

Cookies on GOV.UK

We use some essential cookies to make this website work.

We'd like to set additional cookies to understand how you use GOV.UK, remember your settings and improve government services.

We also use cookies set by other sites to help us deliver content from their services.

[Accept additional cookies](#)

[Reject additional cookies](#)

[View cookies](#)

GOV.UK

▼ Menu

[Home](#) ▾ [Parenting, childcare and children's services](#) ▾ [Safeguarding and social care for children](#)
▾ [Children's social care providers](#) ▾ [Inspection of children's social care providers](#)
▾ [Joint targeted area inspection of the multi-agency response to identification of initial need and risk](#)

[Care Quality](#)

[Commission](#)

[HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services](#)

[Ofsted](#)

Guidance

Joint targeted area inspection of the multi-agency response to identification of initial need and risk

Updated 5 April 2024

Applies to England

Contents

[Scope of the inspection](#)

[Evaluation criteria](#)

[The inspection team](#)

[Overview of the inspection](#)

[Pre-inspection activity](#)

[Week 1: notification, set-up and information request](#)

[Week 2: children's case audits, off-site analysis and creating a fieldwork timetable](#)

[Week 3: inspection team meetings](#)

[Week 3: meetings with senior leaders](#)

[Week 3: gathering and evaluating evidence](#)

[Issues of concern](#)

[Recording evidence](#)

[The letter of findings](#)

[After the inspection](#)

[Conduct, concerns and complaints](#)

[Annex A: local information to support the inspection](#)

[Annex B: what the inspectorates will do if there is an area for priority action](#)

[Annex C: complaints about JTAs](#)



1. This guidance is for inspectors carrying out a joint targeted area inspection (JTAI) of the multi-agency response to the identification of initial need and risk (often referred to as the 'front door') in a local authority area in England. We last updated this guidance in April 2024.

2. These JTAs are carried out by inspectors from:

- Ofsted
- Care Quality Commission (CQC)
- His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS)

3. We carry out JTAs under section 20 of the Children Act 2004. When applying this guidance, inspectors will take appropriate action to comply with their duties under the Equality Act 2010.

4. For guidance on JTAs that look at other topics, see the [joint inspections of local area services collection](#).

Scope of the inspection

5. The agencies within the scope of this inspection are the police, children's social care, education and relevant health services.

6. Inspectors will evaluate:

- how effectively the front doors of individual agencies identify and respond to initial need and risk
- the effectiveness of the multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) (or equivalent)
- how effectively each agency contributes to the multi-agency response, including early decision-making across early help, child in need and child protection

- how effectively the local partnership, through its multi-agency safeguarding arrangements (MASA), monitors, promotes, coordinates and evaluates the work of the statutory partners
- the impact of leaders and managers on practice with children and families in relation to the front door
- the timeliness of this work and the impact of the local area's actions to improve the multi-agency response to children in need of help and protection

7. The scope does not include longer-term interventions with children and families.

8. The inspection will focus on recent practice. This is practice within the last 6 months. The inspection will evaluate how well current practice takes account of relevant history in children's cases.

Evaluation criteria

9. Inspectors will evaluate evidence about the experiences and progress of children against the criteria set out below. The evaluation criteria (EC) numbers are a referencing system used by inspectors when recording their evidence.

EC number	Criteria
EC1	Agencies work effectively together to ensure that children get the right help at the right time.
EC2	Children and their families feel that their views have been heard. This leads to improvements in the help and support that they receive, both individually and through improved design, planning and delivery of services.
EC3	The quality and timeliness of help and support prevent children's needs and risks from escalating.
EC4	Children and their families can access a sufficient range of effective local services (for example, community and voluntary services), including therapeutic help.
EC5	Professionals identify children in need of help and protection. There is a timely and effective response to referrals, including out of normal office hours. Professionals understand how to access assessments and services for children and families and do so appropriately in line with children's level of need.
EC6	Professionals make appropriate referrals, including to children's social care. This leads to children and families receiving effective, proportionate and timely interventions that improve their situation. Referrals are of a high quality and are timely. Professionals respond to them appropriately, proportionately and in a timely way.
EC7	Children receive the right help and protection because of the application of appropriate

thresholds, effective information-sharing and timely intervention.

-
- EC8 Children are protected through effective multi-agency arrangements. Key participants attend multi-agency meetings. These meetings are effective forums for timely information-sharing, planning, decision-making and monitoring. Actions happen within agreed timescales and the help and protection provided meet need and reduce risk.
-
- EC9 The multi-agency response is proportionate to the risks to children and their needs. Children and families experience child protection enquiries that are thorough, focused on the needs of the child, involve the appropriate agencies and lead to timely action that reduces the risk of harm to children.
-
- EC10 Agencies work together to ensure that assessments are child-focused, comprehensive and timely. They include a thorough analysis of a child’s day-to-day experience that identifies strengths and responds to risk. Risks and needs are responded to appropriately.
-
- EC11 Children experience a child-centred approach from all professionals. Practice is based on a good understanding of children’s experiences; their background and identity, including any barriers to them accessing help and support; and their needs and strengths.
-
- EC12 Children and their families benefit from evidence-based approaches that reduce risks and meet their needs.
-
- EC13 Schools have effective systems to identify children in need of help or protection and make timely referrals to early help or children’s social care when appropriate. Children receive support within the school and/or from external agencies, where required and appropriate.
-
- EC14 Schools contribute effectively to a well-coordinated multi-agency response to ensure that children get the right help and protection at the right time.
-
- EC15 Systematic and high-quality management oversight of frontline practice supports child-centred and timely work with children. This leads to effective multi-agency working.
-
- EC16 Leaders and managers understand the experiences of children and families that need help and protection and the prevalence of need and risk in their area. This leads to effective multi-agency action to meet children’s needs and improve the help and support provided to children and their families.
-
- EC17 Leaders and managers provide appropriate support, training and challenge to practitioners so that effective practice can flourish.
-
- EC18 Leaders and managers from all agencies know and understand the quality of practice with children and families at the multi-agency ‘front door’. When they identify issues, they take timely action to make improvements. They use their knowledge to challenge and support practitioners and promote continuous improvement in multi-agency working.
-
- EC19 Roles and responsibilities are well understood. Agencies are effective in their individual

roles and are meeting their responsibilities well. They also work effectively together in the best interests of children.

