judgements will reflect the body of evidence collated and evaluated by the inspection team.

Feedback to the local authority and their partners 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, which could include other managers, the lead member and key partners.

Following the inspection, the lead inspector will write a report about the findings of the inspection. The inspection report will be sent to the local authority 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 respected unless the safety and welfare of a child is compromised by the withholding of that information.

Ofsted inspectors are currently conducting an inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers in this authority area. If you wish to speak to an inspector please contact:

Name of inspector(s):

Mobile number:

Annex D. Template letter for families

Dear Parent/Carer

xxxxx local authority area, inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers

We are undertaking an inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers in [**insert LA name**]. I am the inspection team leader and I am writing to invite you to meet or have a telephone conversation with a member of the team to help us to understand the help and support you have been given by [**insert LA name**].

This inspection will involve the team and I interviewing the people you have been working with and reading information about the work they do. However, it is also important that we speak to parents and children so that we can fully understand your views and experiences.

With your permission, the inspectors may want to sit in to observe meetings or meet separately with you and other children, young people and families. When they do this, they are looking to see how well agencies and workers are working together to help children and their families. When they talk to you, they will want to hear how well you think you have been listened to. They will want to see how well the local authority is doing at keeping your child/children safe and how you are being helped. They will ask you what difference their help has made.

Inspectors are not checking up on you or your family and you do not have to share any personal information with them. We will make sure that what we write or talk about will not in any way lead to you being identified. If you tell us anything about a child or young person being harmed or at risk of being harmed we would have to tell a social worker working for the local authority so that they could take action to protect them.

At the end of the inspection, the inspectors write a report (this will not name you or anyone in your family). This is then sent to the local authority and is also published on the Ofsted website. The inspector isn't able to tell you all individually what the outcome was at the end of the inspection, but you can read the report online <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/inspection-reports/find-inspection-report> or your social worker or support worker will be able to tell you what the inspection report said.

We really want to talk to you and understand your experiences. I hope this letter will reassure you and enable you to agree to talking and/or meeting with us.

If you have any further questions or concerns, please either telephone me on [**insert phone number**] or email me at **XXXX@ofsted.gov.uk**. I always do my best to respond promptly but forgive me if there is a short delay at this busy time of inspection.

Annex E. Letter to registered manager of children's home

Dear REGISTERED MANAGER OF CHILDREN'S HOME

xxxxx local authority area, inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers.

Following our recent phone call, I am writing to confirm that we are undertaking an inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers in [LA name]. As part of the inspection we want to understand the help and support given by [LA name] to the children and young people that it places outside of its local authority area.

As the lead inspector, I have identified **a/two** young **person/people** placed in your children's home by [LA name] and I would like to arrange for a colleague to visit you. My colleague, [insert name], would like to meet with you, the key worker and the young **person/people** to hear about both **his/her/their** and your experiences of the support provided by [LA name]. In addition to our visit to meet **XXXXX** we will talk to **his/her/their** social worker/s, look at their case file and speak to key family members and professionals who have been involved with **XXXXX**.

I would be grateful if you would speak to the young **person/people** to seek their consent and that of their key worker. [*delete next sentence based on legal status of young person*] As **XXXXX** is accommodated under section 20 of the Children Act 1989, we will separately seek the consent of their parent/s. Attached to this letter is information for parents/carers about the inspection and a leaflet to help children and young people understand why we would like to speak with them. Consent for the inspector to visit should be sent to me at XXXXXX@ofsted.gov.uk

Before the young **person/people** give/s consent please make sure they understand that the inspector is not visiting to check up on them or their family, and they do not have to share any personal information with us. What we write about in the inspection report will not in any way lead to them being identified; however, if they tell us anything about a child or young person being harmed or at risk of being harmed we would have to tell a social worker from [LA name] so that they could take action to protect them.

Please note that this is **not** an inspection of your children's home and will not result in a report or grade about your provision. However, if during the visit the inspector identifies anything that suggests any child is at risk of harm or not being appropriately cared for, this may result in an inspection of your service and any evidence gathered by the inspector would inform this inspection.

