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Guidance

Childminder agencies: inspection guidance

Updated 20 January 2023

Applies to England

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Our guiding principle

[Ofsted's corporate strategy](#) sets out our aim to improve lives by raising standards in education and children's social care. We are a force for improvement through the intelligent, responsible and focused use of inspection, regulation and insights.

Conduct during Ofsted inspections

Ofsted's [code of conduct](#) sets out our expectations for both inspectors and childminder agencies. At the start of an inspection, the lead inspector will explain these expectations and will ask childminder agencies to read the code. It is important that inspectors and childminder agencies establish and maintain a professional working relationship based on mutual courtesy and respectful behaviour. This will ensure that inspection and regulation are productive and beneficial for childminder agencies.

When we inspect childminder agencies

Childminder agencies must be inspected by Ofsted. We carry out the first inspection of a newly registered agency within 12 months of the date that it registers its first childminder. Inspections will then take place within 36 months of the first or previous inspection, as set out in the [inspection arrangements](#) published by the Department for Education.

The agency must inform Ofsted once it registers its first childminder. This is so that we can establish when it should have its first and subsequent inspections. The notification should be made online at: [childminder agency: data notification](#).

If we judge a childminder agency to be ineffective at any inspection, we will reinspect it within 6 to 12 months of the date of the inspection.

We may cancel a childminder agency's registration if we judge the agency to be ineffective. This process is set out in our [enforcement policy, along with our other enforcement powers](#). We will consider all available evidence and information about the agency's non-compliance with the regulations, as well as the enforcement options available, before we make a decision. If we set actions for the agency at the inspection, we will list them in the inspection report and follow them up, either at the next inspection or during a regulatory event.

We will try to give childminder agencies the time and opportunity to put matters right, where this is appropriate and in the interests of children. If a registered childminder agency fails to respond to the actions we have set and/or we lose confidence in its ability to make and sustain improvements to meet regulations, we may decide to cancel its registration. We will always consider cancelling a childminder agency's registration if it was judged to be ineffective at its 2 previous inspections and there has been no improvement.

Childminder agencies and the law

A childminder agency is required by law to:

- maintain a statement of purpose that reflects how the agency meets the requirements for registration

- provide an updated statement of purpose within 28 days of making any changes
- ensure a childminder's suitability, including, where appropriate, their capacity to deliver the statutory requirements of the [early years foundation stage \(EYFS\) statutory framework](#) and/or the Childcare Register requirements, as applicable
- ensure the suitability of all those working in the agency, including, where appropriate, their capacity to support and monitor childminders registered with the agency
- support the training and development of childminders
- quality assure the standard of care and education being delivered by the childminders registered by the agency

You can find more information about the [role of childminder agencies in the Department for Education's policy paper](#).

The legal basis for regulation

Ofsted inspects childminder agencies under the [Childcare Act 2006](#) (the Act), as amended by the [Children and Families Act 2014](#). The Act establishes His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills (HMCI) as the authority for regulating childminder agencies in England. It gives HMCI responsibility for registering and inspecting childminder agencies on the Early Years Register and the Childcare Register and for carrying out enforcement action where it appears that legal requirements are not being met.

There are 4 aspects to Ofsted's regulation of childminder agencies. These are:

- registering agencies
- inspecting registered agencies
- checking that agencies meet the legal requirements for registration
- taking enforcement action where an agency does not meet the requirements for registration

The purpose of regulation is to:

- make sure that agencies meet and continue to meet the requirements for registration
- give childminders and parents an expert and independent assessment of how well an agency is performing so that they can make informed choices
- provide information to the Secretary of State for Education and to Parliament
- promote the improvement of agencies and the early years sector as a whole

How childminder agencies will be inspected

Information-sharing

The duty to share specific information between childminder agencies and Ofsted is set out in the [Childcare Act 2006](#) and other regulations. Information-sharing is reciprocal and is necessary to provide both Ofsted and registered childminder agencies with information that will help protect children from harm or neglect.

To prepare for inspections, inspectors require information about the childminders registered with your agency so that they can determine the sample of childminders they will visit and any records they would like to review. An optional [template for providing childminder information](#) is available for agencies to use. Agencies can keep this up to date as childminders are registered or leave, or complete it following notification of the inspection.

