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Guidance

Social care common inspection framework (SCCIF): supported accommodation for looked after children and care leavers aged 16 and 17

Updated 5 April 2024

Applies to England

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Introduction

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

- children's homes
- supported accommodation for looked after children and care leavers aged 16 and 17
- secure children's homes
- independent fostering agencies
- boarding schools and residential special schools
- voluntary adoption agencies
- adoption support agencies

- residential family centres
- residential holiday schemes for disabled children
- residential provision in further education colleges

The SCCIF means that:

- we usually apply the same judgement structure across the range of settings listed above
- the experiences and progress of children and other service users, wherever they live or receive help, are central to inspections
- there are key areas of evidence that we usually report on at each inspection

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

Note on language

We have decided to use 'children' rather than 'young people' in published guidance for supported accommodation inspections, mirroring the Department for Education (DfE) regulations. We believe it is important to emphasise that those who are within the scope of the regulations are still legally children and should not be, as the DfE's [Guide to supported accommodation regulations, including quality standards](#) (the Guide) states, 'treated as young adults... it is clear that these young people are still children and must be considered and treated as such' (page 10).

However, we are aware that many 16- and 17-year-olds prefer to be known as young people and we will reflect this during day-to-day inspection activity.

Reference to 'staff' in this guidance includes supported lodgings hosts, as well as agency staff and volunteers. Inspectors will tailor the terminology used on inspection and in reports to the context of each inspection. Wherever possible, we will use the terminology of individual providers.

The inspection principles

Ofsted's [corporate strategy](#) outlines how we will carry out inspection and regulation that are:

- intelligent
- responsible
- focused

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

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

We have reached a general consensus with the main social care stakeholders that social care inspections should focus on the experiences and progress of children. We regularly ask children, and the adults who look after them, what matters most about children's experiences and progress.

Using this to guide us, we focus the criteria for our judgements on the difference that providers are making to children's lives. Adults can only support children well if they're given the time, resources and information they need to do this, so we also take account of the quality of the support that the adults who care for children receive.

To be consistent in our expectations of providers

It is important that professionals and members of the public can compare services that do similar things. We make this possible by being consistent in what we expect from providers.

Whenever possible, we use the same judgement structure and the same evaluation criteria, irrespective of where children live or receive help.

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

To prioritise our work where improvement is needed most

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

However, we always take into account the risk to children of not inspecting as frequently. We use a broad range of information to tell us whether standards are slipping. We are always able to go back to strong providers more quickly if we have concerns.

The focus of inspections

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

- inspectors spend less time looking at policies and procedures and more time looking at the

impact of services on children's lives

- we give the minimum notice of inspection, so that we can see settings as they are on a day-to-day basis, and so that the time providers may spend preparing for inspection is reduced as much as possible
- we have set out as clearly as possible the details of the information required by inspectors to assist their inspection; this will enable providers to produce their best evidence whenever we give notice of inspection

When applying this guidance, inspectors will take appropriate action to comply with Ofsted's duties under the Equality Act 2010.

How inspectors make judgements under the SCCIF

The 3-outcome model

Most inspections under the SCCIF follow the 4-point scale (outstanding, good, requires improvement to be good and inadequate) to make judgements.

For inspections of supported accommodation, however, we use a 3-outcome model. These outcomes reflect the complexity and diversity of supported accommodation. They also allow us to describe what we see and to reliably compare quality across the different categories of services.

The 3 outcomes are:

Outcome 1

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.

Outcome 2

Inconsistent quality of service delivery adversely affects some children's experiences, and this may limit their progress. Leaders and managers must make improvements.

The next inspection will be within approximately 18 months.

Outcome 3

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.

Evaluation criteria

How inspectors use the evaluation criteria

Inspectors use the evaluation criteria as the benchmarks against which to grade and judge performance. The outcome, however, is not derived from a checklist. It is a professional evaluation to:

- assess whether the support for children is effective
- determine what impact that support is having on children's experiences and progress

Failure to meet all the criteria will not automatically lead to a weaker outcome.

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

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

The inspector will decide the outcome by determining where the evidence sits most appropriately with the finding. We call this the 'best fit'.

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

Inspectors will focus on the issues that make the most difference to children's lives. The following evaluation criteria describe the benchmarks of effective practice. They help providers to know what we expect to see during inspections. Inspectors evaluate their evidence against these benchmarks and their evaluation informs the outcome of the inspection.

The overall experiences and progress of children

Children make progress and have a range of positive experiences. They receive help to build trusted and secure relationships with staff or supported lodgings hosts. Staff and hosts know them well, listen to them, spend time with them, protect them and promote their welfare.

Children are actively encouraged to develop and maintain strong, supportive social relationships with friends and, when appropriate, family and previous carers. Children have suitable access to technology to help them keep in touch with family and friends.

Children, including those who communicate non-verbally or for whom English is an additional language, are supported to actively participate in decisions about their lives. They are sensitively helped to understand when it may not be possible to act on their wishes and why other action is taken that is in their best interests.

Children have access to, and are actively encouraged to involve, a suitably skilled and experienced independent advocate and, where appropriate, an independent visitor. Their rights and entitlements are met. Children who are subject to immigration controls have access to appropriate support.

Plans for children, including any plans for moving on, are effective. The support that children receive responds to their changing needs. The provider challenges the placing local authority when they have concerns about the plans for children.

Children know how to complain. The provider's complaints policy is easy to understand and is accessible, including for children who use alternative communication systems or who may not speak English as a first language. Children understand what has happened

as a result of their complaint. Their complaints are treated seriously and responded to clearly. Urgent action is taken and practice and/or services improve accordingly.