After the inspection we will write a report about the services provided by [LA name]. You will be able to read the report online at:

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/inspection-reports/find-inspection-report>

If you have any further questions or concerns, please contact me on **phone number** or at XXXX@ofsted.gov.uk

Yours faithfully

Lead inspector

CC – allocated social worker/s at placing LA

Annex F. Evaluating the effectiveness of individual children’s case files

Case file aide memoire

This tool should be used to ensure the team are consistently recording evidence during reading of case files. It brings together the key relevant criteria from the evaluation schedule. The evidence will be recorded in individual inspectors’ records of evidence. The evaluative summary will be recorded on the SEA (Summary of Evidence and Analysis). Inspectors will record evidence including highlighting areas of good practice. In addition, inspectors should always consider whether case files have identified issues for partner inspectorates.

Priority is afforded to evidence concerning the quality and effectiveness of help, care and protection and the impact this has on children, young people and families.

The evaluation schedule reference numbers refer to the characteristics of a good service outlined in the framework and evaluation schedule for these inspections. Number one refers to the first characteristic of the key judgment *the experiences and progress of children who need help and protection* (page 13 of the framework). The bullet points in the framework are numbered sequentially thereafter. The numbering excludes the bullet points that describe a service that is outstanding, requires improvement or is inadequate.

Possible evaluation schedule reference	Criteria (where relevant/applicable)
3, 5, 7, 8, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 22, 23, 24, 27, 28	Risk is identified, responded to and reduced?
1, 2, 12, 18, 19, 20, 25, 26, 27, 28, 35, 45	Appropriate involvement of children, young people and families in the process and evidence of the impact this has had – are children seen alone, and do they benefit from stable and effective relationships?
5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 22, 23, 53, 72	Quality of decision-making – effective and timely?
7, 8, 10, 11, 15, 16, 18, 22, 54	Quality of assessment and help – timely, comprehensive, analytical, of high quality, identifies risk, needs and protective factors, including parental capacity?
4, 8, 14, 15, 16, 18, 27, 28	Quality and timeliness of information sharing including consent where appropriate?
6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 15, 16, 18, 22, 28, 42, 72	Evidence of effective and timely management oversight and direction on cases?

Possible evaluation schedule reference	Criteria (where relevant/applicable)
5, 8, 10, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 22, 27, 28, 43, 74, 78	Effectiveness of coordination between agencies and quality of joint working in improving and sustaining outcomes?
8, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, 27, 28, 49	Consideration and impact of age, disability, ethnicity, faith or belief, gender, gender identity, language, race and sexual orientation?
9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 16, 18, 20, 26, 27, 28, 47	Is case recording clear and reflective of work undertaken and focused on outcomes for children and young people? Does it evidence the individual work undertaken, including appropriate direct work?
13, 14, 15, 16, 18, 24, 27, 45	Quality of direct work to help and protect children and young people and how this links to the plan and reducing risk?
2, 12, 19, 20, 24, 25, 26, 35, 42, 49, 56	Quality of plans: up to date, duration, comprehensive, specific with measurable outcomes, dynamic, quality of management oversight, influenced by the views of children and young people and responsive to equality and diversity issues?
1, 2, 13, 19, 26, 35, 46, 56, 65	Are reviews effective, regular, demonstrating robust scrutiny and challenge of plans? Do young people participate?
23, 25, 26, 34, 36, 37, 38, 39, 44	Quality of placement: are children prepared and matched to placements that consistently meet their needs and take into account their wishes and feelings, local, stable placements?
25, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 44, 45, 50, 51	Are plans for permanency, including adoption, needs led and achieved without delay?
1, 20, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 37, 55, 57, 58, 61, 62	Are looked after children and care leavers supported to achieve their full potential, including education, physical health, emotional well-being and have developed networks within their community and are safe?
20, 26, 27, 55, 59, 60, 63, 64	Are young people prepared for independence and living in high-quality, safe, permanent and affordable accommodation that meets their needs?

Annex G. Evaluating the effectiveness of directly observed practice

Observation of practice aide memoire

This tool should be used to ensure the team are consistently recording evidence during practice observations. It brings together the key relevant criteria from the evaluation schedule. The detailed evidence will be recorded in individual inspectors' records of evidence. The evaluative summary will be recorded on the SEA (Summary of Evidence and Analysis).

Inspectors should, wherever possible, ask families if they know and understand the plan and the expectations of them.

