

Inspection of residential family centres

A report on the responses to consultation

Between 10 June and 8 July 2014, Ofsted held a consultation about its proposals for the inspection of residential family centres. This is a report on the outcomes of that consultation.

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Introduction

1. In October 2014, we will introduce the inspection judgement of 'requires improvement' to replace the current judgement of 'adequate' for our inspections of residential family centres.
2. Between 10 June and 8 July 2014, we held a consultation about our proposals for how we will implement this new judgement. The consultation methodology consisted of a questionnaire (available online and in hard copy), meetings with residential family centre providers, and meetings with parents who were either current or past residents of a residential family centre.
3. We had 16 responses to the questionnaire. This response reflects the low number of residential family centres. In July 2014, there were 43 centres registered with Ofsted. The responses we received to the questionnaire were further strengthened by the meetings we had with providers and parents. We invited all residential family centre providers to one of two meetings in June to discuss the consultation questions. In total, 10 people attended these meetings. We also spoke with eight parents who were, or who had been, residents at a residential family centre.
4. During the consultation about our proposals for inspection, we also consulted about our assessment of the impact of making the proposed changes. This assessment is known as a Business Engagement Assessment.¹ You can find out about the responses to this assessment at paragraph 20.
5. The comments received have helped in finalising the details of the inspection framework. We are grateful to all individuals and organisations who took the time to respond to the consultation.

Overview of responses

6. Nearly all respondents who answered the questionnaire either agreed or strongly agreed with our proposals. We also received comments about our proposals from those who completed the questionnaire, from those who attended the meetings and from the parents who spoke with us. These, too, were broadly supportive of our proposals, although we have taken account of some detailed comments when finalising the new framework.

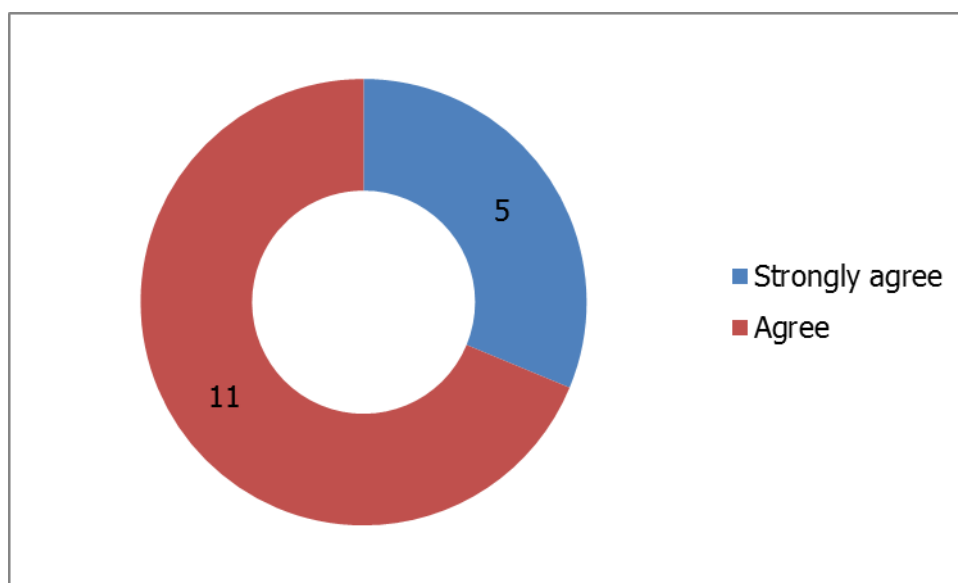
¹ Under recent guidance issued by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, non-economic regulators, of which Ofsted is one, are obliged before implementing any significant policy changes to assess the impact of such change on those regulated, by completing a Business Engagement Assessment (BEA). For further information please see the Regulator's Code: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/regulators-code>

Findings in full

Proposal I: that the evaluation criteria clearly describe the characteristics of good and outstanding judgement

Q1. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

The characteristics of good, as they are set out, describe accurately the overall experiences that children and parents should have at residential family centres.