When completing the childminder information spreadsheet, you will need to include information on all childminders, both active and resigned, as an inspector may wish to include them in the sample and seek the views of a childminder who has recently left your organisation.

Notification of inspection

We will usually notify you of an inspection by 10am on the Wednesday or Thursday before the site visit on the following week. The notification date is at the discretion of the regional inspection team and depends on different factors, including the size of the childminder agency. The lead inspector will normally telephone the owner or nominated individual of the childminder agency to do this. This will give you and the inspection team time to prepare for the inspection.

During the notification call, the inspector will:

- confirm your registration status and clarify any issues relating to your registration
- make sure you are aware of your statutory duty to inform childminders and parents of the inspection
- give you their contact details
- confirm the length of the inspection
- confirm the size of the inspection team and give you the names of the other inspectors and their responsibilities
- confirm domestic arrangements, such as car-parking arrangements, access to the premises, base rooms for the inspection with space for inspectors to work, and refreshments
- make sure you are clear about the scope of the inspection, reporting arrangements and any other key issues
- provide details about how to access documents related to the inspection online
- ask you to provide the details of any meetings or training sessions that will occur during the inspection
- arrange the initial meeting with the agency's owner or nominated individual
- arrange to hold discussions with key people, including anyone involved in making registration and enforcement decisions about childminders, staff in a quality assurance role, parents and childminders – these may be made by telephone
- refer the agency to Ofsted's code of conduct
- provide an opportunity for you to raise any questions

You will be asked to send the inspector the childminder information spreadsheet, if you are using this, or a list of all childminders (both active and resigned) that the agency has registered so that the inspector can plan the sample visits. This should be provided by 4pm on the day that the agency receives notification of an inspection. It must include:

- the childminder's name, address and postcode
- their date of registration, which register(s) they are on, and their registration end date if applicable
- how many support visits and/or quality assurance visits they have had

- the date of their most recent assurance visit, if applicable
- any quality grading you have given them
- their level(s) of qualifications
- whether any safeguarding concerns or enforcement action have been raised against the childminder
- any attendance at training courses and other events run by or on behalf of your agency

The inspector will also tell you which other records and documents the agency will need to make available before the inspection. These will include:

- an up-to-date statement of purpose
- any concerns and complaints about the agency raised with Ofsted
- any notifications to Ofsted that an offence has been committed by a childminder
- any enforcement activity since the previous inspection
- the content of the agency's website
- any self-evaluation and/or any development plans that the agency has, if these are available electronically
- the agency's previous inspection reports

If we have received information that indicates potential non-compliance with regulatory requirements, the inspector must pursue these as specific areas of inspection focus during the inspection. The lead inspector will inform you of any such concerns at the beginning of the inspection.

Gathering views from childminders

As part of the inspection, the inspector will seek the views of the childminders registered with the agency through an online survey. The inspector will send the link to the agency by email once we have announced the inspection and ask you to distribute this link on our behalf. The agency should send out our survey to all its childminders by 5pm on the day after notification. The responses are submitted directly to Ofsted and shared with inspectors.

If there are no responses for an agency, this will also form an area of focus for the inspection.

Requests for deferral

In most cases, we will only defer or cancel an inspection/visit if you no longer have childminders registered with you. The absence of any of the individuals who make up the registered person (see our [childminder agency registration guidance](#)), managers or staff is not a valid reason for deferral. Inspections that have been prioritised as a result of risk assessment will not normally be deferred.

Any request to defer an inspection should be made during the notification call. This will be considered in line with our [deferral policy](#). We make these decisions on a case-by-case basis.

The inspection

The inspection team

The size of the inspection team and duration of the inspection will depend on the size of the childminder agency being inspected, the geographical area the agency covers and the geographical spread of the childminders. The inspection is likely to last for between 2 and 5 days and have a team of between 3 and 15 inspectors.

The start of the inspection

The lead inspector will hold an initial meeting with your agency's owner or nominated individual. This meeting may take place on site or by telephone.

When meetings are held on site, the inspector will show you their identification and will allow you time to check the identification and contact us to confirm it, should you wish to do so.