EC20 There are good systems in place for information-sharing. Professionals are confident and knowledgeable about when to share information to help and protect children.

EC21 Leaders in the local partnership, through the MASA, actively monitor and evaluate the work of the statutory partners effectively. Arrangements for independent scrutiny of the MASA provides assurance about its effectiveness.

EC22 The local partnership, through the MASA, promotes multi-agency learning about the identification, assessment and response to initial need and risk effectively.

The inspection team

10. The inspection team will usually consist of:

- 2 social care inspectors from Ofsted – one will be the lead inspector
- 1 schools inspector from Ofsted
- 2 inspectors from HMICFRS
- 2 inspectors from CQC

11. A Senior His Majesty's Inspector (HMI) from Ofsted will be the quality assurance manager.

12. CQC and HMICFRS may appoint additional quality assurance managers to the team if there are specific circumstances that require additional oversight.

Overview of the inspection

13. The JTAI will follow the structure set out below. The lead inspector will provide a detailed timeline when they notify the leaders in the local area of the inspection.

Activities in week 1

- Inspectors notify the local leaders of the inspection 10 working days before the fieldwork begins. This will usually be on a Monday but may be earlier if there is a bank holiday in week 1 or 2 of the inspection.
- Inspectors request information to support the inspection (this information is set out in [Annex A](#) of this guidance).
- Inspectors and local leaders hold a set-up discussion (inspectors are off site).

- Local agencies share information to support the inspection.
- Inspectors select some children and ask the local agencies to audit the children's experiences.
- Inspectors carry out planning and pre-inspection analysis.

Activities in week 2

- The local area audits children's experiences.
- Local agencies share information to support the inspection.
- Inspectors carry out pre-inspection analysis and review the information set out in [Annex A](#).
- Inspectors work with the local agencies to agree a fieldwork timetable.
- Inspectors may meet virtually with local leaders, staff and stakeholders.

Activities in week 3

- Fieldwork – inspectors gather evidence.
- Inspection findings fed back to the local partnership.

Pre-inspection activity

14. The inspectorates will share with each other an analysis of relevant information they hold about the local area.

15. An inspector from each of the inspectorates will review the information. They will meet to discuss arrangements for the inspection before they notify the local partners of the JTAI.

Week 1: notification, set-up and information request

Notification

16. On day 1 (10 working days before the fieldwork), inspectors will contact the relevant leaders in the local area to notify them of the inspection:

- Ofsted will contact the director of children's services (DCS)

- CQC will notify the integrated care board (ICB) chief executive and executive lead for safeguarding children
- HMICFRS will notify the chief constable and the force liaison officer

17. The Ofsted lead inspector will ask the DCS to notify the chair of the MASA and the person with responsibility for independent scrutiny of the local MASA. The chair of the MASA may be one of the people notified by the inspectorates, as set out in the previous paragraph.

18. Inspectors will ask local leaders to arrange for the information set out in [Annex A](#) to be shared with inspectors. Inspectors will provide a timeline for this to happen.

19. While it is important that we carry out our planned inspections wherever possible, we understand that sometimes there may be reasons why this is not possible. The local safeguarding partnership can request a deferral of the JTAI after they have been notified and before fieldwork starts. The inspectorates will decide whether a deferral should be granted in accordance with [our policy](#).

Set-up discussion

20. Inspectors will arrange a multi-agency set-up discussion with local leaders, including the chair of the MASA and the person responsible for independent scrutiny of the local safeguarding arrangements. This conversation will help the inspectors and local senior leaders to establish a constructive and professional relationship and give them a shared understanding of the starting point of the inspection. It is an opportunity for:

- inspectors and local agencies to discuss the scope and methodology of the inspection, and the practical arrangements for ensuring that the inspection can be carried out smoothly
- local agencies to ask questions about the inspection
- inspectors to ask whether they need to take any steps to ensure the well-being of local staff, including senior leaders, during the inspection. They will ask who to contact if the inspection team needs to pass on any concerns about someone's well-being
- local partners to raise any issues or concerns about the inspection and for inspectors to explain how the local partners can raise any matters during the inspection
- local partners to discuss and/or give us information on potential equalities duties, including reasonable adjustments for individuals

21. Inspectors will ask the local area to identify a link person to help arrange the inspection. The link person should have access to the senior leaders in the agencies and the authority to respond to the lead inspector's requests.

22. Inspectors will ask whether there are any safeguarding incidents that they should be made aware of. This includes significant and current investigations, publication of serious case reviews, rapid reviews or child safeguarding practice reviews, or local issues of high media interest.

