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Guidance

Social care common inspection framework (SCCIF): residential family centres

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Introduction

The social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) applies to inspections of:

- children's homes
- secure children's homes
- children's social care providers agencies
- boarding schools and residential special schools
- voluntary adoption agencies
- independent fostering agencies
- residential family centres
- residential holiday schemes for disabled children
- residential provision in former young offender institutions

The SCCIF covers that:

- sets out the common judgement structure across the range of settings listed above
- the expectations and progress of children and other service users, wherever they live, are the central focus of inspection
- draws on key areas of evidence that we usually expect in all each inspection

The SCCIF is not a 'one-size-fits-all' framework. Where necessary, the SCCIF adapts and addresses the unique and distinct aspects and type of setting. However, the evaluation criteria we use to make judgements and the accompanying guidance are, wherever possible, consistent across settings.

The inspection principles

Ofsted's corporate strategy outlines how we will carry out inspection and regulation of services. We:

- intelligent
- responsive
- focused

Our approach is further underpinned by the following 3 principles that apply to all social care inspections.

To focus on the things that matter most to children's lives

We have reached a general consensus with the main social care stakeholders that social care services should be focused on the experiences and progress of children and other service users, and the adults who look after them, which matters most about children's experiences and progress.

Using this to guide us, we focus the criteria for our judgements on the difference that providers are making for children's lives. Adults can only support children well if they're well cared for themselves. We also expect providers to be able to show the difference they make to the quality of the support that the adults who care for children receive.

In residential family centres, we focus on the quality of assessment and children's and parents' experience of the assessment process as well as their progress through the assessment.

To be consistent in our expectations of providers

It is important that professionals and members of the public can compare services that do similar things. We make this possible by being consistent in what we expect from providers. We also make comparisons possible by using a common judgement structure, wherever possible, irrespective of where children live or receive help.

Our inspection methods and published guidance only differ when there is a good reason. This includes taking a similar approach to deciding on the frequency of inspections.

To prioritise our work where improvement is needed most

We are committed to inspecting in a way that focuses our resources where they are needed most. If leaders and managers have shown that they can consistently deliver services for children well, we may decide to return less often or do a more proportionate inspection.

However, we always take into account the risk to children of not inspecting as frequently. We use a range of information to ask us whether providers are closing, stay the same or are able to go back to good and outstanding providers more quickly if we have concerns.

The focus of inspections

The SCCIF has a consistent and clear focus on evaluating the impact of care and support on the experiences and progress of children and families. Ranging through your tracking and sampling. This means that:

- inspectors spend less time looking at policies and procedures and more time looking at the impact of services on the lives of families
- we focus on what children and families say and what we can see settings are doing on a day-to-day basis, and so that the time providers may spend preparing for inspection is reduced as much as possible, we will be reviewing whether to reduce the notice period for most children's social care inspections from 3 working days
- we have set out as clearly as possible the details of the information we expect by inspectors to assist their inspection. We will enable providers to produce their best evidence whenever we plan inspection.

Inspectors will make the limiting and graded judgements first so that they can take these into account for the 'overall progress and experiences' judgement.

How inspectors make judgements under the SCCIF

Judgement structure

Our judgement structure stems from our first principles of inspection – to focus on the things that matter most to children's lives – and place the progress and experiences of children and other people who use children's services at the core of inspections.

All SCCIF inspections follow the 4-point scale (outstanding, good, requires improvement to be good and inadequate) to make judgements on the overall experiences and progress of children and families.

- how well children are helped and protected
- the effectiveness of leaders and managers

Inspections of adoption support agencies, voluntary adoption agencies and residential family centres also look at, as appropriate, the experiences of adult service users.

The judgement structure has been independent and proportionate to what is judgement. This means that, if inspectors judge this area to be inadequate, then the 'overall experiences and progress' judgement will always be inadequate.

The judgement of the effectiveness of leaders and managers is graded judgement. If inspectors judge this area to be inadequate, it will be likely that the overall is inadequate, and certainly no more than requires improvement to be good. For 'overall experiences and progress'.

Inspectors will make the limiting and graded judgements first so that they can take these into account for the 'overall progress and experiences' judgement.

How inspectors use the evaluation criteria

Inspectors will use the descriptors of what 'good' looks like as the benchmarks against which to grade and judge performance. The judgement, however, is not derived from a mechanistic, 'tick-box' approach to the evidence. Inspectors will use their professional judgement, supported and informed by the experiences and progress of children. Failure to meet all of the criteria for good will not automatically lead to a judgement of requires improvement to be good.

Some criteria will have less relevance than others in some settings because of the nature of the provision and the children.

Even when all the criteria are relevant, there is always a degree of professional judgement in weighing and balancing evidence against the evaluation criteria.

The inspector judges a setting to be good if they conclude that the evidence relevant, appropriately with this finding. We call this the 'best fit'.

The evaluation criteria for SCCIF inspections are broadly consistent across different types of setting but, where necessary, they have been adapted to reflect the varying and unique nature of each type of provision.

Required evidence

Inspectors look at several areas of required evidence for each judgement. Some areas are common. The SCCIF inspection tools will indicate which are specific to the specific type of provision. We will also include in our notice of inspection the bullet points at the beginning of the evaluation criteria for each judgement.

Evaluation criteria

Inspectors use the following criteria to make judgements. This includes the benchmarks of what good looks like.

The overall experiences and progress of children and parents

Areas of required evidence are:

- the quality of individualised support provided and the influence and impact of the support on children's and parents' experiences and the overall progress, and any progress they make
- the quality of relationships between staff, children and parents
- how said families' views are understood and taken into account in the provision of support and services
- the quality of children's and parents' experiences on a day-to-day basis
- how well the centre supports transitions
- how well the centre supports and prepares parents to meet their children's needs and promote their welfare
- how well staff understand and use the centre's assessment framework and any model of attachment, and how this supports the assessment of parenting capacity

Good

The experiences and progress of children and parents are likely to be judged good if there is evidence of the following:

Children and parents are enabled to build trusted and secure relationships with professionals and with Ofsted the children and parents said, listen to them and promote their welfare.

Children and parents, including those who communicate non-verbally, are supported to develop their confidence to be assertive and express their views and feelings, and to be able to make decisions about their lives, including when and where it may not be possible to act on their wishes, and to understand where other action is taken that is in children's best interests.

Children and parents know how to complain. The centre's complaints policy is well publicised and understood by children and families who have had reason to be aware of their complaint. Their complaints are treated seriously and responded to clearly. Urgent action is taken and improvements happen accordingly.

Children and parents are supported to attend education, including pre-school groups, or employment where appropriate.

Children and parents have access to a range of social, educational and recreational opportunities, including activities and groups in the local community and in the centre. They are supported to engage in faith-based activities if they wish.

The centre challenges the local authority effectively when it has concerns about the future plans for children and parents. The centre challenges external professionals about any delays in the assessment process.

Children and parents are being helped to improve their health or manage lifelong conditions. Their health needs are identified (including their mental and sexual health needs, and any substance or alcohol misuse, as appropriate). They are helped to understand the importance of healthy lifestyles and practical ways of managing medication and safe and effective and parents' relationships, whenever possible. Managers and staff develop effective relationships with all relevant health services, including GPs, dentists, and sexual health services. Appropriate healthcare for their children, including appointments for immunisations and developmental checks.

Specialist help is made available according to the individual needs of children and parents and in line with the statement of purpose. The help is available as soon as it is needed, at the intensity required and for as long as required. If children and parents are ready to move on from the centre, staff help them to centre challenges and escalates concerns with the placing authority or other partners.

Any specific type or model of attachment and/or assessment and intervention, specialist help or support delivered or commissioned by the centre is provided by staff who are appropriately trained and supervised to do so. Managers and where appropriate, children understand what is involved in using and the assessment. Staff share assessment progress reports regularly with families.

Families who are new to the centre are welcomed sensitively and with care(s) and considered planning. When children and parents leave the centre, staff promote positive and timely endings. The centre works with placing authorities to ensure that children and families who have been supported by the centre receive good support. The needs of other families at the centre are taken into account.

Parents and, where appropriate, children are supported to develop skills and strategies to manage their own conflicts and difficult feelings through appropriately supportive relationships. They are helped to make clear, consistent and appropriate boundaries for children and parents.

Children and parents are involved with dignity and respect. They experience consideration of their individual needs, including those of any of the protected family factors, including age, disability, ethnicity, faith or belief, gender, gender identity, language, race and sexual orientation.

Staff always place the well-being of individual children at the centre of their practice. The centre works with parents to promote and protect children's well-being. Staff help children to be safe and to develop healthy, physical, sexual, nutritious meals and enjoyable mealtimes.

Children and parents have appropriate, carefully assessed, supervised contact with their relatives and friends. Staff help children and people who are important to them. There are no unnecessary restrictions in place.

Staff support good relations between families living at the centre.

