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Closed consultation

# Consultation: a new judgement within ILACS on the experiences and progress of care leavers

Updated 22 June 2022

**Applies to England**



# About Ofsted

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people and in education and skills for learners of all ages.

## Purpose of and background to the consultation

We developed the [inspection of local authority children's services \(ILACS\) framework](#) in 2017, and implemented it from January 2018. ILACS is the first inspection arrangement for local authority children's services that is a system of inspection rather than a simple programme. The ILACS system includes:

- inspection activities (short and standard inspections) and focused visits
- activities outside inspection – self-evaluation and annual engagement meetings

This distinguishes ILACS from our earlier approach to local authority inspection – the single inspection framework (SIF).

Under the SIF, we made a separate sub-judgement about the experiences of care leavers. For ILACS, we made a conscious decision to include our evaluation of the experiences and progress of care leavers within the same judgement as the experiences and progress of children in care. At the time, we felt that this was the best way to give care leavers a prominent profile within the overall judgement structure for the inspection.

As we approach the second cycle of ILACS standard and short inspections, we have reflected on the strengths of the framework and where it could be strengthened further.

In January 2022, we published ['Ready or not': care leavers' views of preparing to leave care](#). From our research, we found that:

- more than a third of care leavers felt that they left care too early
- many care leavers felt 'alone' or 'isolated' when they left care, and did not know where to get help with their mental health or emotional well-being
- although statutory guidance requires that young people should be introduced to their personal adviser (PA) from age 16, over a quarter of care leavers did not meet their PA until they were 18 or older.
- some care leavers could not trust or rely on the professionals who were helping them to prepare for leaving care
- care leavers were not sufficiently involved enough in plans about their future
- many care leavers had no control over where they lived when they left care, and many felt unsafe
- many care leavers felt unprepared to manage money and some were not aware of what bills they needed to pay, or how to budget; this often led to them getting into debt, losing tenancies or not being able to afford food or travel
- some care leavers said that they did not find out about their rights until they were already in serious difficulties

We have reflected on our research and on how we currently report on the experiences and progress of care leavers. We have also listened to representations from care leavers themselves and feedback from groups who support care leavers. Many leaders in the local authority sector have shown enthusiasm for Ofsted inspections to 'shine a brighter light' on how well care leavers are supported into

adulthood up to the age of 25.

We have concluded that embedding our evaluation of the experiences and progress of care leavers within the wider 'children in care and care leavers' judgement has not maximised the profile of care leavers to the extent that we had intended.

Like children in care, care leavers are a significant cohort. In England, there are more than 80,000 children in care; there are almost 45,000 care leavers aged 17 to 21 years; and local authorities also have responsibilities towards approximately 30,000 care leavers up to the age of 25 years.

The aim of our proposals is to ensure that we give care leavers a clearer profile in our evaluation of the effectiveness of local authority children's services.

Your response will inform the updated arrangements that we aim to introduce from January 2023. The consultation runs from 20 June to 29 July 2022.

We will publish a report on the outcome of the consultation in December 2022.

## Our proposals

We propose to:

- introduce a separate new judgement within ILACS: 'The experiences and progress of care leavers'
- review and update the existing evaluation criteria to ensure that they are relevant and reflect what good looks like for care leavers
- introduce the new judgement after all local authorities have at least one ILACS inspection outcome

## Proposal 1: a new judgement for care leavers

We propose to introduce a separate new judgement within ILACS: 'The experiences and progress of care leavers'. The table below sets out our current and proposed judgement structures.

<b>Current judgement structure</b>	<b>Proposed judgement structure</b>
Overall effectiveness	Overall effectiveness
The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection	The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection
The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers	The experiences and progress of children in care
The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families	The experiences and progress of care leavers  The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families

We will make this judgement using the same 4-point scale as for the other

judgements (outstanding, good, requires improvement to be good and inadequate). The findings from this judgement will inform the overall effectiveness grade.

Inspectors will evaluate the experiences of care leavers and the services they receive using the evaluation criteria as a benchmark. Inspectors will use professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings. A judgement of good will be made if the inspection team concludes that the evidence overall sits most appropriately with a finding of good. This is what we describe as 'best fit'. The overall effectiveness judgement will be derived from findings in each of the 4 other judgement areas. Inspectors will use both evidence and their professional judgement to award the overall effectiveness grade.

## Proposal 2: evaluation criteria

Currently, we have evaluation criteria for a judgement on 'the experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers'. We will separate these evaluation criteria into the separate judgements for 'children in care' and 'care leavers'.

You can read our [current criteria for the 'experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers'](#).

We propose to review the criteria to ensure that we have the right focus on the things that matter most to care leavers. We will:

- update the criteria in light of statutory guidance for local authorities: ['Extending personal adviser support to all care leavers to age 25'](#)
- take account of the government response to [the independent review of children's social care](#)
- review whether we need to change the evaluation criteria for 'the experiences and progress of children in care' and 'the impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families' to align with the updated criteria for care leavers
- take account of feedback during this consultation

## Proposal 3: when we will introduce the new judgement

We propose to introduce the new care leavers judgement in January 2023.

By January 2023, all local authorities will have had at least one ILACS standard or short inspection. By carrying out at least one inspection under the current arrangements, we will have evaluated all local authorities against a consistent framework before making this important change.

We will not introduce the new judgement sooner than January 2023. We want to take the time to carry out a full consultation, review the responses and update our published guidance before we introduce the new judgement.

## Consultation process

We welcome your responses to this consultation. The consultation opened on Monday 20 June and closed on Friday 29 July 2022.

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