Information request (Annex A)

23. [Annex A](#) sets out the information inspectors will request and the timeline for the local agencies to share it. The information includes:

- child-level data, which inspectors will use to select the children whose experiences they will evaluate (inspectors will ask the local agencies to audit the experiences of some of these children)
- case records about the children whose experiences the local agencies have audited
- performance and management information that set out how the local partnership works together

24. Inspectors may ask for additional information not set out in Annex A and may agree to look at additional information provided by the local partnership. The inspector/local agency must demonstrate that the additional information is:

- necessary for an accurate understanding of children's experiences and the effectiveness of the local partnership in relation to the scope of the inspection
- not already available through the request in Annex A

Selecting cases to audit

25. By the end of week 1, inspectors will select at least 5 children and ask the local agencies to audit these children's experiences. Inspectors will use the child-level data set out in [Annex A](#) to select these children.

26. Inspectors will ask for child-level data lists 1 to 5 from [Ofsted's inspections of local authority children's services \(ILACS\)](#). We will ask the local authority to include some additional information in list 1 (see Annex A for more information).

Week 2: children's case audits, off-site analysis and creating a fieldwork timetable

Children's case audits

27. Starting in week 2, the local agencies should audit the experiences of the 5 children that the lead inspector selected at the end of week 1. Inspectors will also ask the agencies to share these children's case records. They will ask the agencies to share the records electronically in week 2, if possible.

28. The local partnership should use its own methods to audit the children's experiences, while taking the scope of the inspection into account. Inspectors will ask the local partners to submit single- and multi-agency evaluations for each child. They will also ask the agencies to provide a summary of themes and learning from their evaluations.

Off-site analysis

29. In week 2, the local agencies should share the performance and management information set out in [Annex A](#). Inspectors will refine their analysis based on the information that the local agencies share.

Off-site meetings with local agencies

30. Inspectors may meet remotely with local leaders, staff and stakeholders to discuss arrangements for the inspection and start gathering evidence in week 2. More information on who inspectors may speak to is set out in the '[Interviews with practitioners, managers and leaders](#)' and '[Meeting with representatives of the MASA, the independent scrutineer and sub-groups](#)' sections.

Creating the fieldwork timetable

31. The Ofsted lead inspector will coordinate the creation of a fieldwork timetable. They will ask the lead inspectors from CQC and HMICFRS to liaise with their respective agencies to help create the timetable. This will include arrangements for meeting with practitioners, managers and leaders to discuss their work. Inspectors will also make arrangements for keep-in-touch (KIT) and feedback meetings to share inspectors' findings.

32. When creating the timetable, the Ofsted lead inspector will:

- consider which activities should be carried out in person and which by phone or video call
- include enough time for inspectors to travel between appointments
- include time for inspectors to review and analyse their evidence, individually and together
- ensure that the timetable is flexible enough to be changed in response to emerging findings
- work with the link person in the local area to ensure that local leaders and practitioners are aware of the timetable and any changes to it

33. Inspectors will meet at the end of week 2 to discuss the plan for the inspection and any matters arising from their off-site analysis.

Week 3: inspection team meetings

34. Inspectors will meet when they arrive on site to review the arrangements for fieldwork.

35. Inspectors will meet regularly during fieldwork to discuss their findings. They may meet as a whole team or in smaller groups to consider findings from a particular part of the inspection scope. At these meetings, inspectors will:

- compare evidence from different inspectors and different parts of the inspection
- consider the impact of leaders, managers and the MASA on practice with children and families
- agree when the team has gathered enough evidence
- agree how best to gather further evidence in the time remaining
- ensure that the lead inspector has the information they need to coordinate the inspection effectively and keep the local agencies informed

36. Inspectors will meet at the end of fieldwork to review all the evidence they have gathered and agree provisional findings. Inspectors will review the evidence against the evaluation criteria and use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings. They will identify any strengths, areas for improvement and areas for priority action.

Week 3: meetings with senior leaders

Initial on-site meeting with senior leaders

37. The lead inspector and a representative from each inspectorate will meet with senior leaders from the local agencies on the first day of fieldwork. At this meeting, attendees will review the matters discussed at the set-up discussion and inspectors will answer any questions the local leaders have.

38. This is also an opportunity for the local agencies to set out their local context. This can include any key strengths or challenges faced by the partnership and known issues of concern or public interest relating to the scope of the JTAI.

Keep-in-touch meetings

39. Inspectors will offer local senior leaders an opportunity to attend KIT meetings. KIT meetings are opportunities for senior leaders to hear emerging findings from the inspection. Leaders can use these meetings to ask questions about the findings and to help the lead inspector identify where further evidence is needed.

40. KIT meetings usually take place on the Wednesday and Thursday of the fieldwork week. They focus on the main findings arising from fieldwork. Inspectors may raise concerns about the help, protection or care of specific children for discussion at the meetings. They may ask the relevant local agencies to respond to these concerns in writing.

41. The lead inspector will chair these meetings. A representative from each inspectorate will usually attend. The lead inspector will ask the relevant local agencies to identify an appropriate senior leader from each agency to attend. Local leaders may bring additional attendees from their agency. They should discuss this with the lead inspector to ensure the meeting can be kept brief and manageable.

42. Attendance at KIT meetings can be in person or by phone or video call. A local agency's attendance at, or absence from, the meetings will not affect the inspection findings.

The feedback meeting

43. At the end of fieldwork, the lead inspector will invite all senior agency leaders, the chair of the MASA and the person responsible for independent scrutiny of the MASA to meet inspectors to hear the provisional findings. The Ofsted lead inspector and at least one inspector from each inspectorate will attend. We will ask the local agencies to keep attendance to a minimum to help keep the discussions manageable and focused. Attendance at the feedback meeting is voluntary and any attendee from the local agencies may leave at any time.