When meetings take place by telephone, you can verify an inspector's identity by contacting the Ofsted helpline on 0300 123 1231 and asking for the call to be transferred to the inspector. Please note that during busy periods, waiting times on the helpline can be significant.

During the initial meeting, the lead inspector will:

- clarify the role of the key people involved in the inspection, both in the inspection team and the agency, including the lead inspector and other inspectors, the agency's nominated/lead person, and the arrangements for communication between the inspection team and the agency
- check the accuracy of, or any changes to, the information about the agency, including the structure of the organisation
- discuss the available evidence and the areas of inspection focus – the agency's owner or nominated individual will have the opportunity to clarify the self-evaluation and to provide any new contextual information
- agree the timetable for inspection activities, including meetings and arrangements for joint observations and for completing the visits to a sample of childminders
- make arrangements for providing feedback at the end of the inspection, and ask the agency's owner or nominated individual to attend

Gathering and recording evidence

The detail of the activities carried out and discussions held will depend on the areas of inspection focus for each individual inspection. Inspection activities will be determined by the lead inspector and will usually include:

- discussion with agency leaders and managers
- discussion with agency staff and other key partners, for example training providers or those in contracted roles deployed by the agency to undertake delegated tasks
- visits to a sample of childminders registered with the agency to gather their views about the agency, to check the accuracy of the agency's assessment about the support it provides and the impact of its training, and to see them at work (see [sampling childminders](#) and [what childminders being visited can expect](#))
- observing recruitment and training sessions wherever possible
- accompanying a member of agency staff on a 'support/monitoring' visit to a childminder
- examining relevant records and documents to assess the impact of the agency's

services to childminders and parents; this is likely to include training plans and records, recruitment policies and procedures, case files, and monitoring and quality assessment records

- case tracking of childminders who have recently been recruited or undergone training and assessment by the agency
- reviewing relevant records of the sampled childminders, such as records of support or quality assurance visits
- speaking with parents

Childminder case records

Inspectors will scrutinise the case records for a sample of childminders to be visited to understand how the agency operates. This may be done alongside senior agency staff.

The records may also include the following, although this is not an exhaustive list:

- the registration process carried out for the childminder, including right to work checks
- training and professional development records
- evidence of monitoring/inspection of the childminder by the agency
- the way the agency deals with any complaints and the action it has taken

Sampling childminders

We will visit a sample of the childminders you register. We do this to assess the quality of support being offered.

The lead inspector will determine the size of the sample of childminders to be visited. This will normally be based on the number of childminders registered with the agency.

The sample should include, where possible:

- a childminder assessed by the agency as needing additional support
- a newly recruited childminder
- a childminder who has been registered for more than 6 months
- a selection of childminders operating in different geographical locations
- a childminder who has been the subject of a safeguarding concern
- a childminder who you have taken enforcement action against or cancelled
- a childminder having a quality assurance visit where the inspector can observe the agency staff member

Inspectors will sample sufficient information from childminders to arrive at a judgement about the effectiveness of the agency. During the planning, they will identify which childminders they will include in the sample.

Inspectors will track the experiences and progress of at least 4 children from the childminders sampled. The number may increase or decrease depending on the size of the agency.

If the inspector is concerned about how the agency handles safeguarding concerns, they may increase the sample size.

Inspectors will consider:

- how accurately the agency has assessed the childminder's strengths and weaknesses
- how any support, guidance or training is helping the childminder to comply with the requirements of the EYFS and/or the Childcare Register (if appropriate)
- how any support, guidance, training or monitoring is helping the childminder to improve their practice
- how the agency has tackled weaknesses and underperformance
- if monitoring is sufficiently rigorous to improve childminding practice
- if the agency has disseminated good practice to childminders

What the childminders being visited can expect

Inspectors will spend between an hour and 3 hours with each childminder. They will explain to the childminder that the purpose of the visit is to assess the quality of the support being offered by the agency. The visit is not an inspection and childminders will not receive a judgement or feedback from Ofsted.

Inspectors will observe the childminder's practice to gauge the extent to which children's learning and development are being promoted, how well children are progressing and the effectiveness of care practices. This helps the inspector to assess the effectiveness of the agency's arrangements for assuring the quality of its childminders and the accuracy of the agency's evaluation of quality.

