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Open consultation

Children and young people's consultation: Inspecting supported accommodation

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Applies to England

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Who we are

Ofsted is the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills. We inspect nurseries, schools and colleges to make sure that children and young people are taught as well as possible. We also inspect children's social care.

What this consultation is about

In April 2024, Ofsted will start inspecting services that are registered to provide supported accommodation for looked-after children and care leavers aged 16 or 17. This is to make sure the services are helping children and keeping them safe.

Supported accommodation can be right for some older children as part of their journey towards adulthood. It is a place where they can live more independently than younger children but still get help when they need it.

Supported accommodation can be a place where a child:

- lives in self-contained accommodation (such as their own flat or bedsit) – this may be on their own, but it may be with their partner or child
- has their own bedroom in accommodation shared with other looked-after children and/or care leavers
- has their own bedroom in accommodation shared with people who may not have been in care
- lives in a private house or flat with someone who supports them (usually known as 'supported lodgings')

More information about the categories of accommodation is in the [guide to the supported accommodation regulations](#).

We'll register providers, rather than individual supported accommodation settings. We'll visit a

sample of a provider's accommodation when we inspect. For smaller providers, this may mean that we visit all, or most, of their accommodation.

We'll inspect providers at least once every 3 years. But we'll go back sooner if necessary, especially when we are worried about children's safety or well-being.

In this consultation, we want to ask what you think about these 3 proposals:

- whether there should be 3 possible outcomes for our first round of inspections
- whether we should give providers 2 days' notice before we come to inspect them
- what effective supported accommodation looks like, and what inspectors should look at during inspections

Proposal 1: 3 inspection outcomes

When we inspect supported accommodation, we will look at:

- children's overall experiences and progress
- how well children are helped and protected
- how effective leaders and managers are

In most of our social care inspections, there are 4 possible outcomes. This is sometimes known as the 4-point scale. We decide whether the provider:

- is outstanding
- is good
- requires improvement to be good
- is inadequate

But for supported accommodation inspections, we are suggesting something different.

We want the outcomes to provide a little more detail. We think this is very important for supported accommodation. It is extremely varied and comes in lots of shapes and sizes. Some providers will be registered for several different categories. So we are proposing the following 3 outcomes:

Consistently strong service delivery leads to typically positive experiences and progress for children. Where improvements are needed, leaders and managers take timely and effective action.

The next inspection will be within approximately 3 years.

Inconsistent quality of service delivery adversely affects children's experiences and limits their progress. Leaders and managers must make improvements.

The next inspection will be within approximately 18 months.

Serious or widespread weaknesses lead to significant concerns about the experiences and progress of children. Leaders and managers must take urgent action to address failings.

The next inspection will be within approximately 6 months.

The 3 outcomes will help us to explain clearly how well a provider is doing.

If a provider is not following the regulations, we will let them know what they need to do. We may visit them again to make sure they are making the changes we have asked for. We can take more serious and urgent action if we think it's necessary to protect children.

We want to know whether you agree or disagree with having these 3 inspection outcomes for the first round of inspections.

Proposal 2: notice of inspection

We want to give providers 2 days' notice of the inspection.

This is the same notice we give to other services that we inspect at the 'provider level', such as fostering and adoption agencies. It means providers will not spend too much time preparing for the inspection. We want to see how providers usually operate.

A short notice period will also mean that inspectors can use their time better when they arrive. For example, we want to speak to as many children as possible when we visit. This notice period would mean that inspectors will be able to arrange to meet children who might not be able to speak to us if we arrive without any notice.

We think 2 days is the right amount. We need to give some notice but not any longer than is absolutely necessary.

We want to know if you agree or disagree with giving 2 days' notice of the inspection.

Proposal 3: Main features of supported accommodation

We want to make sure inspectors look at the things that make the most difference to children's lives. We have made a list of these, based on what other children have told us, and on what researchers have found out.

Please have a look at our suggestions in the [main consultation](#).

Your feedback will help us write the final descriptions for each outcome, for our inspection framework. Inspectors look at the evidence they've written down against these descriptions. This all goes towards deciding the outcome.

We want to know if you agree or disagree that these are the right things to look at. We also want you to tell us if we have missed anything out that you think is important.

We need your help

Your parents or carers or your school or college can help you with the survey.

Please give us your answers by 8 September 2023.

How to do the survey

Please tell us what you think about our ideas for inspecting supported accommodation by taking our online survey.

[Take our online survey](#)

If you have any difficulties using the SmartSurvey tool, please email eyregulatoryandsocialcare@ofsted.gov.uk with the details.

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