The evaluation schedule reference numbers refer to the characteristics of a good service outlined in the framework and evaluation schedule for these inspections. Number one refers to the first characteristic of the key judgment the experiences and progress of children who need help and protection (page 13 of the framework). The bullet points in the framework are numbered sequentially thereafter. The numbering excludes the bullet points that describe a service that is outstanding, requires improvement or is inadequate.

Possible evaluation schedule reference	Criteria
3, 7, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 22, 27, 28	Risk is identified, responded to and reduced.
1, 12, 20, 26, 46, 48, 62, 65	Attendance and participation (parents, carers, children, young people, professionals and advocates) – the involvement and participation of care leavers increasingly influences decisions which affect their lives.
1, 2, 7, 11, 12, 26, 35, 44, 45, 46, 49, 56	The focus on the child.
1, 2, 12, 13, 19, 26, 44, 45, 46, 56	Effectiveness of the communication with the child and family, evidence of relationship building and appropriate use of empathy and challenge.
1, 2, 12, 19, 26, 46, 56	Appropriate involvement of children, young people and families in the process and decision-making, including impact and evidence of their understanding.
9, 10, 22, 46, 56, 72	Quality of decision-making – effective and timely?
4, 10, 11	Quality of assessment and help: comprehensive and up to date?
4, 10, 13	Quality of evidence gathering.
12, , 13, 24, 35, 42, 46, 51, 56	Quality of planning and review including the timely consideration of the range of permanency options. Reviews are timely, effective, appropriately challenging and lead to the delivery of a child-centred plan.

4, 14, 35, 58	Quality and timeliness of information sharing.
4, 5, 6, 14, 16, 29, 33, 35, 56, 57, 63	Effectiveness of coordination between agencies and quality of joint working.
10, 12, 21, 35, 49, 56, 62	Consideration and impact of age, disability, ethnicity, faith or belief, gender, gender identity, language, race and sexual orientation.
1, 12, 26, 27, 46, 48, 54, 55	Children, young people and their families feel they have been effectively helped.

Annex H. referring concerns about individual children and young people back to the local authority

Case no HMI referring Date of referral	Local authority team	What are the serious issues of concern and reasons for referral?	LA response	Inspectors' view of LA response

Serious issues of concern are where the inspection team need further information from the local authority to assure them that an individual child or young person is not left at risk of significant harm or where some aspects of a child's plan or care do not appear to be in their best interests.

Annex I. Foster carer records

Records must be kept for at least 10 years from the date that the foster carer's approval has been terminated.

National Minimum Standard 26.1 states that the fostering service should implement a written policy on the 'purpose, format and content of information' on foster carers' files.

The requirements with regard to case records relating to foster carers are set out in Regulation 30 of The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011.

The regulatory requirements

- The assessment of the applicant's suitability to be a foster carer, which has been submitted to the fostering panel, including the fostering provider's proposal about terms of approval.²³
- References and checks with the local authority where the foster carer is living.
- Any information obtained by the fostering provider in relation to the assessment of the foster carer.
- Any reports submitted to the fostering panel.
- Any recommendations made by the fostering panel.
- Foster carer agreement.
- Notice of approval.
- All reviews of the approval of foster carers.²⁴
- A record of each placement with the foster carer, details of each child placed including name, age and gender, the dates on which each placement began and ended and the reasons why the placement ended.
- Any information relating to the approval of the foster carer including any review or termination of the approval.

National minimum standards state that files should include:

- records of supervisory meetings (NMS 21.8)
- a clear and comprehensive summary of any allegations made against a member of the fostering household including details of how the allegation was followed up and resolved, a record of any action taken and the decisions reached (NMS 22.7).

²³ The requirements for foster carer assessments are covered in Regulation 26(2) Schedule 3 of The Fostering Services Regulations 2011. In addition the assessment is required to include any other information that the fostering provider considers relevant to the assessment of the foster carer.

²⁴ National Minimum Standard 26 states that reviews include an appraisal of performance and consideration of training and development needs. This should be recorded. The views of each child currently placed with the foster carer should be taken into account.

Annex J. Prospective adopters' records

Case record requirements are set out in the Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013. Inspectors will focus on the effectiveness, quality and timeliness of matching and decision-making.

