

Ofsted inspections – clarification for children’s homes

This document aims to confirm facts about Ofsted inspections of children’s homes and dispel any myths that can result in unnecessary workloads in children’s homes. It should be read alongside ‘Inspecting children’s homes: guidance for inspectors’, which can be found here:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/inspecting-childrens-homes-guidance-for-inspectors.

This document highlights specific practices that are not required by, or are the policy of, Ofsted. It is up to each children’s home provider to determine their practices and to justify these on their own merits.

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Corporate member of
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Registration

1. Ofsted **does not** prefer any particular size of home.

Ofsted, under the powers of the Care Standards Act 2000, is required to register a children's home of any size providing the requirements for registration are met. As part of the registration process, the applicant for registration has to demonstrate how they intend to meet the needs of the children they wish to care for, understand the ethos and nature of care to be offered and that this is appropriate in relation to the size of the building and staffing arrangements.

Innovation

2. Ofsted supports providers looking for ways to improve the experiences and progress of children.

The Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 encourages providers to continually look for ways to improve the quality of care provided, including the use of research and development. Ofsted recognises that implementing a new way of working can take time to embed and have a positive impact on the progress and experiences of children and young people. Ofsted does not wish to stifle innovation and recognises the challenges of trying something new. Inspectors will want to understand why a provider has chosen a new model of practice, what impact they anticipate it will have, how they will evaluate success and what progress is made.

Admission of children and young people

3. Admitting a child or young person with 'difficult' behaviour **does not** affect inspection judgements.

Children's homes care for some of the most damaged and vulnerable young people who present many challenges. We know that some children's behaviour may fluctuate as they become more settled or start dealing with traumatic events and memories; we recognise that this takes time. Ofsted also knows that needs, not previously identified, emerge as a child settles into a home.

We understand there is a view that the admission of a child with 'difficult' behaviour will affect the Ofsted judgement. This is not the case. Providers should know whose needs they can meet and only accept into their homes the children they know that they can care for. Managers and staff should be able to explain to inspectors the nature of the behaviour of the children they care for and the underlying reason for this, how they are addressing these needs and what changes they have made to care plans to take into account any new or emerging needs. It is about progress **and** experiences – where children are new to the home, we will be looking at the quality of their experience. If a

provider can demonstrate that they can meet the needs of the children placed there, that care planning is robust and children are making progress and having positive experiences, this will not adversely affect the judgement at inspection.

Preferred models

4. Ofsted **does not** 'prefer' any models of practice.

Ofsted does not have a preference for any research-based practice, care planning models, recording systems or methods of restraint. Ofsted does not condone or support any method of restraint that inflicts pain or any care arrangement that is abusive or emotionally harmful. Where providers have adopted a particular practice, inspectors will want to understand why, what impact it has on the progress and experience of children and that staff have received relevant support, training and guidance. Inspectors will want to see evidence of this in practice.

Evidence

5. Ofsted **does not** expect providers to hold 'folders for Ofsted' – just the records required in regulation.

The inspection framework introduced in April 2015 encourages inspectors to talk to providers, managers, staff, professionals and children to gather the majority of evidence. Inspectors encourage managers to show their 'best evidence', which demonstrates that their work is making a difference to the progress and experience of children. Records are only one aspect of practice. Inspectors will want to see some records to support the inspection process and, on occasion, to confirm what they have been told. Providers should create recording systems, which comply with regulations and are effective in practice for their home.

Making complaints

6. If a provider makes a complaint, it **will not** adversely affect their next inspection judgement.

Ofsted has a published complaints process, the first stage of which is to try to resolve any concerns informally and amicably. Ofsted receives very few formal complaints about social care inspections. Complaints are thoroughly investigated and where we have made a mistake, we apologise and try to put things right. Our complaints process is open and transparent, with cases escalated to internal review also considered by a scrutiny panel that includes an external sector representative. If a provider makes a complaint, this will not adversely affect the judgement at the next inspection. Complaints can help us to learn and improve our practice.

Quotas

7. There are no quotas of inspection judgements.

Each inspection is an event in its own right and inspectors judge each individual home based on the practice they see and the progress and experiences of children. There are no 'quotas' of judgements regionally or nationally and there are no rewards or incentives for inspectors to make specific judgements.

Outstanding

8. You **can** be judged outstanding at your first inspection.

There are no rules that state you cannot be outstanding at your first inspection as a children's home. Where practice and the progress and experiences of children meet the criteria for outstanding then this is the judgement the inspector will make.

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

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