Inspectors will hold a discussion with the childminder to gauge the impact of the agency's support and training on their childminding practice. Inspectors will ask questions about the registration process to understand the childminder's view of the process. Where the agency has provided business support, inspectors will note the extent to which the childminder feels this has benefited their business.

Inspectors will agree with the childminder when to hold this discussion in order to avoid disrupting the children's care. They may agree to hold the discussion by telephone later in the day.

Inspectors must check the childminder's arrangements for safeguarding children and child protection procedures and that they meet with the agency's expectations.

Inspectors will talk with children and the childminder but will take care not to disrupt the childminder's practice and usual routine.

Agency staff, discussions and observations

Inspectors will hold discussions with any of the agency's staff who provide support to the childminders visited as part of the sample. If any quality assurance visits are due to take place, the inspector will arrange, where practicable, to carry out joint observations with the agency staff as part of the sampling childminders. This is to explore how the agency is supporting the childminder's practice and bringing about improvement.

Inspectors may observe your staff while they are working in order to evaluate the quality and impact of the agency's work. This may include inspectors attending any existing groups that meet during the inspection. Observations of a range of sessions/activities could include:

- recruitment/registration visits to childminder applicants
- assessment/monitoring visits of childminders registered with the agency

- training sessions delivered and/or commissioned by the agency
- support meetings run by agency staff
- drop-in sessions at outreach sites (as applicable)

In discussion with agency leaders where practicable, inspectors will choose which, and how many, sessions and activities to visit. They will give agency leaders/managers/the nominated individual the opportunity to carry out joint observations of agency staff.

Observations will enable the inspector to:

- assess the accuracy and quality of the agency's monitoring and evaluation of practice
- discuss the effectiveness of the agency's performance management arrangements and professional development programme for staff
- help the agency manager understand the judgements the inspector team are making about the quality and impact of practice, and how they might be improved

The agency's owner/manager/nominated individual is able to choose whether or not to take part in joint observations. Where a joint observation takes place, the inspector and the owner/manager/nominated individual must discuss their views about the quality of the session/visit. Any differences in the analysis and evaluation of the session/visit should be explored and, where appropriate, used to inform the judgement made.

After a joint observation, the inspector and leader/manager/nominated person should agree how to manage the feedback and when this should take place. The inspector may observe the leader/manager/nominated person giving feedback in order to evaluate the manager's assessment about the quality of practice observed and to observe how they carry out and deliver feedback.

Inspectors can also speak directly to any parents who have asked to speak to them after being notified of the inspection. They can do this by telephone.

Evaluating policies and procedures

Inspectors do not routinely examine all policies and procedures. Inspectors examine documents if they inform an area of inspection focus for that individual inspection. 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 are fit for purpose and provide enough information to childminders so that they can care for the children safely and appropriately.

If the agency uses the [DBS update service](#) to check the status of an individual's DBS certificate, it should be able to demonstrate how it manages and records details of any check it carries out.

If any areas of inspection focus require additional information, then the inspector may ask that a small sample of full personnel records are made available at the inspection visit. These may include:

- DBS records for any agency staff who have direct contact with children
- recruitment records for all agency staff and evidence of how safe recruitment has been carried out for agency staff who do not have direct contact with children
- evidence of how the agency ensures the ongoing suitability of its staff, including systems for performance management
- how the agency's leaders manage the performance of agency staff
- staff qualifications

- evidence that all staff and childminders have been trained to understand the agency's safeguarding policy and procedures and that the training enables them to identify possible signs of abuse and neglect at the earliest opportunity and to respond in a timely and appropriate way
- any records of complaints

Inspectors will want to see evidence of how an agency assesses the ongoing suitability of the childminders that it has registered and how it develops the childminders to help them improve their practice.

Evaluation criteria

Inspectors use their professional judgement to weigh up the evidence they gather. They consider this evidence against the grade criteria to reach fair and reliable judgements that reflect the quality of the agency.