Parents and, where appropriate, children are clear about what parenting skills are being assessed and how the assessment process works. They are helped to understand the outcomes of the assessment and recommendations that the centre uses. They feel fully engaged in the assessment process and feel able to challenge the views of the assessors.

Assessments focus on safeguarding children and identifying their needs, and take into account parents' views. Assessments are individualised and realistic about what parents can achieve, taking into account their capacity to learn, continue cutting bonds with their parents. Parents understand the measures used to develop and assess capacity to learn and how to improve their parenting. The assessment is carried out in a non-stigmatising way.

Final assessment reports are evaluative and analytical, sufficiently describing parents' strengths and weaknesses, that capacity for change and the extent to which it is likely to be sustained. Reports include clear, realistic and practical recommendations are made to inform decision-making about children's futures. Prompt action is taken to complete the assessment if this is in the child's best interests. The centre's assessment of parents' capacity to learn and develop programs that the centre provides that improve parenting capacity.

Requires improvement to be good

The experiences and progress of children and parents are likely to be judged requires improvement to be good if there is evidence of the following:

The centre is not yet delivering good assessments of parenting capacity and help. The weaknesses identified need to be addressed to fully support children and families who are being helped by the centre and to ensure that safeguards are in the medium and long term. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that mean children's welfare is not safeguarded and promoted.

Inadequate

The experiences and progress of children and parents are likely to be judged inadequate if there is evidence of the following:

There are serious or widespread failures that mean children are not protected, or that result in children's welfare not being promoted or safeguarded, or that progress through the assessment process has been avoidably delayed or assessment is weak.

Outstanding

The experiences and progress of children and parents are likely to be judged outstanding if there is evidence of the following:

Professional practice, including the quality of assessments and assessment reports, consistently exceeds the standard of good. There are examples of excellent practice that are sacrificing of wider dissemination.

How well children and parents are helped and protected

Areas of required evidence are:

- how well the centre promotes and protects children's welfare throughout the assessment process
- how well risks are identified, understood and managed and whether the support provided to children and families is sufficient to minimise risk so that they can help their children to become increasingly safe
- the provider's actions in response to children who may go missing or may be at risk of sexual exploitation, including consideration of the risks of being in care, radicalisation, and the children's parents who may be grooming from the centre
- how said staff manage situations and behaviour and whether clear and consistent boundaries are in place for children and parents, and how well they understand parents
- whether safeguarding arrangements to protect children and parents meet all statutory and other government requirements.

Good

The help and protection offered to children and parents are likely to be judged good if there is evidence of the following:

Children feel protected and are protected from harm, including neglect, abuse, exploitation, accidents, bullying and radicalisation. There is a strong and effective culture of safeguarding. Children and parents are encouraged to discuss harm or risk of harm to them, including their safehavens. That response includes regular and effective contact and planning with the child's and family's social worker and other professionals. Staff know the family. If this is appropriate and in accordance with plans for the future.

Families report that children to them, take their concerns seriously and respond appropriately.

Any risks associated with children or their parents offending, misusing drugs or alcohol, or being victims of domestic violence are identified and managed. Risks are explicitly assessed and understood by staff. Individual plans and risk assessments address effectively any known vulnerabilities for each child and parent. Staff are alert to the signs of sexual exploitation and grooming and know the signs of grooms that are indicating that the risk of harm and there is evidence that these risks are being minimised. When staff believe that risks posed by or to any children or parents have increased safety within the centre. They take prompt action to address this.

Children and parents who are missing experience well-coordinated responses to ensure their safety and well-being when they return to the centre and are interviewed. There is a clear plan of action in place to protect their well-being and reduce the risk of further harm. The centre is aware of and implements, as appropriate, the local authority's protocol for children who are missing from care or missing. The centre responds effectively to children and parents who are missing.

Parents are helped to keep themselves and their children safe from bullying, inappropriate behaviour, racist, sexist, homophobic and other forms of discrimination. Any discriminatory behaviour is challenged. Help and support are given to families about how to treat others with respect.

Parents receive help and support to manage their own and their children's behaviour and to keep their children safe. Parents are helped to understand how to safe and accountable and seek to understand the triggers for behaviour.

Positive behaviour is promoted consistently. Staff use effective de-escalation techniques and creative alternative strategies that are specific to the needs of each child or parent and developed in consultation with them where possible.

Conflict management is effective and includes the appropriate use of restorative practices that reverse relationships, increase parents' sense of personal responsibility and reduce the need for formal police intervention.

Proactive and effective working relationships with the police, health, children's social care and other professionals help to support and protect children and families who are at risk of harm. Information is shared with the centre from any strategies in place to keep children and parents safe, and to support parents to keep themselves and their children safe.

Staff understand the risks that using the internet may pose for children and parents. They are aware of the signs that this may be happening and have strategies in place to keep children and parents safe, and to support parents to keep themselves and their children safe.

Careful assessment and regular monitoring of staff and volunteers prevent unsuitable people from being recruited and having the opportunity to harm children and parents. Staff are vetted. Staff who have DBS disclosures are informed of any concerns about inappropriate behaviour.

Staff working within the centre know and follow procedures for responding to concerns about children and parents. Staff know how to raise concerns about colleagues and immediately shared with the placing or host local authority as required, and a record of that referral is retained.

There is evidence that staff follow up the outcomes of the referral quickly and that appropriate action has been taken to protect the child or parent from harm. Managers and staff know how to contact the local authority's duty and advice service and know what information is required in the placing authority. It escalates its concerns appropriately, including by writing to the director of children's services (DCS) if the local authority agency fail to act.

Investigations into allegations or suspicion of harm are shared with the appropriate agencies and are handled fairly, quickly and in accordance with local and national guidance. Children and parents who are involved are kept informed. Support is given both to the person making the allegation and the person who is the subject of the allegation.

The centre has effective links with local authorities, designated officers and other safeguarding agencies. There is good communication about safeguarding issues. Staff are appropriately trained in the local authority's safeguarding and relevant local voluntary and organisations that may be supporting children, parents and families.

Children and parents are helped to understand the local authority's safeguarding procedures and how to contact the local authority's duty and advice service. Staff know how to contact the local authority's duty and advice service and know what information is required in the local authority. Staff know how to escalate their concerns appropriately, including by writing to the director of children's services (DCS) if the local authority agency fail to act.

Requires improvement to be good

The help and protection offered to children and parents are likely to be judged requires improvement to be good if there is evidence of the following:

The centre is not yet delivering good assessments of parenting capacity and help. The weaknesses identified need to be addressed to fully support children and families who are being helped by the centre and to ensure that safeguards are in the medium and long term. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that mean children's welfare is not safeguarded and promoted.

Inadequate

The help and protection offered to children and parents are likely to be judged inadequate if there is evidence of the following:

There are serious or widespread failures that mean children are not protected, or that result in children's welfare not being promoted or safeguarded, or that progress through the assessment process has been avoidably delayed or assessment is weak.

Outstanding

The help and protection offered to children and parents are likely to be judged outstanding if there is evidence of the following:

Professional practice, including the quality of assessments and assessment reports, consistently exceeds the standard of good. There are examples of excellent practice that are sacrificing of wider dissemination.

Legal context

Children's homes are governed by the Care Standards Act 2000 and the Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the Children's Homes (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2018.

Secure children's homes are governed by the Secure Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015.

Children's social care providers are governed by the Care Standards Act 2000 and the Children's Social Care (Registration and Inspection of Providers) (England) Regulations 2018.

Boarding schools and residential special schools are governed by the Boarding Schools and Residential Special Schools (England) Regulations 2015.

Voluntary adoption agencies are governed by the Adoption Agencies Regulations 2005.

Independent fostering agencies are governed by the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011.

Residential family centres are governed by the Care Standards Act 2000 and the Residential Family Centres Regulations 2002.

Residential holiday schemes for disabled children are governed by the Care Standards Act 2000 and the Residential Holiday Schemes for Disabled Children (England) Regulations 2013.

Residential provision in former young offender institutions are governed by the Care Standards Act 2000 and the Secure Training Centre Rules 1998.

How inspectors make judgements under the SCCIF

Notice of inspection

Ofsted will usually give providers 3 working days' notice of an inspection and regulation visit. We may give less than 3 working days' notice if we think it is necessary.

Scheduling and the inspection

Ofsted will usually give providers 3 working days' notice of an inspection and regulation visit. We may give less than 3 working days' notice if we think it is necessary.

Feedback

Ofsted's

Ofsted's use of evidence

Ofsted's use of evidence

The inspection

The inspection report

Conduct during inspections

Making requirements and recommendations

Monitoring visits

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Use of social media

Use of social media

The physical environment for children and parents is safe and secure and protects them from harm or the risk of harm. Risk assessments for the physical environment are regularly reviewed and updated and comply with statutory requirements.

If surveillance and electronic monitoring are used, this is appropriate and in line with children's and parents' rights to privacy and dignity. Footage is recorded and regularly reviewed with families and the placing authority.