44. We encourage the local agencies to discuss the findings to help them:

- understand the evidence on which the findings are based
- understand any strengths, areas for improvement and areas for priority action
- build on their strengths and inform discussions about improvement

45. The lead inspector will set out the main findings and provide a summary of the evidence that demonstrates the local area's strengths and areas for improvement. The findings shared at this meeting are provisional pending quality assurance after the fieldwork has finished. Local leaders can share inspection findings, in confidence, with others who were not involved in the inspection. This may include their colleagues, family members, medical advisers and/or their wider support group. Leaders should not make the findings public.

46. If there are findings that may lead an inspectorate to take further action (for example, in its role as a regulator), the relevant inspectorate will offer to have a separate discussion with the relevant local agency.

47. Inspectors will set out the procedures for raising any concerns or issues after fieldwork, sharing the draft report for the local partnership to review and publishing the report. Inspectors will also set out the arrangements for making a formal complaint (see Annex C).

Week 3: gathering and evaluating evidence

48. Inspectors will prioritise gathering evidence about direct practice with children and families. They will gather evidence by:

- evaluating the experiences of children through case sampling and observations of practice
- interviewing practitioners, managers, leaders and stakeholders
- evaluating the quality and impact of local multi-agency audits
- meeting with representatives of the MASA and relevant sub-groups
- reviewing documents about the local partnership's work that are relevant to the scope of the inspection

49. When inspectors select the children whose experiences they will evaluate, they will take into account issues specific to the local area that are relevant to the scope of the inspection.

50. Inspectors will gather personal information that is necessary to help them evaluate local services. Our [privacy notices](#) set out what data we collect, what we do with it, how long we keep it for and people's rights under the Data Protection Act 2018.

51. At all times, inspectors will focus on children's experiences and how well practitioners have understood and taken account of their views in assessment, planning and intervention. Inspectors will evaluate how well leaders, managers and representatives of the MASA understand the experiences of children and families. Inspectors will work with leaders and staff constructively and will act with professionalism, courtesy, empathy and respect.

Case audits

52. Inspectors will review the audits of children's cases that they asked the local agencies to carry out in week 2. They will also look at key documents about the local agencies' work with the child.

53. They will ask to meet with the practitioners involved in some of these children's cases during the fieldwork week for a multi-agency discussion about their work.

54. They may also discuss children's experiences individually with the professionals involved with the child. This may include the social worker, health and education professionals and the police.

Case sampling

55. Case sampling (also referred to as 'dip sampling') involves looking at the experiences of a larger number of children. It is not an evaluation of all the support provided to children and their families. Inspectors use sampling to focus on particular aspects of children's experiences with local services. Inspectors use sampling to investigate areas of potentially strong and weak practice that they identify from other evidence gathered on the inspection. Inspectors may sample children's cases alongside practitioners or by looking directly at case records.

56. The lead inspector will select some children's cases for all inspectorates to sample (multi-agency sampling). Inspectors may also carry out single-agency sampling.

57. The lead inspector will decide when the inspection team has evaluated the experiences of a sufficient sample of children to arrive at clear inspection findings.

Observations of practice

58. Inspectors may gather evidence by observing meetings, such as:

- an initial child protection conference
- a strategy discussion/meeting
- a multi-agency panel

59. If meetings relevant to the scope of the inspection are taking place in week 2, inspectors may observe these by video call if possible and appropriate.

Interviews with practitioners, managers and leaders

60. Inspectors will speak to relevant staff during fieldwork (week 3) and may ask to speak to them by phone in week 2 while inspectors are off site. Inspectors will not usually ask to speak to frontline managers and practitioners in week 2.

61. Inspectors will talk to practitioners and/or managers about the children that they are responsible for, the learning and development of professionals, and the support and supervision they receive. They will ask them about their view of any strengths and areas for development relevant to the response to children's initial needs and risks.

62. In most instances, inspectors will want to have private conversations with practitioners and managers and will usually ask to speak with them alone. Practitioners may ask to have a colleague present at this discussion to support them. This should not usually be their direct manager, unless the inspector agrees that this is appropriate. It is the responsibility of both local staff and inspectors to ensure that discussions are not overheard or influenced by others. If the individuals that inspectors want to speak to are not available, they may talk to those who are deputising for them. If a member of staff becomes upset or distressed, inspectors will take a break from the discussion. The inspector will inform those responsible for that person's welfare, the lead inspector and the quality assurance manager. The discussion will resume after the necessary steps have been taken to ensure the person's well-being. If appropriate, inspectors will change the arrangements for the staff member to enable the discussion to continue. There may be exceptional circumstances when we need to consider pausing the inspection. We will consider these on a case-by-case basis according to our [published guidance on pausing inspections](#).

63. Inspectors will usually meet with the service leaders listed below:

- DCS

- head of social care
- the chair of the MASA
- person responsible for independent scrutiny of the MASA
- police head of public protection or child protection and safeguarding
- police lead(s) for the force or constabulary's front door arrangements
- head of safeguarding and/or designated nurse for safeguarding children in the integrated care system

If these individuals are not available, inspectors may talk to those who deputise for them. Where the local area has an alternative service model, inspectors will talk to the local equivalent of these service leaders.

64. Inspectors may speak to stakeholders who provide local services that are relevant to the scope of the inspection, such as providers of commissioned services or voluntary sector organisations. These discussions are to gather information about the effectiveness of the local safeguarding partners; they are not an inspection of the stakeholder.

Meeting with representatives of the MASA, the independent scrutineer and sub-groups

65. Inspectors will speak to representatives of the MASA, including the chair, by phone or video call in the week before fieldwork to find out how they support and enable local arrangements at the front door to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. This includes how well they understand the strengths and areas for development in multi-agency practice and their impact on improvements in the multi-agency response to identification of initial need and risk.