Inspectors will judge whether the childminder agency is effective or not by taking into account three key judgements:

- the effectiveness of the leadership and management of the childminder agency
- the quality of the agency's services
- the impact of the agency's services on the quality of the education and care provided by its childminders

In reaching the overall effectiveness judgement, inspectors must evaluate how well the agency:

- assesses and identifies the quality of childminders registered with it
- improves and/or maintains the effectiveness of childminding provision
- ensures that childminding services contribute positively to children's well-being and progress

Inspectors will consider the following criteria to make judgements, including benchmarks for what 'effective' looks like:

- the evidence and judgements from across the evaluation schedule
- the context in which the agency works, including specialising in placements for particular groups of children
- how the agency helps drive up the quality of childcare in areas of high deprivation
- how the agency improves the quality of weaker childminders, taking account of the length of time that childminders have been registered with it
- the effectiveness of the agency's systems to carry out its role as the regulator of the childminders registered with it
- the seriousness of any failure on the part of the agency to meet regulations and requirements for registration and the potential impact of that failure on childminders registered with the agency and children

Effective

The childminder agency is effective overall if:

- the agency understands its own context well, enabling resources to be targeted appropriately to improve the quality of childminding practice
- the agency provides a good service to childminders, including those who take

- children in areas of deprivation, and the quality is improving strongly
- safeguarding meets requirements and the agency's policies and guidance support childminders well to keep children safe and secure
- the agency's leaders are clear about and fulfil their responsibility as the regulator
- childminders understand the agency's expectations for them to continually improve their practice
- the agency demonstrates that the quality of childminding and children's experiences of the early years are improving as a clear result of its work

Ineffective

The agency is likely to be judged ineffective if:

- any one of the key judgements is ineffective
- there are failures in regulatory requirements, which have a significant impact on the children's safety and well-being and/or learning and development

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the childminder agency

Inspectors must consider:

- how well leaders and managers demonstrate a clear vision and strategic direction for the agency
- how well leaders and managers promote British values and equality and diversity
- the rigour of self-evaluation in measuring the impact of actions taken and in setting challenging targets for improvement
- the effectiveness of the agency's recruitment policies and procedures for checking the suitability of childminders at registration and their continuing suitability to work with young children
- the effectiveness of partnerships with stakeholders and external agencies
- whether systems to monitor the quality of childminding provision and to identify what support is required to improve the provision are robust
- the extent to which leaders and managers take account of parents' and children's views
- the effectiveness of systems for supervision, performance management and continuing professional development of agency staff
- whether arrangements for safeguarding meet requirements

Effective

Leadership and management of the agency are effective if:

- leaders and managers are ambitious for the agency and communicate high expectations to all in the agency. Self-evaluation is thorough and accurate, and the actions taken by the agency to improve the quality of the agency and childminders' services are carefully planned, concerted and effective
- leaders and managers implement robust procedures to support childminders to meet safeguarding and welfare requirements and to ensure that children are safe
- the promotion of British values and equality and diversity can be seen in the agency's policies and practice
- rigorous and precise monitoring enables the agency to have a comprehensive understanding of childminders' strengths and areas for development. Poor

performance is tackled systematically, leading to improvement

- thorough checks and clear recruitment policies ensure the suitability of agency staff and childminders who apply to register and their continuing suitability to work with young children
- the agency works effectively with partners to provide support for childminders to improve their practice
- leaders and managers take account of the views of parents, childminders and children in order to drive improvement
- regular monitoring and professional development support childminders to improve
- performance management and professional development of agency staff are thorough and lead to improvement
- the commitment of leaders and managers to improving the quality of childminding is such that they do not restrict applications to childminders previously judged as good or better
- childminders who consistently fail to meet the agency's standards are de-registered promptly

If the inspector considers that a regulation/requirement is not being met, but there is no impact on the quality of the childminding, the inspector will include this as an area for improvement.