Requires improvement to good

The help and protection offered to children and parents are likely to be judged requires improvement to be good if there is evidence of the following:

Children are not yet receiving good help and protection, but there are no serious failures that leave them either harmed or at risk of harm.

Inadequate

The help and protection offered to children and parents are likely to be judged inadequate if there is evidence of the following:

There are serious or widespread failures that leave children being harmed, at risk of harm or still their welfare being safeguarded.

Outstanding

The help and protection offered to children and parents are likely to be judged outstanding if, in addition to meeting the requirements of a good judgement, there is evidence of the following:

Professional practice results in sustained improvement to the safety and welfare of children. Highly effective planning, assessment and support strategies and minimises risks include and outside the home.

Proactive and creative safeguarding practice means that all children and parents, including the most vulnerable, have a strong sense of safety and well-being. Children and families benefit from creative and innovative solutions and finding creative alternative strategies that are effective.

Research-informed practice, some of which may be innovative, continues to develop from a strong and confident base, making an exceptional difference to the experiences and safety of children and parents.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers

Areas of required evidence are:

- whether leaders and managers show an ambitious vision, have realistic expectations and high aspirations and ensure high standards of assessment, support and care
- the extent to which leaders and managers have a clear understanding of the progress and impact of their work, including the quality of their work
- whether leaders and management provide the right supportive environment for employees through effective supervision and appraisal and high-quality induction and training opportunities that are tailored to the specific needs of the children and parents
- how well leaders and managers know and understand the centre's strengths and areas for improvement. Identify weaknesses and take decisive and effective action to rectify them
- whether the centre is achieving its stated aims and objectives
- how well leaders and managers promote a culture of reflective and evidence-led assessment and support to children and parents in all areas of their development
- whether leaders and managers actively challenge where the responses from other agencies are not good enough
- the extent to which leaders and managers actively promote tolerance, equality and diversity

Good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers is likely to be judged good if there is evidence of the following:

The centre is managed effectively and efficiently by a permanent, suitably experienced and qualified registered manager. A registered social worker manager is preferred. If a registered social worker is absent, a suitably experienced registered manager with good or better is taken to address the vacancy of the registered manager post.

The centre is properly staffed and resourced to meet the needs of the families at the centre. The staff team is suitably vetted and able to deliver high-quality services. Arrangements for recruitment and appraisals are robust.

Leaders and managers regularly monitor the quality of assessment, care and help provided. They use learning from practice and feedback to improve assessments and the experiences of and support for children and parents. This includes the views of children and parents, staff, placing authorities, professionals and other stakeholders, including the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass) and the courts.

Leaders and managers learn from ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of assessments practice, complaints, staff feedback, placement breakdowns and breakdowns, and any serious events. They identify strengths and areas for improvement and use this information to improve practice and improve outcomes for the experiences and care of children and parents. Any breaches of the minimum standards (MNS) are not directly impact on the safety or welfare of children.

Action is taken to address all issues of concern, including concerns or complaints raised by children, parents, staff, professionals and stakeholders. Placing and local authorities are engaged as necessary. Effective actions have been taken to address all requirements and recommendations from previous inspections.

Leaders and managers ensure that assessment plans, reports and care plans for individual children and parents comprehensively address their needs, are of high quality and are error-free.

Leaders and staff work proactively and purposefully with other agencies and professionals. They have effective and working relationships to secure the best outcomes for children and parents.

If families are not settling into the centre, leaders and managers take steps to ensure that the assessment process is reviewed with the placing authority and the family. Leaders and managers ensure that staff are able to work with and challenge effectively and take action when they are concerned that placing authorities are not meeting the needs of the children and parents. Leaders and the statutory requirements for looked after children are not met, or when they cannot keep children safe.

Leaders and managers understand the assessment and care plans for children and parents, and drive the achievement of important assessment milestones and ensure that the assessment process is clear, fair and free from bias. They can demonstrate the positive impact that timing of the centre has had on individual children's life chances and stability of relationships.

Managers and staff, including volunteers, receive regular and effective supervision that is focused on children and parents' experiences, needs, assessments and feedback. Supervision is recorded effectively.

Staff and leaders receive effective support and challenge, including through team and management meetings, to ensure that the professional development of staff is effective and that it leads to improvements in practice and outcomes. The emotional impact on staff of the work is recognised and managed using leaders and managers.

Training, development and induction activities are effective. They are focused on ensuring that staff can carry out effective assessments and can meet the specific needs of families at the centre. Activities are evaluated to ensure that they have had a positive impact on the quality of care and help that children and parents receive in their current care. The centre's allocated social assistant models are well understood and consistently practised.

Staff work collaboratively to provide consistency and stability. There are clear responsibilities and accountabilities and staff have a sense of shared ownership of the work of the centre. Staff feel that they are valued and managed and there's other evidence to support this.

Leaders and managers make child-centred decisions about families coming to the centre and about how to improve the safety and stability of the group assessment and take extensive care to account of the likely impact of new families joining the group.

The statement of purpose, which is kept under review, clearly sets out the ethos and objectives of the centre.

Leaders and managers ensure that the physical environment is maintained to a high standard, keep the needs of the families in relation to space and privacy to the minimum, keep the damage to wear and tear to a minimum and repaired.

The registered provider is financially viable and can deliver high-quality assessments, help and support for children and parents.

Case records reflect children's and parent's everyday lives and the work that is carried out with them. The records reflect children's and parent's experiences and the impact of the work on their lives. The records are well-organised and show the understanding that children and parents have about their histories, backgrounds, experiences and their progress through their assessment. The records are accessible to children and parents, including, if they are in care, their foster carers, challenge them or contribute to them as they wish, with appropriate support.

The registered person ensures that notifications of all significant events that relate to the welfare and protection of children placed at the centre are made to the appropriate authorities. The registered person takes the necessary action to keep children safe, to ensure that the child's needs are met and that they are safe and protected.

The culture of the centre is characterised by high expectations and aspirations for all children and parents. The ethos and objectives of the centre are demonstrated in practice.

Leaders and managers regularly review and act on any known risks to children, taking advice and guidance from local partners and agencies.

Requires improvement to good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers is likely to be judged requires improvement to be good if there is evidence of the following:

The characteristics of good leadership and management are not in place. Not all of the NPS are met. Where the centre has been inspected, it has not yet been assessed as good. Leaders and managers are not yet fully effective in their ability to address them or they are less serious and there is capacity to take the necessary action. Any failure to meet the regulations (see compliance) does not affect the safety or welfare of children.

Inadequate

The effectiveness of leaders and managers will be judged inadequate if there is evidence of the following:

The supervisor, progress of the assessment or protection of children and their parents are inadequate, and leaders and managers do not know the strengths and weaknesses of the centre. They have been ineffective in prioritising, challenging and making improvements.

Any failure to meet the regulations places children at risk of harm.

The provider has not taken effective and timely steps to appoint an appropriate, permanent manager within a reasonable timeframe and/or the appointed manager has not registered as soon as possible.

The assessment report is completed by an individual who is not a registered social worker.

Outstanding

The effectiveness of leaders and managers is likely to be judged outstanding if, in addition to meeting the requirements of a good judgement, there is evidence of the following:

Leaders and managers are inspirational, confident, ambitious for children and parents, and influential in changing the lives of those in their care.

The quality of assessment is exceptional. There is clear evidence that leaders and managers have made a difference to the quality of care and help that children have left the centre. They evaluate whether their assessment reports contribute to effective decisions about children's futures.

Leaders and managers create a culture of aspiration and positivity. They have high expectations of their staff to deliver qualitative and evidence-based assessments and care of the children and parents, and powerful capacity to change and improve.

Leaders and managers lead by example. Innovate and generate creative ideas to improve the highest quality assessment, help and support for children and parents.

Leaders and managers know their strengths and weaknesses well and can provide evidence of improvement over a sustained period.

Leaders and managers maintain relationships between the centre and partner agencies that ensure the best possible care, assessment, experiences and futures for children and parents.

External professionals comment positively on the quality of the assessments, which are completed in a timely way.

There are no breaches of the NPS.

Legal context

Under the Education and Inspections Act 2006, Ofsted carries out its work in ways that encourage the services it inspects and regulates to:

- improve
- be sort-focused
- be efficient and effective in the use of resources

Section 50(4) of the Care Standards Act 2000 provides that Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) inspects and reports on children's homes and other establishments and agencies to which Part 2 of that Act applies.

The Care Standards Act 2000 sets out Ofsted's powers to register and inspect children's homes and other establishments and agencies and to take action in the interest of the relevant regulations. Section 62(1) of the Act defines a residential family centre.

When inspecting residential family centres, Ofsted considers the knowledge and understanding gained from previous inspections and the:

- Care Standards Act 2000
- Children Act 1989
- Residential Family Centres Regulations 2002 as amended
- Residential Family Centres, National Minimum Standards (2015)

How inspectors use the national minimum standards

Residential family centres must follow the regulations. If they do not, inspectors identify what action providers must do by setting requirements in compliance or enforcement action.