66. Inspectors will meet with the representatives of the MASA and the chair again during fieldwork to share our findings. This will be an opportunity to reflect on our findings and provide further evidence if appropriate.

67. The lead inspector will meet with the person responsible for independent scrutiny of the MASA (the independent scrutineer) before and during fieldwork to inform our understanding of the MASA's effectiveness in relation to the response to identification of initial need and risk.

68. Inspectors may decide to meet with any sub-groups of the MASA that are relevant to the inspection.

Role of the schools HMI

69. The schools HMI will carry out case sampling and contact a sample of schools that have made referrals. They may meet with the relevant strategic leaders, operational and strategic groups, and other stakeholders and services. They will evaluate whether schools contribute effectively to a well-coordinated multi-agency response to ensure that children get the right help and protection at the right time.

Issues of concern

70. Inspectors will notify a senior officer as soon as possible if they identify serious issues of concern during the inspection. Examples of these include a failure to follow child protection procedures or when a child is discovered to be at immediate risk of significant harm.

71. The lead inspector will provide a template for recording issues of concern and discuss the arrangements for managing this information at the set-up discussion. Inspectors will record their concerns on this template and ask the relevant senior officer(s) to provide a written response. The notifying inspector will inform the lead inspector, who will ensure that the response is received through the KIT meetings. The inspector who raised the concern and the lead inspector will evaluate the response and share their evaluation with the senior officer. The lead inspector and senior officer will sign this written record to confirm that they have seen the final version and that the process of review is complete.

Recording evidence

72. Each inspector will maintain a record of the evidence they gather. They should record the source of the evidence and the date and time they gathered it. This includes the date and time of any meetings, discussions and interviews. Each inspectorate will retain its individual inspectors' evidence records in accordance with its retention policies.

73. Inspectors will record evaluative summaries of their evidence in the inspection team's shared evidence record. The summaries will set out the inspector's view about the quality of practice and the difference this makes for children. Two or more inspectors may coordinate their findings and agree for one of them to record an evaluative summary on their behalf. The shared record will include the notes of team meetings and KIT meetings with the local agencies. Ofsted will retain the shared record on behalf of the inspectorates.

74. Inspectors should complete all evidence records by the end of the fieldwork week. This is so an accurate record is available to support report writing and quality assurance.

75. The lead inspector will coordinate completion of the evidence record and will direct inspectors when further evidence is needed. All inspectors should review the shared evidence record regularly and advise the lead inspector when they identify gaps and when the team has gathered enough evidence.

76. When recording information about specific people, inspectors should use case reference numbers, people's initials, dates of birth and job titles/roles. Inspectors should only record people's names in the evidence record when this is necessary to accurately connect related evidence from across the local agencies. Inspectors should delete any names from the evidence record if they are no longer needed.

The letter of findings

77. The lead inspector will write up the inspection findings, drawing on the inspection team's expertise as required. They will set out the findings in a letter addressed to the senior leaders in the local partnership, the chair of the MASA and the independent scrutineer for the MASA.

78. The letter will set out any strengths, areas for improvement and areas for priority action. It will state the services, practice or arrangements that the findings relate to but will not state what action the local partnership should take in response to the findings.

Areas for priority action

79. Inspectors will include an area for priority action if they identify a serious weakness that is placing children at risk of inadequate protection or significant harm. Priority actions may result from particular or localised failings to protect children, as well as systemic failures or deficits. The inspectorates may take action individually after the inspection to respond to the areas for priority action they identified. For further information, see [Annex B](#).

Quality assurance manager

80. A quality assurance manager will be assigned to the inspection to ensure that the inspection guidance, methodology and criteria are applied consistently and correctly and that any concerns raised by the local agencies about the inspection are resolved. They will review the findings in the final letter to ensure that they link clearly to the evidence from the inspection.

Arrangements for publishing findings

81. The quality assurance manager will support the lead inspector throughout the writing process. Senior managers in all inspectorates will review and agree the findings presented in the letter.

82. We will share the draft letter with the DCS and ask them to coordinate a shared review of the factual accuracy of the letter and a response on behalf of the local partnership.

83. Inspectors will share a timeline for writing, reviewing and publishing the letter when they notify the local area of the inspection.

Activity

Deadline

Draft letter sent to local partnership to review factual accuracy

15 working days after

	fieldwork
DCS has 9 working days to coordinate the partnership's comments	24 working days after fieldwork
Final version of the letter sent to the local partnership (pre-publication, under embargo)	31 working days after fieldwork
Letter published	34 working days after fieldwork

After the inspection

Post-inspection feedback survey

84. When we send the final letter of findings to the local partnership, we will ask the DCS to coordinate a response from the partnership to an evaluation questionnaire. The inspectorates will use the feedback to improve future inspections.

Action plan after the inspection

85. The [Children Act 2004 \(Joint Area Reviews\) Regulations 2015](#) allow HMCI to require a written statement of proposed action that responds to the findings. Ofsted will decide whether to require a statement of action in consultation with CQC and HMICFRS. We will also decide which agency should lead and which agencies should cooperate in making the statement. We will include this decision in the letter of findings. The local partnership may choose to involve other partners in addition to those identified in the letter.

86. The local partnership must make the statement within 70 working days of receiving the final letter of findings.

87. The inspectorates will review the action plan and write a response to the local partnership. The purpose of the inspectorates' review is to confirm whether the action plan shows that the local agencies have understood the findings. It is the partnership's responsibility to agree the actions that it should take in response to the inspection findings.