The regulatory requirements:

- stage 1 pre-assessment information²⁵
- a summary of the state of health of the prospective adopter completed by the agency's medical adviser
- a written report from a registered medical practitioner about the health of the prospective adopter²⁶
- records and observations of DBS check for any members of household aged over 18 years old
- record of interviews with nominated referees and checks with the local authority where the prospective adopter is living
- the prospective adopter stage one plan
- assessment plan for the prospective adopter
- information and reports obtained by the agency
- observations relating to the preparation of the prospective adopter
- the prospective adopter's report and the prospective adopter's observations on that report
- stage 2 assessment information²⁷
- the matching plan
- the prospective adopter's review report and the prospective adopter's observations on that report where applicable
- relevant information relating to the adoption panel including its recommendation, the reasons for the recommendation and any advice given by the panel to the agency
- a record of the agency's decisions

²⁵ As listed in Schedule 4 Part 1 of the Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendment) Regulations 2013.

²⁶ This must include what is listed in Schedule 4 Part 2 of the Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendment) Regulations 2013. (The exception to this is where the agency has received advice from its medical adviser that such an examination and report is not required.)

²⁷ As listed in Part 3 of Schedule 4 of the Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013. The assessment should also include any other information that the agency considers relevant.

- relevant information relating to the adoption panel including its recommendation, the reasons for the recommendation and any advice given by the panel to the agency
- the recommendation of the independent review panel, where applicable.

In addition:

- a clear and comprehensive summary of any allegations made against an adopter or a member of an adopter's family (NMS 22.7).

Annex K. Adoption – key timescales

Some key timescales are listed below for inspectors to take into account when tracking the child's journey through to adoption, including the timeliness of response to prospective adopters. Inspectors' overriding consideration will be the welfare of the child.

- An agency should respond to requests for information within 10 working days.
- The stage one pre-assessment should take no more than two months unless the agency is satisfied there are good reasons for it to take longer.
- The stage two assessment should take four months unless there are exceptional circumstances which mean the agency cannot make the decision within that time, or the agency delays making the decision at the request of the prospective adopter.
- Agencies are required to complete the fast-track assessment process in four months.
- Agencies must refer prospective adopters to the Adoption Register as soon as possible and no later than three months after their approval unless the agency is considering placing a particular child with the prospective adopter.
- A permanence plan should be made at the four month review/second review.
- The adoption panel should receive all necessary information from the adoption agency within six weeks of the completion of the child's permanence report.
- The adoption panel's recommendation on whether the child should be placed for adoption should be made within two months of the review where adoption has been identified as the permanence plan.
- Agencies must refer children to the Adoption Register as soon as possible and no later than three months after the agency decision-maker's decision that the child should be placed for adoption unless the agency is considering placing the child with a particular prospective adopter.
- A proposed placement with a suitable prospective adopter should be identified and approved by the adoption panel within six months of the decision that the child should be placed for adoption.
- The timescales are different where a birth parent has requested that a child aged under six months be placed for adoption. A proposed placement with a suitable prospective adopter should be identified and approved by the panel within three months of the decision that the child should be placed for adoption.

The adoption scorecard

- The first indicator of the adoption scorecard measures the average time it takes for a child who goes on to be adopted from entering care to moving in with his or her adoptive family. The performance threshold has been set at 21 months (639

days) for 2010–13. The scorecard shows both the number and the percentage of children who wait less than the current performance threshold (21 months).

- The second indicator of the adoption scorecard measures the average time it takes for a local authority to match a child to an adoptive family once the court has formally decided that adoption is the best option. The performance threshold has been set at seven months (213 days) for 2010–13.
- The adoption scorecard measures the three-year average for these indicators. The other performance thresholds that have been set are for 2013–16, which are 426 days for the first indicator and 121 days for the second indicator. Additional information is included in the scorecard to give a context to local authority performance.

Annex L. Record of visit to looked after children placed outside of the local authority area

Placing local authority	
SC number of children's home visited	
Type of children's home visited (for example, residential special school, secure children's home)	
Information about the children spoken to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Case file number ■ Length of placement
Reasons for placement out of area (for example, shortage of suitable local placements and/or specialist placement required; to ensure child's safety)	
Short- or long-term placement? If long term, has this decision been formalised?	
Information about the adults spoken to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Initials ■ Role
Date of visit	
Name of inspector and contact telephone number	

Evaluative summary

State your key evaluative findings about the experience and progress of the young person/s visited, including the impact on the young person of living outside the area of the placing local authority.

Evidence

Record the key evidence that led you to your evaluative summary above. You should record the key evidence source that supports your summary. This will likely cover:

- the young person's own testimony
- information from staff
- information from the residential file.