The Department for Education (DfE) publishes NPS. If providers do not meet these, it may indicate a failure to meet the regulations.

Inspectors consider:

- the impact on children and parents
- how it should influence the judgements and outcome of the inspection, including any enforcement action

A failure to meet a regulation does not automatically lead to a judgement of requires improvement to be good.

Requirements may still be made when providers are judged to be good.

We use 'recommendations' to describe actions we expect providers to take to improve their services. We will take these into account when we inspect.

Notice of inspection

We are centres to provide access to premises, records and space to work. Inspectors may also need to see children and parents in their homes.

Centres do not need to provide files or hard copy where these are already used, although the inspector may ask for specific reports or documents to be printed.

Request for information at an inspection

At the start of an inspection, the inspector gives the manager a charge sheet (Annex 1) to complete and agree with them when this will be ready.

This information is requested under section 10 of the Care Standards Act 2000. The information requested is proportionate to what inspectors need to know. It may generate supplementary lines of enquiry.

Providers can download Annex 1 and keep it updated ready for their full inspection. They can use this to the inspector electronically during the inspection. Some of the information may be in a form that the inspector can't use, for example, a PDF.

The inspector will also provide a letter, which is for the provider/manager to send back to Ofsted with some of the centre. It provides contact details of the inspector(s) should staff need to contact them during the inspection.

Scheduling and the inspection team

Frequency of inspection

We expect residential family centres at least once in every 3 year inspection cycle as set out in the Ofsted's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) inspection and regulation of Children's Homes, Children's Care Homes and Residential Family Centres (2015).

We operate a rolling 3 year programme of inspection for each residential family centre. We will visit at least once in every 3 year inspection cycle. Inspections will normally last each 3 year window, and centre will usually be inspected in the 2 years after the following inspection. We will usually give the 2 years and longer on the 1 April in the year following its last inspection. For example, a centre inspected between April 2012 and March 2015, a new 3 year cycle begins on 1 April 2016.

Scheduling

The scheduling of inspections takes account of:

- previous inspection findings
- complaints and concerns about the service
- questionnaire responses from parents, social workers and other stakeholders
- Ofsted's duties
- the contents of monitoring reports given to Ofsted by residential family centres under regulations 23, 24 and 26 of the Residential Family Centres Regulations 2002 as amended

Generally, we inspect new residential family centres within 12 months from registration and within 6 months of a change of manager. We may inspect more frequently if we have provider. Following this inspection, the centre is not required to accounts for rating 3 year inspection programme (see Frequency of inspection section).

Inspectors may visit a centre at any time to monitor compliance with requirements and notices that Ofsted has made. However, in certain circumstances, for example, if Ofsted is taking enforcement action, it may be important for continuity purposes to retain the same inspectors until the enforcement action has finished.

Length of inspection

For a full inspection of a residential family centre, an inspector usually spends a maximum of 2 days on site, spread over 3 days.

The inspector and the regulatory inspection manager (RIM) should decide how best to allocate resources for inspections. If necessary, the RIM should agree to either the inspector spending additional days on site or additional inspectors being deployed on the inspection.

Inspectors should determine whether:

- the amount of time on site should be reduced, such as when only a very small number of assessments have been carried out since the previous inspection
- additional resources, such as more inspectors or more time, or both, should be deployed because of larger centres, or when there are specific issues, such as a serious incident, to consider

Deferrals

We will grant deferrals in line with our criteria.

Timeframe

Timeframe for an inspection from planning to publication of the report.

Day	Inspection activity
1	Preparation
2	Visit one
3	Visit one
4	Report writing
5	Inspector evidence and report submitted for quality assurance
6	Draft report sent to the registered provider for very comments within a maximum of 14 working days from the inspection
7	Provider returns the report with the factual accuracy with very comments
8	Final report sent to the registered provider within 28 working days of the visit to Ofsted inspection
9	The final report is sent to the relevant parties 5 working days after the issue of the final report
10	Report is published on the Ofsted website within 2 working days of receiving the final report from the provider

Preparing for an inspection

Analysis and planning

Inspectors are allocated one day to prepare for a full inspection. They should use the time to review the information held by Ofsted and to make sure fieldwork is focused and effective in collecting hard evidence.

Inspectors will look at the information that Ofsted already holds about the agency, including:

- previous inspection reports
- complaints and questionnaires from parents, staff, social workers and commissioners and partner agencies
- the centre's statement of purpose
- the centre's annual complaints record
- notifications of significant events
- reports of monthly visits received under regulation 25
- quality assurance reports received under regulation 26
- the centre's annual report, including the change of manager or the responsible individual
- any enforcement activity that has happened since the last inspection

Some of this information is drawn together in the provider information report (PIR).

The inspector should always familiarise themselves with relevant background and contextual information, such as the most recent inspection report and the previous inspection report.

If we have received information that indicates potential non-compliance with regulatory requirements, we may use the information as a trigger for a focused inspection. The inspector usually outlines the concern to the registered person(s) or person in charge at the start of the inspection. In some cases, it may be more appropriate or practical and not aggravate to share the information about a concern. In cases where the allegation is about the registered person or person in charge themselves, or where there is a risk of immediate harm, we recommend an investigation being carried out by another agency, such as the police.

The inspector analyses the evidence and information and records their planning notes on the inspection database.

The plan for the inspection should identify:

- areas of enquiry
- any areas of apparent evidence or significant changes
- areas where further evidence needs to be gathered

The focus of the inspection may change during its course as further evidence emerges.

Questionnaires

Each year, Children access questionnaires to gather a range of views about different types of setting. Where relevant, this includes the views of:

- children
- children and carers
- staff
- foster carers
- adopters
- social service users
- other interested parties such as placing social workers and independent reviewing officers

We send links to the questionnaires annually to each provider/group and ask them to distribute these links on our behalf. The responses are collated by the inspector.

We share responses with the inspector for the service or setting and use them to inform the planning and scheduling the inspection.

If there are no responses for a service or setting, this also forms a line of enquiry for the inspection.

Notifications made under regulation 26 and reports made under regulations 23 and 25

Inspectors must regularly review notifications made under regulation 26, and reports under regulation 23 and 25 reports. Inspectors must focus on both their content and the frequency of their receipt as this may be a monitoring tool for children and parents.

Information from any of these sources may result in:

- further activity, such as requiring the registered manager or provider or other stakeholders
- a focused inspection being rescheduled based on concerns within reports or notifications, or based on a change in the provision of notifications
- lines of enquiry for the next inspection of the residential family centre, including whether the registered manager or provider has demonstrated effective oversight of the care and support of children and parents, and responded to notifications to Ofsted and other parties

Any emerging lines of enquiry that we recorded in the inspection database and inform pre-inspection planning.

Notifications prior inspection 26

Registered persons (providers and managers) must notify Ofsted without delay about specific events and incidents, as set out in regulations.

Providers should always seek advice from their link inspector about individual cases if they are uncertain how to proceed.

If the inspector identifies issues that give them cause for concern about the welfare of children, they may contact the relevant agency who has been involved in the protection of the child.

If notifications are incomplete, the inspector should always ask the provider for more information.

Whenever there are concerns about the welfare of a child or parent, the inspector must consider the information they have received from the local authority, the police, the placing authority and other organisations, such as the foster authority and social workers, to safeguard the child or parent.

Managers and staff should take into account the appropriate parts of the statutory guidance published by Working together to safeguard children.

Regulation 23 of the Residential Family Centre Regulations 2023 requires the placing or local authority, this is managed in Ofsted's system as a notification, to:

The DCS must be notified immediately of the concerns so they can review the situation. This information also informs any forthcoming local authority inspection.

Inspectors monitor closely whether Ofsted is informed of the outcome of any child protection enquiry, in line with regulations and statutory guidance. If this has not been received promptly, the inspector should contact the residential family centre. Inspectors must follow up any failure to notify Ofsted of the outcome.

Reports under regulations 23 and 25

Regulation 23 of the Residential Family Centre Regulations 2023 requires that the provider arrange for a person to visit the residential family centre at least once a month and this may be unannounced. The regulations also require the visitor to complete a report and send it to Ofsted. The report must be sent to Ofsted within 28 days of the visit, before the end of the month following the month of the visit. The requirements apply when there are no children and parents accommodated at the centre.

Regulation 25 of the Residential Family Centre Regulations 2023 requires the registered person to prepare a report at appropriate intervals, reviewing the quality of care provided by the centre.

Providers can submit reports by email to reportsofvisits@ofsted.gov.uk. Reports must include Ofsted's unique reference number (URN) and the date on which the visit occurred or the report.

The on-site inspection

The start of the inspection

During COVID-19 (coronavirus) restrictions, inspectors will usually contact the centre immediately before arriving on site to establish what additional precautions may be necessary for a safe visit. For example, the inspector may contact the provider from their car or phone before arriving.