Conduct, concerns and complaints

88. All the inspectorates follow the [civil service code](#) and share the principle that inspectors will work with leaders and staff constructively and will act with professionalism, courtesy, empathy and respect. Each inspectorate has further guidance on its conduct and values, which you can find at the links below:

- Ofsted’s [code of conduct](#)
- CQC: [our purpose and role](#)
- HMICFRS: [our purpose, values and objectives](#)

89. Most of our work is carried out smoothly and without incident. If concerns arise during an inspection, the local partnership should raise these with the lead inspector or quality assurance manager as soon as possible, in order to resolve the matter before the inspection is completed. If an issue remains unresolved, the local partnership can contact the quality assurance manager – a senior HMI who is independent of the inspection team – on the working day after the end of fieldwork. This is an opportunity for the local partnership to raise concerns about the inspection process or outcomes informally to try to resolve these concerns at the earliest opportunity. Depending on the nature of the concern, a quality assurance manager from CQC and/or HMICFRS may be a part of any discussion.

90. We will take any concerns seriously. Raising a concern will not affect the inspection findings or how the inspectorates consider the local partnership. If it is not possible to resolve concerns during the inspection or quality assurance process for the report, the local partnership may wish to make a formal complaint. Arrangements for doing this are set out in Annex C.

Annex A: local information to support the inspection

91. This annex sets out the information that inspectors request when they notify the local partnership of the JTAI. It also sets out the arrangements for selecting the children’s cases that inspectors will ask the local agencies to audit. The table below sets out the high-level timeline for sharing this information

Day / time	Activity
Week 1, Monday	All inspectorates request the information set out in Annex A
Week 1, Tuesday, by 5pm	Local authority provides child-level data Local partners provide list of audits (Paragraphs 94 to 96)
Week 1, Wednesday, by 5pm	Ofsted lead inspector selects 30 children from these lists and request further information on them (Paragraphs 97 to 98)
Week 1,	Local partners provide additional information on the 30 children (Paragraph

Thursday, by 5pm	98)
Week 1, Friday, by 12pm	Ofsted lead inspector selects at least 5 children's cases for local partners to audit (Paragraphs 99 to 100)
Week 2, Tuesday, by 5pm	Local partners share case records for the 5 children whose experiences they are auditing (Paragraphs 101 to 105) Local partners share performance and management information (Paragraphs 108 to 109)
Week 2, Thursday, by 5pm	Local agencies share their audits of children's experiences (paragraphs 106 to 107)

92. Inspectors will provide details for accessing an online system that local agencies can use to share information. Ofsted configures and manages this system in line with guidance from the [National Cyber Security Centre](#).

93. Inspectors will gather personal information that is necessary to help them evaluate local services. Our [privacy notices](#) set out what data we collect, what we do with it, how long we keep it for and people's rights under the Data Protection Act 2018.

Week 1: selecting children's cases to audit and evaluate

94. This section sets out the child-level data we use to select the children whose experiences we will ask the local partnership to audit.

95. In week 1, the lead inspector will ask the local authority to share child-level data lists 1 to 5 from [Ofsted's framework for the inspection of local authority children's services](#). For this JTAI, the local authority should also include one additional column of data headed 'Contact outcome' in child-level data list 1.

96. The local partnership should also provide a list of multi-agency audits carried out in the 6 months before the inspection. Inspectors will consider this information when deciding which children's experiences they will ask the local agencies to audit for the inspection.

97. The lead inspector will select 30 children from all the child-level data lists provided. The lead inspector will consider the following when selecting the 30 children:

- age, sex, ethnicity and any disability
- length of time since the last contact/referral
- range of need – early help, children in need and child protection
- who/which agency referred the child to the MASH (or equivalent)

98. The lead inspector will ask the local partnership to provide additional information about these 30 children. The local partnership should answer the following questions about each of the 30 children:

- Is the child known to the police?
- Are the child's parents/carers known to the police?
- Has the child received support from health services other than universal services?

99. By the end of week 1, the lead inspector will select at least 5 children from the 30. They will ask the local partnership to audit these children's cases.

100. The lead inspector may phone the local authority to confirm that the cases selected include multi-agency involvement, and ask the local authority to review the cases on the electronic recording system to ensure this.

Week 2: children's case records

101. The list below sets out the information that inspectors will ask for about the children whose experiences the local agencies have been asked to audit. Whenever possible, the local agencies should share this information electronically in week 2. If this is not possible, the local agencies should liaise with the relevant inspectorate to give them access to this information during fieldwork.

102. The local authority should share:

- the initial referral/contact/notification (where applicable)
- the child's most recent assessment, including an early help assessment
- the strategy or other multi-agency discussion or equivalent
- the section 47 investigation documentation/initial child protection conference minutes
- the latest return-home interview and any subsequent risk assessments (where applicable)
- the minutes of any multi-agency meetings about the child
- a chronology of significant events in the 6 months before the inspection

103. The police force should share:

- incident logs
- crime/non-crime reports
- referral information
- missing children records
- custody records

104. Health services should share:

- assessments of need/risk and action taken
- referrals to the MASH (or local equivalent)

- follow-up with MASH/evidence of feedback
- evidence of information-sharing with and from other health and multi-agency partners
- evidence of health agencies contributions to decision-making, including at meetings (for example, initial child protection conferences)
- evidence of managers supervision/oversight of health practitioners work with the child
- evidence of escalation to multi-agency partners, including children’s social care, when there are professional disagreements about decision making

105. The specific health agencies that help each child will vary. CQC will determine which agencies to request the information from.

Week 2: local partnership audits

106. The local partnership should provide its joint audits – and, if possible, individual agencies’ audits – of children’s experiences 2 working days before fieldwork starts.