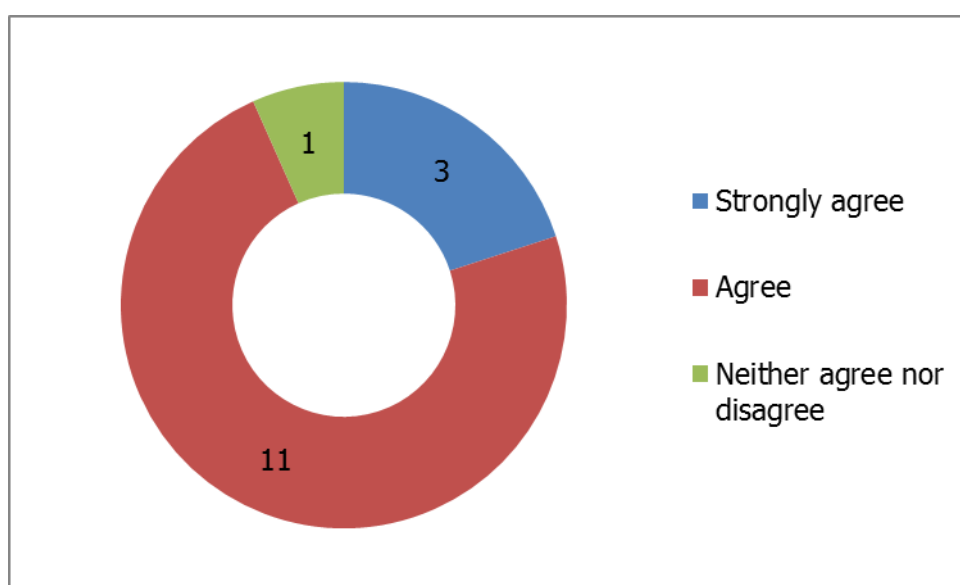


7. All 16 respondents replied to this question in the questionnaire and all either agreed or strongly agreed with the proposed characteristics of a good centre. Therefore, we have made no major changes to these evaluation criteria as set out in the consultation document.
8. We have, however, made several minor changes to descriptors in the interests of clarity, following comments made in response to the consultation. These include changes that:
 - seek to clarify that the views of families to drive improvement need not be limited by the relatively short stays at centres by many families – views can be gathered over time and analysed collectively
 - provide the more suitable wording of 'homely,' to replace 'like a family home', to reflect the realistic constraints of centres when seeking to minimise an institutional feel.

Q2. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

The characteristics of good, as they are set out, describe accurately what should be expected in the following judgement areas:

- quality of assessment
- how well children and parents are helped and protected
- the effectiveness of leaders and managers
- working with partners to improve outcomes.



9. All but one respondent answered this question in the questionnaire. Nearly all respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the proposal. One commented that there is a 'clear distinction from the characteristic of outstanding so therefore also easy to understand the difference and aspire to outstanding for providers of the service'.

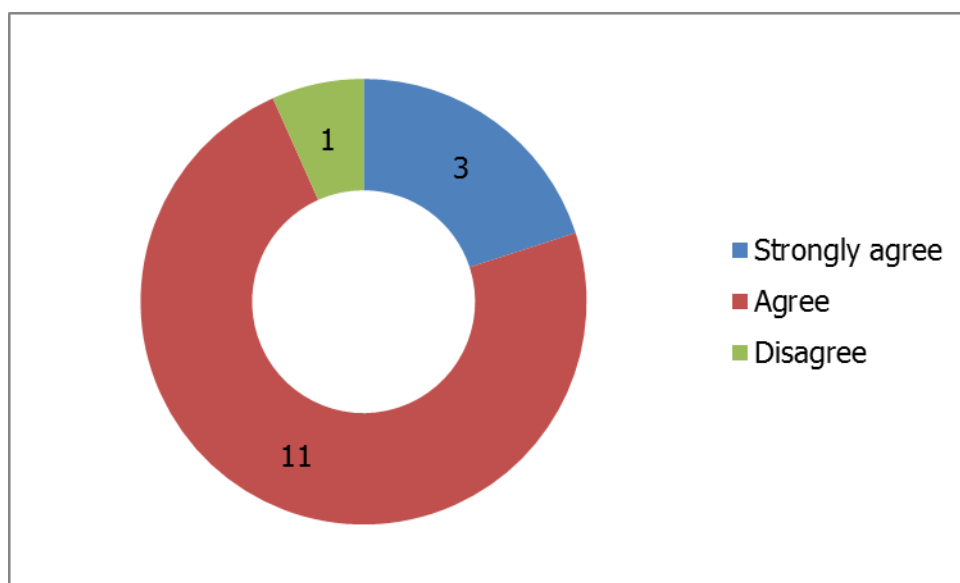
Again, minor changes to descriptors were made following comments from respondents to the consultation, to reflect:

- more accurately the distinct roles of professionals who contribute to the assessment
 - the differing circumstances under which families may arrive at the centre
 - the fact that support to children and families may increase or decrease as the assessment progresses.
10. Parents that we spoke to were particularly keen that help and support should take full account of the diverse and individual needs of children and families. An

additional descriptor has been included to reflect the fact that many parents and children are resident at centres situated far from their home area. A further change has been made in response to views expressed by some parents that staff should promote positive relationships between the different families staying at centres.

Q3. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

The outstanding criteria as set out across the judgement areas capture well the characteristics of those residential family centres that are making an exceptional and enduring positive difference to the lives of children and parents.

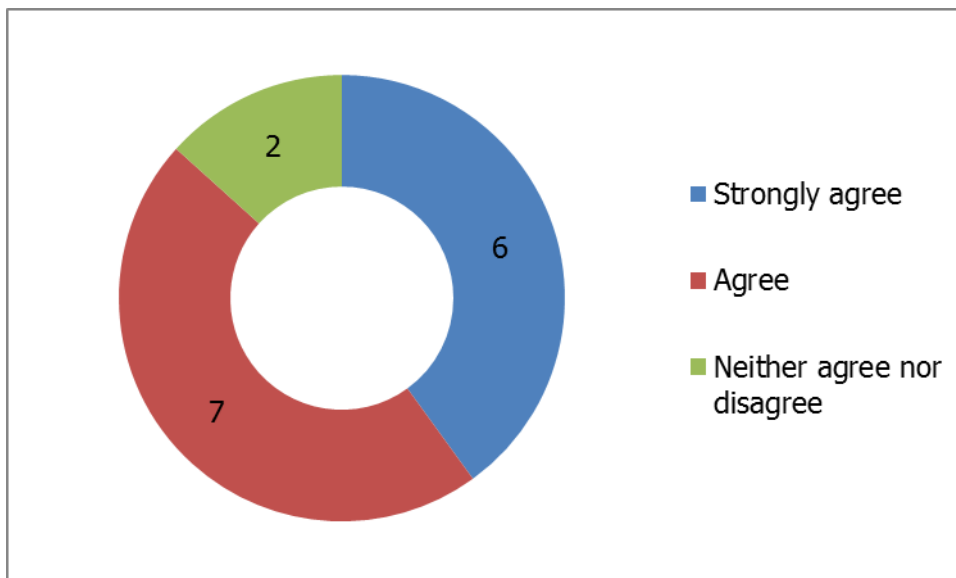


11. All, except one respondent, answered this question in the questionnaire. Nearly all agreed or strongly agreed with the statement.
12. We have made changes to descriptors that take into account more fully that the scope for centres to demonstrate sustained improvement in the lives of children and families is limited by the relatively short time that families stay at the centres.
13. Comments from parents have resulted in an increased emphasis on seeking parental views to improve services and on access to independent advocacy in the criteria for outstanding centres.

Proposal II: that a judgement of 'inadequate' in the judgement of 'how well children and parents are helped and protected' will always limit the 'overall experiences' judgement to 'inadequate'; a judgement of 'inadequate' in other judgements is likely to limit the 'overall experiences' judgement to 'inadequate' and in all instances to no more than 'requires improvement'

Q4. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

A judgement of 'inadequate' in the judgement of 'how well children and parents are helped and protected' will always limit the 'overall experiences' judgement to 'inadequate'?