Ineffective

Leadership and management are likely to be ineffective if one or more of the following apply:

- leaders and managers do not monitor the work of the agency staff and/or childminders' practice well enough
- known weaknesses in childminders' practice are not tackled quickly enough, so provision is not improving and/or children's health, safety and well-being are at risk
- leaders and managers are not working effectively with external agencies to meet regulations and ensure that prompt action is taken to protect children and keep them safe from harm
- recruitment processes do not ensure the suitability of agency staff and/or childminders
- professional development does not lead to improvement and, consequently, childminders whose practice is weak remain registered with the agency for too long
- self-evaluation is not accurate. As a result, leaders and managers do not secure improvement and hold an overly high view of the quality of childminding practices
- the agency does not promote British values or equality and diversity, or ensure that childminders registered with it do
- strategies for working with parents and other agencies are weak and parents are not satisfied with the service provided
- arrangements for safeguarding children do not meet statutory requirements, and give serious cause for concern

The quality of the agency's services

Inspectors must consider:

- the quality and accessibility of support, training and guidance to ensure that childminders meet the requirements of the [EYFS statutory framework](#) and/or the requirements of the Childcare Register
- how well support is targeted to help childminders improve their practice

- the breadth and range of services provided to childminders to enable them to improve the quality of their provision
- the effectiveness and accuracy of the agency's assessment of registered childminders' needs and the extent to which support meets these needs
- any observations of training and support work taking place during the inspection period

Effective

The childminder agency's services are effective if:

- the agency has a well-planned programme of training, with high levels of participation, which enables childminders to improve their practice
- the agency supports childminders to meet all statutory requirements by providing high-quality policies and guidance
- childminders are challenged and supported well to improve weaker aspects of their practice through individual programmes of support that develop their knowledge, skills and confidence
- childminders and parents are positive about the services the agency provides and can point to the impact they have had
- belonging to the agency enables childminders to learn from best practice and to work together to improve outcomes for children
- childminders develop knowledge, skills and confidence to improve their practice because of the broad range of events and activities the agency provides

Ineffective

The agency's services are likely to be ineffective if one or more of the following apply:

- childminders are not improving their practice because the agency is failing to provide quality training and/or support
- opportunities for childminders to attend training are not frequent enough and do not lead to improvement in practice
- services provided do not match the needs of the childminders registered
- the agency is slow to tackle weak practice
- lack of clear policies and guidance mean that childminders are not meeting statutory requirements
- childminders and parents are dissatisfied with the agency's services

The impact of the agency's services on the quality of education and care provided by its childminders

Inspectors must consider how well the agency assures itself:

- that children are kept safe at the childminder provision
- of the quality and range of experiences offered to children and opportunities provided for their parents to be involved in their learning
- of the progress made by children in childminder provision registered with the agency, especially in their speech, language development and ability to communicate
- that gaps in achievement between groups of children in the local area, particularly between those who receive government funding and those who do not, are narrowing
- that childminders use any additional funding they receive for children in their care

effectively

- that the quality of provision in childminding is continually improving

Effective

The agency can demonstrate that:

- all childminders registered with it meet safeguarding requirements and, as a result, children are safe and secure
- childminders provide children with a wide range of experiences that are well suited to their development needs
- advice and guidance to parents support children's development needs
- childminders understand how to develop children's skills in communication and language and so meet children's learning and development needs
- childminders assess children's skills and abilities well and plan targeted programmes to help children at risk of falling behind to catch up with their peers
- additional funding is targeted effectively and is making a significant difference to raising the development levels of children with funded places
- training and development provided by the agency have had a positive impact on improving the quality of childminding practices

Ineffective

Services are likely to be ineffective where the agency has not identified and/or tackled weaknesses so that one or more of the following apply:

- not all childminders meet safeguarding requirements and, as a result, children are at risk
- the quality of experiences provided for children is poor and consequently gains in learning and development are too slow
- parents are not engaged with or supported to help their children to develop
- childminders' knowledge of the EYFS is weak, particularly in communication and language
- consequently, children are not making enough progress
- childminders do not assess children's skills and abilities well enough to be able to plan appropriate support to enable children who lag behind to catch up with their peers
- additional funding is not targeted well and/or the agency has no records of how additional funding is spent

Safeguarding and child protection concerns

During the inspection, inspectors share emerging findings about the childminder agency's key strengths and weaknesses with the agency. Shortfalls that could have an immediate impact on the safety of children or another concern that may lead to the agency being judged ineffective should be brought to the immediate attention of the owner or nominated individual.

If serious issues of concern arise during the inspection, for example in relation to the failure of the agency or a childminder registered with the agency to follow child protection procedures, the inspector must notify the agency manager as soon as possible unless to do so might put children at further risk.