107. Inspectors will ask to meet with the practitioners involved in some of these children’s cases during the fieldwork week for a multi-agency discussion about their work.

Week 2: performance and management information

108. In the week before fieldwork takes place, the local partnership should provide the information set out below. Inspectors will use this to understand how members of the local partnership work together.

109. The local partnership should not provide everything that it holds on each subject. The inspectors will want only the area’s best and most recent examples that relate to the scope of this inspection. Inspectors will not review information that they deem to fall outside the scope of the inspection, so the information provided must be relevant.

The local authority

Number	Item	Description
1.1	Local authority organisational structures	Organisational structures showing lines of reporting and accountability
1.2	Management information reports	Management information reports at both a local and agency level
1.3	Threshold criteria	Assessment and threshold criteria for helping families and

protecting children and guidance related to the MASH or equivalent

1.4	Practice audits	Practice audits, including multi-agency audits, over the 12 months before the inspection
1.5	Improvement plans	Improvement/action plans
1.6	Commissioned services	Details of any services in the area that have been commissioned from the community or voluntary sector
1.7	Needs analysis	Needs analysis, strategies and action plans, and any success criteria and analysis of impact
1.8	Strategic meetings	Minutes of strategic multi-agency meetings relating to the front door
1.9	MASH	Terms of reference for the MASH or local equivalent
1.10	Engagement with children	How the local authority seeks feedback from children about the front door and engages them in evaluating and improving services
1.11	Escalation policy	Any policy relating to escalation following disagreement between agencies about decisions made at the front door
1.12	Local protocols	Local protocols for assessment and support (as set out in Working together to safeguard children 2023)

Multi-agency safeguarding arrangements

Number	Item	Description
2.1	MASA structure	Organisational structures showing lines of reporting and accountability
2.2	Management information reports	Management information reports: please inform the lead inspector if these are the same as the reports shared by the individual agencies
2.3	MASA meeting minutes	Minutes of MASA meetings from the 12 months before the inspection (including executive board meetings where applicable)
2.4	Sub-group minutes	Sub-group minutes relevant to the front door
2.5	MASA audits	Practice audits, including multi-agency audits, relevant to the scope of

the inspection

2.6	MASA yearly report	The most recent MASA yearly report setting out the effectiveness of local arrangements
2.7	Reviews	Rapid reviews and practice reviews carried out in the 18 months before the inspection
2.8	Action plans	All relevant action plans, including those following rapid reviews, practice reviews and multi-agency audits
2.9	Engagement with children	Information about how the local partnership seeks feedback from children in relation to the front door and engages them in evaluating and improving services
2.10	Escalation policy	Any policy relating to escalation following disagreement between agencies about decisions made at the front door

The police force

Number	Item	Description
3.1	Police organisational structure	Organisational structures showing lines of reporting and accountability, including police representation in the MASA
3.2	Risk assessment process	Process map relating to the front door
3.3	Learning and development	Details of child protection/safeguarding training that relates to police officers and staff working in the MASH/front door. This should include, where possible, the training materials and the number of officers/staff trained
3.4	Referral document	Child protection referral document
3.5	Minutes on strategic governance	The 3 most recent sets of minutes for any strategic or operational governance meetings relating to the MASH/front door
3.6	Audits and action plans	Copies of any audits (both internal and multi-agency) and action plan(s) relating to the MASH/front door
3.7	Performance management	Performance management information/data relating to the front door, including any qualitative information
3.8	Escalation	Any policy relating to escalation following disagreement between

policy

agencies about decisions made at the front door

Health partners

Number	Item	Description
4.1	ICB/provider organisational structure	Organisational structures of the ICB and provider organisations, showing lines of reporting and accountability, including details of local health commissioning and/or provider services and links between operational and safeguarding teams
4.2	Commissioning arrangements	ICB and provider services, with details of who is providing commissioned services, including school nursing, young people's substance misuse services, contraceptive and sexual health services, child and adolescent mental health services, urgent care units and midwifery (we will provide a template for this information)
4.3	Annual reports	Annual reports from the ICB and provider services' annual reports on safeguarding and child protection
4.4	Audits and action plans	Any commissioner or provider safeguarding audits and action plans relating to the scope of the inspection
4.5	Escalation policy	Any policy relating to escalation following disagreement between agencies about decisions made at the front door
4.6	Referral data	Most recent data on health referrals to the MASH (or equivalent), multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARAC) (where there are children) and multi-agency child exploitation (MACE) meetings.

Annex B: what the inspectorates will do if there is an area for priority action

If an area for priority action is relevant to more than one agency within the scope of the inspection or the MASA

110. The inspectorates will discuss how to coordinate their follow-up with individual agencies (as set out below). We will share the final letter of findings with the government departments before it is published. We may offer the departments a discussion to explain the findings so that they can coordinate any response they may take. The inspectorates will consider whether to carry out a JTAI with the same scope after the local partnership has had sufficient time to respond to the area

for priority action.

If an area for priority action is relevant to the local authority

111. Ofsted will inform the Department for Education (DfE). The DfE may contact the local authority to discuss the findings. Ofsted will also follow the process set out in the [inspection of local authority children's services framework](#), including asking for an action plan.

If an area for priority action is relevant to a health service

112. The CQC inspection team will immediately notify their manager, and a management review meeting will be called. This meeting may be attended by representatives from the regulation team and other key individuals as deemed necessary.

113. At the management review meeting, the inspection team will present the issues, and a decision will be made as to whether regulatory action is required. The regulatory response may include arranging a meeting with providers, organising a further follow-up visit, and/or beginning enforcement activity according to CQC's enforcement policy.