At the start of an inspection, the inspector confirms their identity by producing their Ofsted identity card. Inspectors may do not need to carry paper copies of Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks.

The inspector always meets with the manager or person in charge at the beginning of the inspection to:

- outline the plan for the inspection and confirm whether it is a full inspection or a monitoring visit
- ask the manager or person the registered manager during the inspection. If the registered manager is unavailable to attend the inspection (and the respondent inspector is also unavailable), the responsible individual should identify a suitable representative
- ask the manager to arrange for other staff members, including those present during a monitoring visit, to be available
- provide the person in charge with the opportunity to share current information or concerns about the centre, including any changes since the last visit. The person in charge needs to be aware of any feedback that has been expressed by the centre
- ensure that Ofsted holds the correct details on the inspection database (so inspector can contact the registered person, the registered manager, the responsible individual, registered provider and responsible individual, any other partners, directors or trustees (see Annex A)
- ask the manager to provide records of the latest qualification of the registered manager or progress made on any qualifications being undertaken
- arrange the appropriate time that verbal feedback will be given and who to receive it. Usually, the inspector will give feedback to the registered manager and responsible person and the representative of the registered provider, additional persons can be linked to the centre may also attend at the discretion of the inspector if agreed in advance

If the inspection has been prompted by an receiving information about a concern or complaint, the inspector should also ask the manager or person in charge if they are aware of the centre the nature of that information. This is so that the manager is fully aware of the concerns. This also provides an opportunity for the manager to provide additional information or evidence that may be relevant to the inspection, if it is appropriate and possible. If the information is from a complainant who has asked for their identity to remain anonymous, then the inspector must take the utmost care to ensure that the person's identity is not revealed.

Case tracking and sampling

Evaluating the experiences and progress of children and parents is a core inspection activity. Progress relates to the way the family is progressing towards the agreed outcomes in their plan, and how well the centre is helping them to achieve these outcomes.

For tracked cases, inspectors take an in-depth look at the quality of the help and protection that individual children and parents have experienced. If a monitoring visit inspectors look at elements of practice within individual cases, usually to follow lines of enquiry.

We take into account individuals' starting points and circumstances during inspections.

Children and parents' varied experiences and progress are, in part, a result of how well the centre's staff understand and meet their needs and how well they do so. Inspectors consider the 'help and protection' and 'leadership and management' judgements in light of what we have learned from this account when reaching judgements in other areas.

Inspectors track the experiences and progress of at most 2 cases in small centres. In larger centres, they look at a greater number of cases.

Inspectors also sample elements of other cases to follow specific lines of enquiry.

The scale of the centre and the nature of any lines of enquiry determine how many cases inspectors track.

Tracked and sampled cases should be selected by the inspector from the case list provided and usually include, where relevant:

- any family that has recently arrived at the centre
- any family whose home is a long way from the centre
- any family that has been accommodated for a short time
- the last court report to a family that has been assessed by the centre

Inspectors also assess, where relevant, the management of a recent incident. This is so that they can understand how the staff team responds to complex and difficult circumstances, and whether the actions and responses are focused on promoting and safeguarding the welfare of children and parents.

Case files are one aspect of children and parents' journeys. Inspectors increase their understanding of children and parents' experiences and progress by using other sources, such as by observing practice and discussions with individuals involved in the case. When tracking the case of a looked-after child, inspectors should consult the independent reviewing officer responsible for reviewing the child's care.

Inspectors examine, discuss and evaluate cases in line with the evaluation criteria. Inspectors look for evidence that the centre has had a positive impact on the experiences and progress of children and parents, and that it knows what difference they are making a difference to children and parents' lives.

The detail of activities carried out and discussions held varies depending on the lines of enquiry for each individual inspection.

Inspectors must record the entries of children, professionals or carers who have been tracked, sampled and/or interviewed as part of an inspection within the evidence base.

Listening and talking to children and parents

Views of children and parents are central to the inspection and provide important evidence for the judgements we make.

Inspectors assess how well the centre consults with children and parents. Children's and parents' views gathered by the centre are taken into account as part of the inspection evidence.

Inspectors always to be meet with children and parents during the inspection. In exceptional circumstances, inspectors may make alternative arrangements to speak to children and parents by telephone or video call. Inspectors should be sensitive to children and parents' differing abilities and situations when deciding how and parents are present, rather than engaging in direct communication with them. This is to ensure that children and parents are not put at risk of harm. Inspectors should always have the opportunity interact with staff and respondents in a manner that is appropriate and sensitive to discuss inspection the inspection as necessary.

Inspectors should consider children and parents' perspectives and activity whenever they can. Opportunities for their views may include:

- asking families to share resources around their accommodation
- holding unannounced meetings (as a general guideline, a meeting should not include more than 3 families)
- holding individual conversations
- spending time with families in their accommodation

Communication methods

Inspectors should bear in mind the limits of verbal consultation with some children, particularly those who are linked to more complex health care needs, and they should take time into account in their evaluation. In these cases, they would expect to see the centre's staff using other methods to gather information about children's experiences and promoting their feedback about the impact of their care.

Inspectors must take into account the specific communication needs of individual children and parents, and the extent to which the centre's staff team and other children's carers who know and understand a particular child or parent well can contribute to a child's or parent's communication. This is unique to the child or parent.

Inspectors can expect the services of an interpreter to join the inspection. This is helpful when the children or parents are fluent in British Sign Language. Inspectors should make the centre aware of the inspection team's need for one 2 weeks before visits provide.

Parents, including those who have limited or no verbal communication, may wish to share their views or a letter to the inspector.

Practice when gathering the views of children

Inspectors demonstrate safe and sensitive practice by:

- letting staff team and where conversations with children and parents are taking place and who is involved
- seeking advice from the SLT and/or the centre's manager
- ensuring staff are aware of the proposed meetings with family members and that children and parents may leave the meeting at any time
- ensuring that children and parents are not pressured into participating they is another other a parent are at risk of harm and/or parents are appropriately informed of the necessary action about their concern

Inspectors respect the privacy and confidentiality of personal information at all times. They always ensure which any decisions about children's involvement in the inspection.

Observing activities

Inspectors can use the centre's scheduled activities as opportunities for observing and following lines of enquiry. These activities could include:

- play and daily care routines for parents and children
- parent and child activities
- meetings with families
- staff meetings or briefings
- family group activity sessions

Inspectors always seek to strike a balance between the time taken to observe an activity and the significance of the activity to be gained.

Gathering views of other professionals

Inspectors consult with professionals to inform the inspection findings. This is usually through a telephone call during the inspection and may not always take place on site. These professionals may include:

- placing representatives of the placing family (social)
- social workers
- independent reviewing officers
- the police
- commissioners from the local authority
- the local authority designated office
- relevant health and education professionals
- the local authority's designated officer and the provider union representatives (if the Residential Family Centre Regulations 2023)

Inspectors ask for the relevant contact details through Annex A.

Inspectors should always take account of professional views and confidentially when talking to stakeholders on the telephone during the inspection.

Discussions with managers and staff

Individual interviews are held with the registered manager/person in charge and a sample of staff. The number of staff interviewed depends on the size of the centre but will include a sample of permanent staff and any agency staff working in the centre at the time of inspection.

If the registered manager is not available, the inspector should ask to interview the responsible individual.

The inspector always aims to interview the responsible individual where:

- there is no registered manager in post
- there are concerns about the quality of assessment, care and support, the management of the centre, staffing arrangements, or the quality of leadership and management of the centre
- evidence indicates that the centre is failing to protect children and parents
- there are concerns about staffing, the premises or resources to manage the provision

The interview with the manager usually covers:

- issues that have arisen from pre-inspection information or early lines of enquiry
- the centre's statement of purpose and how it is implemented in practice (the statement of purpose should be a specific line of enquiry in every inspection)
- discussions about any attachment and/or assessment model that the centre uses, and how it is integrated into the family assessment
- discussions about how the assessments work in practice, including how the centre ensures that they are sufficiently robust to inform the intervention and support plan
- the centre's evidence of how it uses the experiences of families to improve their support and practice
- how the manager has theoretical and professional understanding and approach to working with vulnerable children and parents and assessing parents' capacity to parent and change
- how the manager ensures that the manager ensures that assessments are carried out appropriately to each family
- the manager's knowledge and understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the centre's staff team, how the manager supports and develops the staff team, and how it promotes a culture of continuous improvement
- follow-up progress in response to previous requirements and recommendations the manager and governance of private related supervision the manager receives and goes to staff
- challenge and enquiry about the relationship of the centre with other professionals, including the local authority
- any other evidence they wish to highlight to the inspector

During the inspection, the inspector shares emerging findings about the centre's strengths and weaknesses with a registered person (usually the registered manager) so that they fully understand the issues being identified.