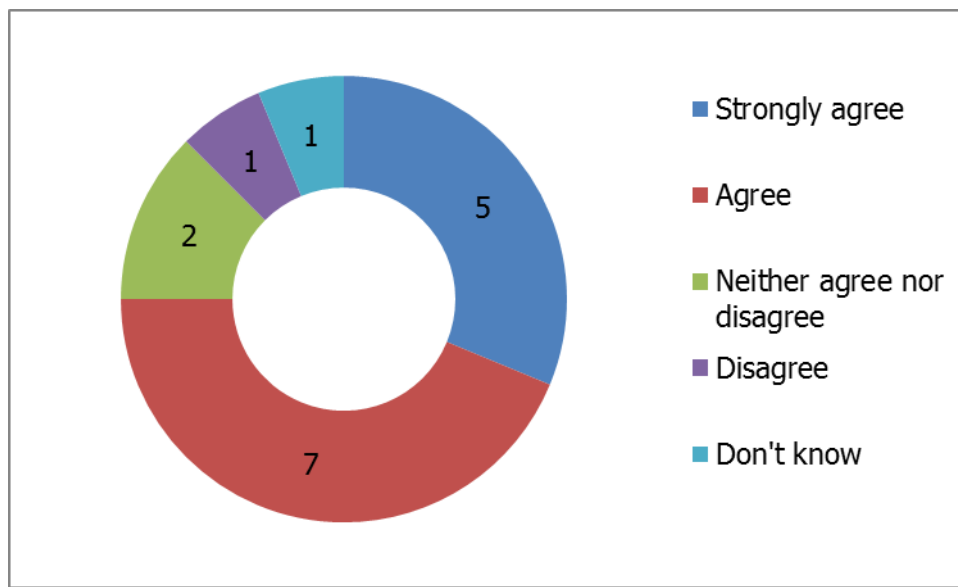
14. There were 15 respondents who answered this in the questionnaire.

15. We will be implementing this part of the proposal. Nearly all respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, and none disagreed. One respondent wrote:

'It is important to have this as a limiting judgement. If families and children aren't safe and helped and protected within the setting, the setting cannot be judged as anything but inadequate.'

Q5. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

A judgement of 'inadequate' for either 'the effectiveness of leaders and managers' or 'working in partnership with others to improve outcomes' is likely to lead to an 'inadequate' judgement for the 'overall experiences' judgement, and in all instances to no more than 'requires improvement'?



- 16. There were 16 respondents who answered this in the questionnaire.
- 17. Most respondents agreed, or strongly agreed, with this statement. We will, therefore, be implementing this part of the proposal.

Q6. Further comments

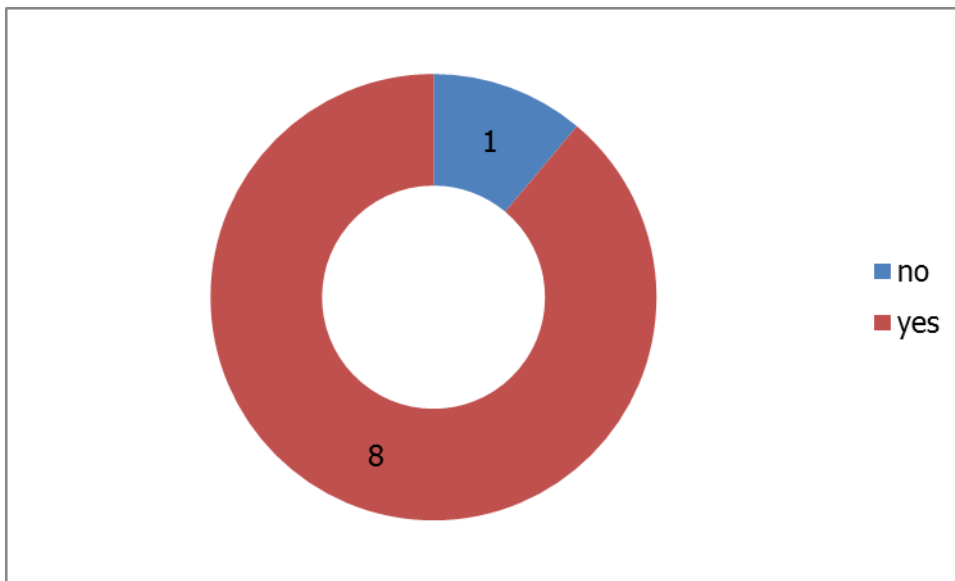
- 18. We asked respondents to provide feedback on any area relating to the inspection of residential family centres. Areas covered, included:
 - the need for effective moderation of reports to ensure consistency and objectivity
 - the importance of understanding the different roles and responsibilities between commissioning local authorities and the local authorities.
- 19. We are satisfied that these issues are addressed satisfactorily within the evaluation criteria. Where necessary, they will be addressed further within *Conducting inspections of residential family centres*.²