If an area for priority action is relevant to a police force

114. HMICFRS will report the area for priority action as a cause of concern. A cause of concern will always be accompanied by one or more recommendations. HMICFRS will recommend that the force(s) (and sometimes other bodies) make changes to alleviate or eradicate the concern. New and existing causes of concern are tracked through the force monitoring process.

115. There are 2 phases to the monitoring process: scan and engage. A force's progress against a cause of concern is reviewed through the scan stage of the monitoring process. If a force is not responding to a cause of concern, or if it is not succeeding in managing, mitigating or eradicating the cause of concern, it will probably be moved to the engage phase.

116. At this stage, the HMI will meet with the chief constable and police and crime commissioner (or equivalent) to set out the causes of concern and identify actions that need to be taken. Based on these discussions, the chief constable will carry out a root cause analysis and use it to formulate an improvement plan. The level of improvement required to be 'disengaged' will be set out by the HMI. The HMI may also approach other organisations to organise support for the force.

117. HMICFRS may decide to revisit/re-inspect a particular area of activity. This would focus on the cause(s) of concern identified in the initial inspection.

Annex C: complaints about JTAs

118. If concerns arise during an inspection, these should be raised with the lead inspector or quality assurance manager as soon as possible during the inspection. This provides an opportunity to resolve the matter before the inspection is completed.

119. If it has not been possible to resolve concerns, the local partnership can make a complaint. There is a different process for:

- complaints about the inspection process and/or the findings
- complaints about an inspector’s conduct

120. The local partnership can make a complaint from when it receives the final letter of findings (the pre-publication stage) to up to 10 working days after the inspection findings are published.

121. We will not usually withdraw findings that we have already published unless there are exceptional circumstances. The local partnership can ask us to withdraw the letter of findings when it submits its complaint. The request should set out any exceptional circumstances that may be relevant. Ofsted’s National Director (Regulation and Social Care) will decide whether to withdraw the published findings in discussion with the relevant Ofsted Regional Director and the other inspectorates. There may be circumstances when a decision needs to be made urgently and a discussion between the inspectorates is not possible. In these situations, Ofsted’s National Director will make the decision and advise the other inspectorates at the earliest opportunity.

Complaints about the inspection process and/or findings

122. Complaints relating to the inspection arrangements or findings should be submitted to Ofsted through our [complaints form](#). Ofsted will appoint a lead investigator to coordinate an investigation with the other inspectorates. We will follow the timeline set out in the table below.

Milestone	Activity
From receiving the pre-publication report to 10 working days after the report is published	Local partnership submits complaint to Ofsted.
Within 5 working days of complaint being made	Ofsted sends an acknowledgement letter to the complainants, setting out the timeline for considering their complaint. The letter will confirm whether any request to withdraw the report has been agreed. Ofsted shares copies of the complaint with the other inspectorates.
Within 30 working days of complaint being made	The response letter will undergo final checks and sign-off in Ofsted.

Ofsted will share the final response with all inspectorates before sending it to the complainant.

Complaints about inspectors' conduct

123. Complaints about an inspector's conduct should be submitted to the relevant inspectorate. The relevant inspectorate will use its own processes to investigate the complaint.

124. In order to maintain confidentiality, the details of the complaint and the outcome may not be shared across all inspectorates. However, inspectorates must share whether a complaint about an inspector's conduct has been upheld so that any potential implications for the findings can be considered. The inspectorates have agreed the following milestones for keeping each other informed of the complaint progress.

Milestone	Activity
Within 5 working days of complaint being made	<p>Acknowledgement letters will be sent to complainants and will confirm expected response deadlines; the letter will explain which inspectorate will carry out the investigation.</p> <p>All inspectorates will be informed that a complaint has been received.</p>
Within 30 working days of complaint being made	<p>All inspectorates will be informed of whether the complaint has been upheld.</p> <p>The relevant inspectorate will respond to the complainant.</p>

Complaints about inspection process/findings and inspectors' conduct

125. Complaints about both the inspection process/findings and inspectors' conduct will be considered on a case-by-case basis. In some cases, it may be appropriate for queries about inspectors' conduct to be included in a broader complaint investigation. In other cases, for reasons of confidentiality, complaints about conduct might be considered separately.

126. Where this occurs, it is important to consider whether the outcome of an investigation into a complaint about conduct might impact on the robustness of the inspection process itself or the inspection outcomes. The relevant inspectorates will be consulted in all such cases.

[Back to top](#)

Is this page useful?

Yes

No

[Report a problem with this page](#)

Services and information

[Benefits](#)

[Births, death, marriages and care](#)

[Business and self-employed](#)

[Childcare and parenting](#)

[Citizenship and living in the UK](#)

[Crime, justice and the law](#)

[Disabled people](#)

[Driving and transport](#)

[Education and learning](#)

[Employing people](#)

[Environment and countryside](#)

[Housing and local services](#)

[Money and tax](#)

[Passports, travel and living abroad](#)

[Visas and immigration](#)

[Working, jobs and pensions](#)

Government activity

[Departments](#)

[News](#)

[Guidance and regulation](#)

[Research and statistics](#)

[Policy papers and consultations](#)

[Transparency](#)

[How government works](#)

[Get involved](#)

[Help](#) [Privacy](#) [Cookies](#) [Accessibility statement](#) [Contact](#) [Terms and conditions](#)

[Rhestr o Wasanaethau Cymraeg](#) [Government Digital Service](#)

All content is available under the [Open Government Licence v3.0](#), except where otherwise stated





© Crown copyright