Inspectors should always follow [Ofsted's safeguarding policy](#).

Where relevant, the inspector must ensure that the agency deals with the matter appropriately. The inspector will ensure that any referral needed is made to the relevant local authority children's services and, if the concerns relate to allegations against agency staff or childminders, they are referred to the designated officer.

You can find further guidance in [Safeguarding concerns: guidance for inspectors](#).

Reaching final judgements

Inspection activity, including observations, will continue throughout the inspection. Inspectors should avoid giving any impression that they have reached final judgements before the inspection has finished.

The lead inspector must set aside sufficient time towards the end of the inspection to consider the evidence and make the final judgements. They should record final judgement grades and identify the main points for feedback. The lead inspector should also ensure that time is set aside for the final feedback meeting.

On reaching a judgement of ineffective, the lead inspector may consult with the regional duty desk. They should always consult the regional duty desk if:

- there is evidence of any safeguarding issues or child protection concerns
- previous concerns about the agency have not been dealt with in a satisfactory way, including the failure to take satisfactory steps to carry out the actions set at a previous visit
- agency staff show insufficient understanding of their responsibility to meet the requirements
- the last inspection resulted in a judgement of ineffective

End of the inspection and feedback

At the end of the inspection, the lead inspector will give feedback to the agency's nominated/lead person on the main findings and provisional judgements. If the nominated/lead person cannot be present, the inspector should give feedback to the manager as the representative. The lead inspector will usually give feedback on the last day of the inspection, but in some circumstances, they may need extra time to take advice before giving feedback.

Feedback will be consistent with the evidence gathered during the inspection and should cover the agency's strengths and areas for improvement in:

- the quality of leadership and management
- the quality and standards of the services the agency provides
- how effectively the agency assures itself of the quality of the care and education provided by its childminders

The lead inspector will also give feedback on actions to be taken and/or recommendations for improvement.

The lead inspector will provide examples that illustrate the agency's strengths and weaknesses. They will ensure that you are clear about the:

- main findings of the inspection and each of the judgements made
- need for confidentiality until the agency receives a copy of the final inspection report, because the judgements might be amended as a result of quality

assurance

- main points provided orally in the feedback, which will be referred to in the text of the report
- recommendations for improvement and any actions that you need to take if the agency has failed to meet regulatory requirements
- procedures leading to the publication of the report
- post-inspection survey, which the agency is encouraged to complete
- complaints procedure

Inspectors will not provide a written summary of the inspection or written feedback before sending the inspection report. You may choose to take your own notes at the feedback meeting. The inspector will summarise in their evidence base the main points raised at the feedback meeting and the responses to these.

After the inspection

All inspectors are responsible for the quality of their work. The lead inspector must ensure that the inspection is carried out in accordance with the principles of inspections and [our code of conduct](#).

We monitor the quality of inspections through a range of formal processes. This may include another inspector conducting a quality assurance visit during the inspection to monitor the quality of the inspection. The monitoring visit may also be carried out remotely in some circumstances. We may also evaluate the quality of an inspection evidence base. The lead inspector will be responsible for giving team inspectors feedback about the quality of their work and their conduct.

The great majority of our work is carried out smoothly and without incident. If concerns do arise during the inspection, they should be raised with the lead inspector as soon as possible, in order to resolve issues before the inspection is completed. Any concerns raised, and actions taken, will be recorded in the inspection evidence.

Following the quality assurance process, Ofsted will share the report with the registered person or nominated individual of the childminder agency. You will have 5 working days to comment on the draft report, inspection process and findings. We will consider all comments, and we will respond to the comments when we share the final report with you within 30 working days after the inspection.

If it is not possible to resolve concerns during the inspection or through submitting comments in response to the draft report, you may lodge a formal complaint within 5 working days of receiving the final report. The lead inspector will ensure that you know you can make a formal complaint and that [information about how to complain](#) is available. The lead inspector should advise you of the above at the feedback meeting at the close of the inspection.

Use of personal data

As part of our inspection activities, we may gather personal data that is necessary to help us evaluate childminder agencies. 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. We will apply [Ofsted's policy on incomplete inspections](#) where appropriate.

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