The inspector usually meets with the registered provider and manager at the end of day to share the emerging findings. This is usually by telephone or video call, unless they consider latter in the inspection. The manager has the opportunity to prepare and direct inspectors to any specific information or evidence required.

Shortfalls that could have an immediate impact on the safety of staff, children or parents, or that could be rectified quickly, should be brought to the attention of the staff team as soon as the inspector has identified them.

Inspectors want to establish that the centre's monitoring systems are robust enough to identify strengths and weaknesses in practice.

Inspectors do not spend time routinely counting medication or petty cash, carrying out detailed checks of the premises or undertaking detailed checks of staff files. Inspectors hold large case files to a bare minimum in the interests of efficiency.

Inspectors should be prepared to alter their interview or arrangements if staff have to attend to the needs of families.

Assessing financial viability

The Residential Family Centres Regulations 2023 state that 'the registered provider shall carry on the residential family centre in such manner as is likely to ensure that it is financially viable for the purpose of performing the aims and objectives set out in the statement of purpose'.

Inspectors are only expected to carry out a light-touch 'a assessment of the financial information. If, during a routine inspection, the inspector has concerns about the financial viability of the centre, they may request more information to enable a standard of day-to-day care or services. We should follow recent what happened.

Inspectors should expect to provide only the requesting financial information during an inspection or at any other time.

The financial information Ofsted can request ranges from professionally produced business plans to a collection of accounts (including profit and loss accounts), records and financial forecasts.

Examining records, policies and procedures

Inspectors do not routinely examine all policies and procedures. Inspectors examine documents when they may inform a line of enquiry for that specific inspection.

However, inspectors do usually look at:

- rotas or alternatives
- pre-admission assessments
- court instructions
- requirements from the placing authority
- the statement of purpose and service guide
- completed assessment reports

Inspectors focus on the impact of documents such as risk assessments and how they work in practice, rather than the format. What matters is that they fit the purpose and provide enough information to staff so they can assess, care and support children and parents. Inspectors do not expect to see any particular format or style of risk assessment. Where practicable, Centres could use electronic records if:

- the records meet the requirements of regulation
- there is an opportunity to provide children and parents if they want to share a copy
- staff have access to the information they require to assess, care and support families

Employment records are not maintained at the centre, inspectors should be able to see a list of electronic records that summarises the setting and recruitment checks for staff and carers. Inspectors should be able to see evidence that the centre's staff team provided sufficient information to enable the employer who carried out the staff vetting at the centre are fit to do so and that recruitment and selection arrangements comply with regulations 16 and 17 of the Residential Family Centre Regulations 2023.

Where the provider uses the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) update service to check a DBS certificate, inspectors should be able to see evidence that the centre demonstrates how it manages and records details of any check it carries out. Inspectors should be able to see evidence that the inspector may ask to see a small sample of DBS certificates.

Where members of staff are subject to transfer of undertakings (protection of employment)(TUPE) arrangements, we recognise that the new employer relies on the information from the previous employer. Inspectors should be able to see evidence including documents requesting the information. In this case, we do not expect the new employer to full enough relevant information to make sure staff are suitable. Including the TUPE process, the new employer should request the information. Inspectors should have taken steps to assure themselves that the person is suitable to work in their role. This should include reference to employment records such as appraisals.

The use of surveillance

The inspector should observe how any surveillance or electronic monitoring is used in the centre and how it impacts on children and parents. Inspectors should have reference to regulation 34 of the Residential Family Centres (Independent Regulations) 2023 and the Residential Family Centres (National Minimum Standards, standard 15).

Finding evidence of possible offences

If during the course of the inspection, the inspector thinks that an offence may have been committed, they should contact a social care compliance manager or EPP immediately to discuss whether the inspector (or monitoring visit) should continue or should be stopped.

Further guidance is available in the social care compliance handbook.

Implications of the Equality Act

The Equality Act 2010 came into effect on October 2010. The Act makes it unlawful for an employer to use a potential employee questions about their health or disability before they are offered employment, whether as a contract or a permanent employee.

Social care providers must comply with both the Equality Act and the sector-specific regulations. The Act does not prohibit providers from asking for a full medical, mentally, for the work.

To comply with both laws, providers may give conditional offers of employment to potential employees that are contingent on satisfactory responses to health questions and a satisfactory medical.

There are a number of exemptions to the provisions in the Act. It provides balances that an exemption applies to recruitment of staff. It ensures that a disabled person is not at the harbour.

Inspectors will assess whether providers have a rigorous, recruitment and selling process in place, including ensuring that their employees are mentally and physically fit before they begin work as part of their employment.

How inspectors record the evidence

Inspectors must analyse the information they gather on inspection and use their professional judgement to assess the impact on the experiences and progress of children and other service users.

Inspectors must record sufficient evidence to clear, evaluate and sufficient to support the judgements.

The evidence should tell the story of the experiences and progress of children and their families through their assessment. Evidence should include information about how identify individuals unless it is necessary to protect a child or to support further action. In these instances, inspectors can use initials/first letters.

Inspectors can record direct quotes from children, adult service users and other professionals, if they are relevant and significant.

The record should clearly indicate the source of the evidence (for example, whether the evidence is from observation, a written record or a face-to-face interview). Evidence should be dated, so it is clear when it was gathered. It should also show the interviewee's job title or relationship to the child or family.

Throughout the inspection, inspectors maintain a record of their evidence. Electronic evidence is recorded within the inspection database. Summarised evidence must be sufficient to support the judgements and any recommendations or requirements. Inspectors should be able to show how the evidence they have gathered and judgements are based on and supported by conclusions that stem from the judgements.

After the summarised evidence has been placed in the inspection database, inspectors should review the information to make sure it is consistent and that it tells a story of the centre's work. Inspectors will be expected to review the evidence and judgements and notes they have made during the inspection trigger. This may be necessary, for example, when lapse time or a prolonged absence of the judgement has been recorded.

All handwritten evidence should be legible and dated. Handwritten evidence that has been transcribed into the inspection database should be retained in the original format for scanned and uploaded into the inspection database. It cannot be destroyed at the end of the on-site visit.

Evidence may be overloaded for quality assurance and will be considered in the event of any complaint.

End of the inspection and feedback

The inspection will give feedback of the most findings and provisional judgements. This feedback will usually be given to the responsible individual, as appropriate. Inspectors will also give feedback to children and families if they have met with the inspector. In some circumstances, we may decide that it is more appropriate for the inspection feedback to take place before giving feedback. The day of feedback is counted as the start of the inspection.

The inspector should:

- cover the main findings of the inspection, including both strengths and weaknesses
- clearly communicate the likely judgements
- give the provisional judgements with reference to the relevant SIFs or quality standard where relevant, providing a clear direction for improvement
- use the grade descriptors and the evidence to clearly indicate how the judgements have been made
- confirm when they will issue the report and who will be sent the report for comment.

Inspectors will not provide a written summary of the inspection in written feedback in advance of the inspection report being sent. Providers may choose to take their own notes at feedback.

Making requirements and recommendations

Requirements

Inspectors impose requirements when there has been a breach of a regulation.

When imposing a requirement, the inspector must make sure there is enough evidence to support the breach and be able to show that this is having an impact, or is likely to have an impact, on the health, safety and well-being of children. The inspector will cite and balance evidence from more than one source to support making a requirement.

The requirement should refer to the specific regulation and be detailed enough for the provider to understand what they need to do to meet the law. It should also be clear why and by which time should it meet the law.

In deciding whether to impose a requirement, the inspector must assess the extent of the impact, or potential impact, on the experiences and progress of children and families, and whether the matter could be dealt with more appropriately by making a recommendation.

Inspectors will also consider the requirements when there are significant concerns for the welfare, safety and quality of care for children and parents.

Sometimes, the requirement needs to take action to meet a requirement that they can complete quickly. Inspectors can impose a requirement with a date that is likely to be before the next inspection if they consider it appropriate to do so. The date should be clear of the inspection feedback about the requirement and its deadline is.

Recommendations

Inspectors make recommendations when necessary to improve practice.

In making a recommendation, the inspector should refer to the SIF(s) for residential family centres. They should always give enough detail for the manager in charge to know what they need to do. The relevant part of SIF(s) should be summarised. Inspectors will also make recommendations in relation to other relevant statutory guidance such as:

- Working together to safeguard children
- Statutory guidance for children who live away or on visions from home or care

If, during an inspection, the registered person rectifies a minor administrative error that is not a breach of a regulation or requirement, the inspector may choose to do so. The inspector may not make a requirement or recommendation if it is not proportionate. However, they may refer to it in the leadership and management section of the report.

Where the registered person has failed to comply with a requirement within the timescale set by the inspector, we will consider carefully whether it is necessary to take further enforcement action. We will take into account the impact on children and their parents. Enforcement action may include, but is not limited to, issuing a compliance notice, or a fine.

Where a service has not acted on recommendations made at a previous inspection, the inspector will consider carefully the impact of this on children and parents and may impose a requirement.