The evidence should answer the following questions:

- How well is the young person supported by their social worker/local authority?
- Does the young person value their relationship with their social worker?
- How frequent are social work visits and do they make a difference to the progress and experience of the young person?
- What difference has the IRO made?
- Has the young person had access to independent advocacy/children's rights?
- What is their educational progress, taking account of their starting point?
- What are their health needs and how well are these met (including emotional and mental health needs)?
- Have they had contact with their birth family or friends and is this in the young person's best interests?
- If the plan is for the young person to return home, is the family getting the help they need to change?
- Does the young person know why they live here?
- Does the young person feel safe and secure?
- Is there a relationship between the care plan and placement plan? Where there have been issues of risk have these been effectively addressed?
- Is the young person routinely consulted about their care plan and service design by the local authority?
- Depending on how long the young person has been in the placement, what was the quality of the information provided to the children's home and young person before their arrival?
- If the plan is for the young person to return to live in their local authority area, is this in line with the young person's wishes and feelings and is it in their best interest?
- What is the quality, frequency and impact of dialogue between the home and the placing local authority? What has gone well and what could have been better?
- Has the home challenged the local authority on behalf of the young person and, if so, what has been the outcome?

Annex M. Links to the relevant Acts, Regulations and Statutory Guidance

Local authority general

Acts of Parliament²⁸

Children Act 1989

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents>

Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/35/content>

Adoption and Children Act 2002

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/38/contents>

Children Act 2004

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/31/contents>

Education and Inspections Act 2006

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/40/contents>

Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/47/contents>

Children and Young Persons Act 2008

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/23/contents>

Equality Act 2010

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>

Regulations and statutory guidance

Visits to Former Looked After Children in Detention (England) Regulations 2010

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/2797/contents/made>

Visits to Children in Long-Term Residential Care Regulations 2011

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2011/1010/made>

The Arrangements for Placement of Children by Voluntary Organisations and Others (England) Regulations 2011

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2011/582/contents/made>

²⁸ Provisions of the Children and Families Bill are expected to come into effect on 1 April 2014

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills (Fees and Frequency of Inspections) (Children's Homes etc.) Regulations 2007 (as amended)
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2007/694/contents/made>

The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2010/959/contents/made>

Amendments to The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010
<http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/families/childrenincare/a0065502/care-planning-for-looked-after-children-and-care-leavers>

Disclosure and Barring Service
<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/agencies-public-bodies/dbs/>

The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 1: Court Orders
<https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/DCSF-10500-2008>

The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 2: Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (2010)
<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130401151715/https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/DCSF-00185-2010>

The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 3: Planning Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers
<https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/DFE-00554-2010>

Delegation of authority: Amendments to the Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 2: Care Planning, Placement and Case Review
<http://education.gov.uk/aboutdfe/statutory/g00225465/delegation-of-authority-looked-after>

Working together to safeguard children: a guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children (2013)
<https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/DFE-00030-2013>

Statutory guidance on children who run away and go missing from home or care (2009)
<https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/Childrenandfamilies/Page8/DCSF-00670-2009>

Missing Children and Adults strategy (2011)
<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/police/missing-persons-strategy>

Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) website
<http://www.ceop.police.uk/>

Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation: Supplementary guidance (2009)
<https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/DCSF-00689-2009>

Statutory Guidance on Promoting the Health and Well-being of Looked After Children (2009)
<https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/DCSF-01071-2009>

Short Breaks: Statutory guidance on how to safeguard and promote the welfare of disabled children using short breaks (2010)
<https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/DCSF-00183-2010>

Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations: Local authority responsibilities towards former looked after children in custody (2010)
<https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/DFE-00562-2010>

IRO handbook: Statutory guidance for independent reviewing officers (IROs) and local authorities on their functions in relation to case management and review for looked after children (2010)
<https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/Lookedafterchildren/Page1/DCSF-00184-2010>

Statutory guidance on the roles and responsibilities of the Director of Children's Services and the Lead Member for Children's Services (2012)
<https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/DFE-00034-2012>

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<http://www.childline.org.uk/pages/home.aspx>

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http://www.nspcc.org.uk/Inform/research/ctail/ctail_wda84866.html

NSPCC ChildLine number (telephone: 0800 1111)

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<http://www.paceuk.info/>

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