



Children looked after by local authorities in England

Change to the SSDA903 collection 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016

Placement unique reference number (URN)

For the collection year 2015 to 2016, there is a new requirement to enter the unique reference number (URN) where the setting is subject to Ofsted inspections. For children's homes, for example, this would be the URN of the individual home, and for foster or adoptive placements, for example, this would be the URN of the relevant service or agency providing the placement. For larger providers with multiple settings or branches this would mean that the precise URN for the particular setting or branch will be required. It will be required for any placement that is ongoing on 1 April 2015, or for any new placement.

The data, which will cover roughly 90% of all placements, will then be used to map placement use in a more accurate way than has been available before, to enable better understanding of placement patterns, and to help improve understanding of why children are placed in certain placements and how this can impact on them. It will also give us a better understanding of the market for children's homes and the use of independent fostering and adoption providers so that government can consider appropriate policy responses to help the sufficiency of the market. It is also anticipated that local authorities themselves will find the additional data helpful, for instance by linking Ofsted quality ratings to provision.

Ofsted will provide local authorities with complete lists of URNs for inspected providers which are open at any point during the collection year. Currently this is supplied on a monthly basis to named individuals, of whom there can be up to five per authority. Local authorities nominate these individuals by contacting enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk and recipients will require a secure email address [.gsi; .gsx; .gcsx; or .cjsm.net]. Ofsted will support local authorities in providing this information throughout the year and when preparing their SSDA903 returns.

The URN is in the format SC999999, or 999999 for Secure Training Centres. It is our intention that, when submitting the SSDA903 return data, validation will be introduced to check the combined validity of the URN and placement details against details of the provider. Where placements are of a type or in a setting not covered by Ofsted URNs, such as placed with parents, or in a Youth Offender Institute (YOI), then no URN will be expected.

Currently the URN is required in addition to the other information asked of each placement, but we expect that in future years the information requirements may be streamlined for certain placements once this new data item is established.