Compliance notices and enforcement action

Ofsted's compliance process are set out in the Care Standards Act 2000 and associated regulations. The social care compliance handbook has the details.

We serve a compliance notice following an inspection if:

- we consider this to be the most suitable way to promote the welfare of children or we believe they are at risk of harm
- the registered person has failed to comply with a requirement made at an inspection and we consider this to be the best way to deal with it

Inadequate judgements: next steps

Post-inspection debrief and case reviews

When a centre is judged inadequate for the overall experiences and progress of children, we will carry out a post-inspection debrief and case review. We will carry out these a case review. The timing of the case review should be proportionate to the risk and certainty to take them 8 working days following the inspection.

The inspector and their manager have the post-inspection debrief. It provides an opportunity for them to discuss the inspection and the quality of the evidence, and to consider whether there is any other information that we need to see. The recommendation of further action should be clear, including the scheduling of future inspections and/or compliance action. The social care compliance handbook has detailed information about the compliance and enforcement available and the process for following an enforcement action.

The case review considers the recommended future action and allows the manager to decide what action to take.

Subsequent inspection activity

The timing and outcome of subsequent inspection and monitoring visits are set on a case by case basis. If the concerns are serious, we are likely to return to carry out monitoring visit to check that the manager and responsible person have taken action. We will usually inspect within 6 months of the inspection judgement. A monitoring visit's usually focused on a published report. In exceptional circumstances, RPIs can decide not to publish monitoring reports.

An inspection will take place sooner if:

- further significant concerns arise during the period
- it is necessary to take enforcement measures to safeguard and protect the welfare of children and parents

Any inadequacy's serious and requires immediate action. However, in some cases, the inadequacy will be over time risk, health and safety hazards or other environmental factors. Although serious and high risk to families, they can often be quickly rectified. Inspectors will seek to prioritise how and why the serious inadequacy has occurred.

The inspection report

The report should be succinct and evaluative. Inspectors' analysis must include clear judgements and evidence to support them.

In most instances, each inspection judgement section of the report should be no more than 8 to 10 short paragraphs with each usually only 2 or 3 sentences long. Small settings that have several weaknesses or that have been judged inadequate may need more paragraphs. Inspectors should use their judgement to ensure that the reports are long enough to say what needs to be said and no longer.

Content of the SCCIF report

Section of report	Details
Information about the service	Brief contextual information about the service
Extra sub-judgement of that inspection	The date and sub-judgement of the last inspection
Overall experiences and progress of children and families	A summary of the overall experiences and progress of children and families
Inspection judgements	The judgements made and accompanying text
Areas for improvement	Any recommendations or requirements (statutory relevant)
Information about this inspection	What we inspected and information about the inspection process and feedback
Service details	Information on the provider running the service

Quality assurance and arrangements for publishing the report

The inspector is responsible for the quality of the report. The inspector will check the completed draft report carefully before submitting to their manager for pre-publication quality checks before it is shared with the provider.

Any proposed change of judgement from the provisional judgement given at earlier feedback should be discussed with the inspection team and their manager before feedback. When it is necessary, the inspector must inform the provider of the revised judgements and provide reasons for the changes before the provider receives the draft report.

We will send the draft inspection report to the provider within 8 working days of the end of the inspection.

The provider and their's asking to comment on the draft report, process and findings.

We will consider all comments and we will respond to the comments when we share the final report with the provider. This will be within a maximum of 20 working days after the inspection.

Following the inspection, we will provide inspectors for feedback about the inspection through a post-inspection survey. This is sent to the provider at the same time as when they receive both the draft and final inspection reports. Feedback from providers will be used to improve the quality of inspections.

Conduct during inspections

It is important that inspectors and providers establish and maintain a positive working relationship. Inspectors will be professional and courteous. Both must follow guidance in Ofsted's conduct during inspections policy.

Concerns or complaints about an inspection

Concerns

Most of Ofsted's work is carried out smoothly and without incident. If concerns do arise during an inspection, we will try to resolve them with the provider and their's asking during the inspection visit. The providers an opportunity to resolve the matter before the inspection is completed.

If the provider is unable to resolve the matter with the inspector, they should contact the inspector's RPI further for discussion.

Providers also have another opportunity to raise concerns about the draft inspection report, process and findings when they receive the draft report.

Complaints

If they not been possible to resolve concerns, a formal complaint can be raised under Ofsted's complaints procedure before the final inspection report is published.

If the provider wishes to make a formal complaint, it will have until the end of the fifth working day after receiving the final report to do so.

Monitoring visits

Monitoring visits are carried out according to the general principles of the SCCIF.

Monitoring visits are usually carried out for any of the following reasons:

- to follow up concerns
- following an inadequate inspection
- 16 months compliance with a notice

Timing and frequency

The decision to carry out a monitoring visit is usually taken at a case review. The inspector and their manager will decide when the monitoring visit should be, and how frequent is usually it takes place. Timing and frequency are determined by any plans included in compliance notices and the nature of the concerns.

A compliance notice will set out the actions a provider must take by a certain date to meet the relevant service quality requirements for children's social care providers. This is usually at least 16 months after the inspection.

The inspector will tell the provider that it is the subject of monitoring following enforcement action or an inadequate inspection judgement. Monitoring visits are usually unannounced.

Compliance notices

If we establish a number of actions on a statutory notice, or some multiple statutory notices with different compliance dates, then we schedule follow-up visits at key points or notice to ensure that the provider has met each specified action within the timescales specified.

We will usually inspect within 6 months after the requirement compliance date for each specified action. We will usually inspect within 6 months after the last action. We may schedule the monitoring visit so that we can assess compliance with more than one notice.

We may decide, in exceptional circumstances, not to carry out a follow-up visit to check that the provider has met a specific requirement by a notice. In these cases, we will accept written confirmation that the provider has been the required action, if the inspector is satisfied that it is supported by documentary evidence such as a photograph or a copy of a required procedure.

We make a note on the inspection database of the reasons why it was not necessary to carry out a follow-up visit. We will consider carefully the impact on children and parents from continuing to operate.

Following the monitoring visit, we will send a report detailing the outcome of the visit. We will publish it on our inspection website alongside the children's home inspection report.

Preparing for the monitoring visit

When preparing for a monitoring visit, inspectors take into account:

- the last inspection report
- requirements(s) set out in the last inspection report
- requirements(s) set out in compliance notice
- letters from previous monitoring inspection
- any other information about the provider's inspection
- any action plan provided by the setting
- any other information recorded on the inspection database, such as information from complaints and safeguarding
- any enforcement action that should be monitored (for example, restriction of accommodation)

How inspectors carry out monitoring visits

Where the monitoring visit is carried out following an inadequate judgement, or to monitor a specified action in a compliance notice, it is usual to determine which requirements have been completed. It should:

- determine whether the requirements have been completed, and the impact of any completed requirements on the positive and outcomes for children and families
- identify whether any additional concerns exist
- identify any risks to children and families and how to sustain the changes required
- consider any further action that may need to be taken
- revise the evidence in order to determine whether a new inspection judgement can be made

Where the monitoring visit is to monitor other concerns or issues, it should:

- determine whether the effectiveness of the setting has declined or improved
- determine the impact of any improvement or decline in practice on the welfare and safety of children and families
- set out any further action that may need to be taken

The inspector must clearly refer the registered provider or registered manager when they arrive on site.

The inspector should judge how effective the improvement is and how, by tackling the requirements or issues, the setting has improved the experiences and progress of children and families.

To demonstrate the necessary improvement, providers and managers need to show that their actions have had a significant impact in achieving clear and sustainable progress. Good intentions and an improvement outlook, or a recent change of manager or other staff members, are not in itself evidence of themselves give enough proof of the ability of the provider to sustain improvement.

Finding further concerns during monitoring visits

If it becomes clear that there are further breaches of regulation or failure to take the actions from the last inspection the provider has let other important aspects slip, the inspector should make a judgement about the impact on children, the relevant requirements or recommendations and compliance notices or other enforcement actions such as restriction of accommodation or imposing of conditions.

If the inspector is concerned or unsure about any aspect of the visit, they can contact their RPI or a social care compliance manager.

How inspectors gather evidence in a monitoring visit

The inspectors will usually have effective the provider's actions are to:

- meeting the requirements set at the last inspection
- improving the experiences and progress of children and parents

Evidence should be recorded in the inspection database. The evidence should reflect the areas for improvement that were identified in the inspection report. The section should include evidence of the most significant strengths and weaknesses and any new concerns that the inspector has identified during the monitoring visit. The report. The inspector must decide whether the current evidence is sufficient to make a judgement, or cause for concern in different areas.

Inspectors must decide whether the provider demonstrates its capacity to sustain any improvements to its ready. Inspectors should also decide whether the requirements are having a sustained and substantial impact on all areas of services.