² Link to be added in October 2014.

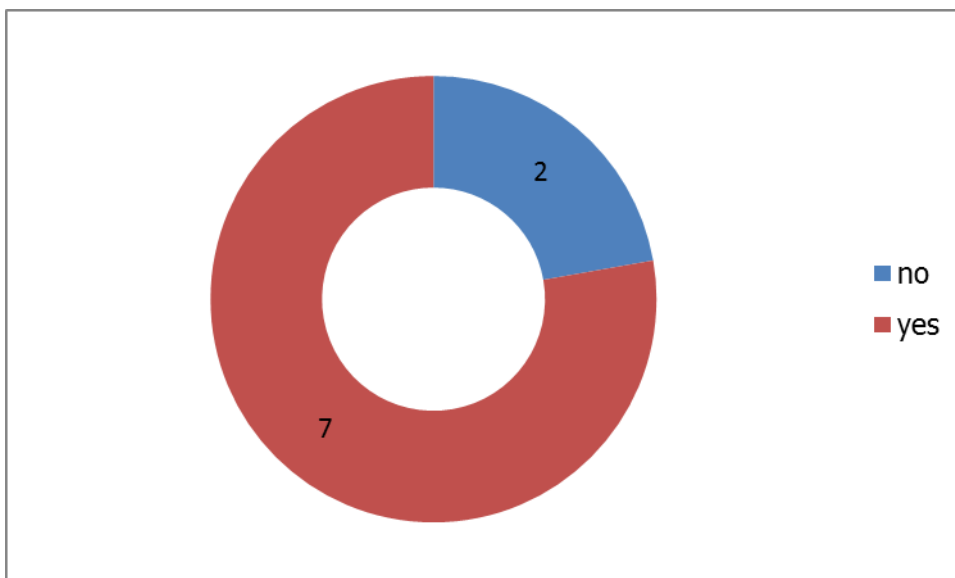
Business Engagement Assessment

20. We received nine separate responses to the questions about our Business Engagement Assessment. Of these, six responded on behalf of an organisation (where identified, four of these were residential family centre providers and one was a local authority commissioner). There was one response from an individual; two respondents did not state.

Q1: Do you agree with our assessment?



Q2: Have we considered the significant factors that may impact on providers of residential family centres?



21. A strong consensus emerged in the replies to these questions and in the meetings with providers that a 'requires improvement' judgement held for an extended period may place centres at serious risk of closure, as commissioners

are unlikely to refer families to centres that have been judged as less than good.

22. Ofsted will consider whether residential family centres should be provided with an earlier opportunity to demonstrate improvement than the current three-year inspection cycle allows. Decisions will take into account the implications for other social care frameworks. We will seek to implement any changes to the frequency of inspections as part of any amendments made following the planned review of the revised framework (see paragraph 25 below).
23. When Ofsted judges a residential family centre to be inadequate for overall experiences of children and parents, the next inspection will normally take place within 12 months. These are the same arrangements as under the previous framework.

Next steps

24. We will implement the new inspection framework in October 2014. The framework will incorporate the changes that we have identified in this report. You can view the framework on our website at www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/140018.
25. A review of the new inspection framework will be carried out six months after implementation.

Annex A: Type of respondents