Feedback at the end of the monitoring visit

The inspector provides verbal feedback to the provider at the end of the visit. The inspector must:

- be clear about the evidence base that the judgement of improvement or continued inadequacy is based on
- make clear any more issues to take forward
- ensure that the provider is clear about the outcome of the visit and what the next steps are, including the timescale for any further inspection or monitoring visit
- be clear with the provider when the next steps will be confirmed (the inspector receives further advice)
- explain that the outcome of inspection is published in the report and that it is on the Ofsted website alongside the last report
- ensure that the provider is clear about their rights from the visit feedback, but that the substance of the issues will not change
- ensure that the provider understands that the overall judgement of inadequate has been made and that the provider understands the reasons why the judgement was made (in case, if a new inspection judgement has been made, and by the case and what the new judgement is or why no change to the judgement has been made

The inspector must contact the RPI if they anticipate any difficulties in providing feedback to the provider.

- there has been a change of judgement and what new judgement is and the nature and effectiveness of any improvement
- there has been no change of judgement and either the original concerns remain or new ones have emerged

Monitoring reports

Ofsted will publish all monitoring reports on the inspect website, although RPIs can decide not to publish monitoring reports in exceptional circumstances.

At the beginning of the report, inspectors should provide a concise, clear explanation of the inspection that we mentioned at the visit. This explanation should include and reflect the message given to the registered manager/person in charge when we announced the visit.

The text summary should then state what was not inspected the setting and the reason.

Monitoring reports should outline the significant developments and evidence of progress that has occurred since the last visit. They should clearly evaluate the action taken by the provider to address the requirements and/or other areas for improvement, or not, on the care, experiences and progress of children and any other service users.

The report must:

- set out the reason(s) for and purpose of the visit (for visit to follow an enforcement activity, the letter should clearly set this out. for example, This letter is to inform you of our monitoring inspection of your children's home on [date]. It is an inadequate this progress the home made in addressing these issues, and whether it is a monitoring visit as ... where this relates to compliance notices, there should be a clear summary of the number of notices and an overview of the key concerns)
- outline any significant developments and clearly explain the action the provider has taken to address the requirements and/or other areas
- explain what progress has been made and what remains to be done
- clearly state the impact of continued concerns on children, alongside any action that Ofsted will be taking to notify parents/carers and/or local authorities
- set out clearly what further action is needed
- set out the RPI's judgement on the overall trends or the reasons why the judgement will not be changed, if appropriate.

Inspectors must use clear language to indicate the level of concern, for example, 'It's not has raised serious concerns about care and practice in the setting.'

Inspectors can clearly state that the provider is likely to be subject to further monitoring visits, or that Ofsted will be in touch with the provider to discuss what is included as this may provide any action we are likely to take and be seen to impede the provider's right of appeal, where relevant.

Review of the monitoring report and evidence base

The monitoring visit report and evidence base will be reviewed by the inspector's manager before it is published. The manager should check that the report is clear and that they accurately reflect the improvements made and that the evidence base supports any further enforcement action we may wish to take.

The draft monitoring report is then shared with the provider and finalised using the same process and timescales as a standard inspection report (see: Timeline assurance and arrangements for the report and feedback).

Checks on responsible individuals

The Residential Family Centres Regulations 2002 require residential family centres to have a responsible individual.

A provider must demonstrate to Ofsted that the responsible individual it appoints is able to meet the requirements of regulation. Our inspectors consider the fitness of the responsible individual to work with children, young people and their families in the supervise the management of an establishment or agency.

For further information, see Registering children's social care services that are residential and/or inspected by Ofsted.

Residential family centres with no registered manager

The Care Standards Act 2000 requires anyone who carries on or manages a residential family centre to be registered with Ofsted. It is a criminal offence to operate or manage a residential family centre without registering with Ofsted.

Regulations 27 and 28 of the Residential Family Centres Regulations 2002 require the registered person to notify Ofsted if the manager is to be absent for 28 days or more or if they cease.

Providers must do this at least 28 days before a known absence of the manager and, in an emergency, within one week of the absence.

Any failure to inform notify Ofsted of the absence or change of a manager, or a failure to provide information about the manager, may be a breach of the Care Standards Act 2000 governing and carrying out inspections. For more information, see Registering children's social care services that are residential and/or inspected by Ofsted.

Actions to take depending on the case, but we can instead, by bringing the matter of the absence of a manager to the attention of the provider, RPI, or the local authority leadership and management of the residential family centre. If a provider fails to notify Ofsted of the absence of a manager, we will consider whether we need to take action against the manager. For more information about what regulatory action we can take, you should refer to the social care compliance handbook.

Inspecting residential family centres that have no families living in them

If there are no families living in the centre, the inspector should contact the centre to find out if it is due to accept a family and decide whether a planned inspection should be postponed.

If there are no placements at the time of the inspection and families have been placed in the centre within the last 12 months, it may be possible to use information about their placements as evidence.

Inspectors should take account of the length of time since the last family left and what evidence they are likely to be able to support the inspection judgements.

If a residential family centre does not intend to take placements and will remain closed for a period of time, it should inform Ofsted in writing. Ofsted will then decide whether the centre will be Ofsted's interest to accept a placement.

The condition must be worded on the certificate as follows:

"The residential family centre must notify Ofsted within 28 days if the centre is unfit (families 3 months before a placement commences)."

The text of the inspection report must contain the following statement:

- "The residential family centre has been closed for [Cycle length of time]. The registered provider has indicated that the residential family centre will be fully operational for [cycle length of time] from the date of inspection."

If the centre decides to accept placements, it is required to inform Ofsted of its intention before it does so.

Incomplete inspections

We will apply Ofsted's policy on incomplete inspections where appropriate.

Safeguarding and child protection concerns

If serious issues of concern arise during the inspection, such as a failure to follow child protection procedures or if a child is discovered to be at immediate risk of harm, the inspector must notify the responsible individual (where relevant) or the person in charge as soon as possible. If that may compromise a child or adult's safety, the inspector must ensure that the appropriate authorities are notified immediately.

Inspectors should always follow Ofsted's safeguarding policy.

Inspectors should contact their manager or regional social care compliance inspector if they need advice. The inspector ensures that the referral is made to the relevant local authority children's services and the child's allocated social worker and/or the relevant local authority adults' services and, where appropriate, the vulnerable adult's allocated social worker. You can find further guidance in Safeguarding concerns: guidance for inspectors. If the concerns relate to allegations against staff, they are referred to the designated officer.

Inspectors must ensure that concerns about the safety and welfare of a child are communicated immediately to the DCS for the responsible placing local authority, where this is relevant. A record that this has been done must be kept. The regional Senior HMI should follow up the action that has been taken by the local authority.

The 'Prevent' duty

Extremism is unlikely to be a routine line of enquiry during SCCIF inspections. Inspectors should, however, be alert to signs of risks of extremism, such as literature, posters, videos or DVDs, or regular visitors to the setting where the purpose of their visit is not clear. Initial enquiries about the possibility of extremism must be directed to the manager or person in charge.

Inspectors should note the detail of any relevant concerns or referrals made by the responsible individual and how effective the multi-agency response has been. The DfE has published advice for schools and childcare providers on the 'Prevent' duty.

Inspectors can contact their RIM, who may seek specialist advice. If inspectors are unable to contact their RIM and remain concerned, they should follow Ofsted's safeguarding policy.

Female genital mutilation: the duty to notify police

Since 31 October 2015, when section 74 of the Serious Crime Act 2015 inserted new section 5B into the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003, specified regulated professionals (including social workers) must report to the police any cases of female genital mutilation in girls under 18 that they come across in their work.

The duty applies where the professional either:

- is informed by the girl that an act of female genital mutilation has been carried out on her
- observes physical signs that appear to show an act of female genital mutilation has carried out and has no reason to believe that the act was necessary for the girl's physical or mental health or for purposes connected with labour or birth

If a child discloses information regarding female genital mutilation to an inspector, the inspector should follow Safeguarding concerns: guidance for inspectors.

Reporting concerns about the administration and management of controlled drugs

If inspectors come across concerns or incidents about the safe management of controlled drugs during their normal inspection duties, or receive information through any other source, they should email an outline of the concern and action taken to the social care policy team: socialcare@ofsted.gov.uk.

This action is in addition to any regulatory action or recommendations made as a result of the concern. Referrals should be made even when no requirements or recommendations are to be made. The social care policy team will collate all these referrals and share these with the Care Quality Commission (CQC)'s Controlled Drugs National Group.

The CQC provides detailed information about controlled drugs (examples include morphine, pethidine, methadone and Ritalin).

Use of personal data

As part of our inspection activities under the SCCIF, we may gather personal data that is necessary to help us evaluate children's social care services.

Our personal information charter sets out the standards you can expect from Ofsted when we collect, hold or use personal information, and that we will follow all applicable data protection legislation in how we treat personal information.

Our privacy notice for social care sets out in more detail what data we collect and our powers to do so, what we do with it, how long we keep it for and people's rights under data protection legislation.

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