Staff are ambitious for children and support children to do well in their education, training or employment.

Irrespective of any disability they may have, children enjoy access to a range of social, educational and recreational opportunities, including activities in the local community, as appropriate. They are supported to engage in faith-based activities if they wish.

Children are supported to develop life skills and their independence in line with their individual needs, while protecting themselves from being in unsafe situations or with unsafe people.

Children are protected from poverty. They are helped to take increasing responsibility for their finances.

Children are in good health, or are being helped to improve their health or to manage lifelong conditions. Their health needs are identified (including their oral, physical, mental and sexual health needs, as appropriate) and addressed. They have access to local health services, including a dentist, when they need them. Arrangements for managing medication or children's health needs are safe and effective and promote independence whenever possible.

Children are able to move into their accommodation in a sensitively and carefully planned way. When they move on, staff promote positive endings and help with building their 'life story'. When endings are unplanned, the welfare and well-being of children remain paramount.

Children are treated with dignity and respect. They experience support that is sensitive and responsive to their identity and family history, including age, disability, faith or belief, sex, gender identity, language, race and sexual orientation.

The support children receive helps them to develop a positive self-view and to overcome any previous experiences of neglect and trauma.

How well children are helped and protected

Staff manage situations well, including managing relationships between children ; they apply clear, consistent boundaries that contribute to children feeling safe.

Children feel protected and settled where they live. Children are able to access support outside of usual office hours, including in an emergency. They are protected or helped to keep themselves safe from harm, including from neglect, abuse, sexual exploitation, homophobia, criminal exploitation, accidents, bullying, radicalisation or other forms of discrimination. There is a strong and proactive response from all those working with children that reduces harm or the risk of harm to them, including self-harm.

Children can identify a trusted adult they can talk to about any concerns. They report that adults listen to them, take their concerns seriously and respond appropriately.

Children have access to specialist help, as required, including support for their mental health.

Children are supported to take risks appropriate to their age or level of understanding. They are encouraged to learn from any incidents when things do not go to plan.

Any risks associated with children offending, misusing drugs or alcohol, self-harming, going missing, being affiliated with gangs, or being sexually or criminally exploited, are known and understood by the adults who look after them. Individual up-to-date risk assessments address any known vulnerabilities for each child effectively and set out what action should

be taken to address the risks. There are plans in place to reduce harm or the risk of harm and there is evidence that these risks are reducing or being managed well, based on children's individual circumstances.

Children who go missing experience well-coordinated responses that reduce the harm or risk of harm to them. Risks are well understood and minimised.

The service is aware of, and implements as appropriate, the requirements of the statutory guidance for children who are missing. It challenges the local authority when an independent return home interview is not offered or arranged by the local authority and takes appropriate steps to escalate concerns. Parents, if it is appropriate, are made aware of incidents when the child has been or is missing.

Children receive help to manage their behaviour and feelings safely. Staff understand the triggers for behaviour.

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

The use of restraint or restrictive practice is extremely rare and by exception. Staff are suitably trained in safe restraint practices. All incidents are recorded, reviewed and monitored. The views of the child are sought and understood.

Conflict management is effective and minimises the need for formal police intervention. It includes the appropriate use of restorative practices that improve relationships and increase children's sense of personal responsibility.

Proactive and effective working relationships with the police help to support and protect children. The provider works with the police to protect children from any unnecessary involvement in the criminal justice system.

Staff understand the risks that using the internet may pose for children, such as bullying, sexual exploitation and radicalisation. The provider has well-developed strategies to support staff in keeping children safe and to support children in learning how to keep themselves safe.

Careful recruitment and regular monitoring of staff and hosts prevent unsuitable people from being recruited and having the opportunity to harm children or to place them at risk. The relevant authorities are informed of any concerns about inappropriate adults.

The recruitment of and training for staff and supported lodgings hosts have a strong focus on keeping children safe. The provider helps prepare staff and hosts for the potential impact of abuse and neglect on the behaviour and needs of children, and for the developing needs of any children placed.

Staff know and follow procedures for responding to concerns about the safety of a child. Any child protection concerns are immediately shared with the placing and/or host local authority as required and a record of that referral is retained.

There is evidence that the provider follows up the outcome of the referral quickly and that appropriate action has been taken to protect the child from further harm. If the provider is not satisfied with the response from either the local authority where the placement is located or the placing authority, it escalates its concerns appropriately. This includes writing to the director of children's services (DCS) in the local authority placing the child.

Allegations or suspicion of harm are shared with the appropriate agencies and are handled fairly, quickly and in accordance with statutory guidance. Children are supported and protected. Both the person making the allegation and the person who is the subject of the allegation receive support. The provider makes sensitive and carefully assessed decisions if a member of staff is subject to an allegation.

Staff have effective links with local authorities, designated officers and other safeguarding agencies. There is good communication about safeguarding issues. Staff have good

relationships with relevant local voluntary sector organisations that may be able to offer specialist support to children in keeping themselves safe.

Accommodation is safe and secure and protects children from harm or the risk of harm. It provides a comfortable, nurturing environment for children, and allows them privacy. All necessary adaptations and equipment are provided.

The quality of accommodation promotes children's sense of belonging and their positive self-esteem. It discourages stigmatisation. The location provides good access to services, including employment, training and education. The location enables children to participate in the local community and to maintain relationships with people who are important to them.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers

The provider is managed effectively and efficiently by a permanent and suitably experienced registered service manager (RSM). Urgent action is taken to address any vacancy of the RSM post.

The service is properly staffed and resourced to meet the needs of children and, where appropriate, supported lodgings hosts. Staff are suitably vetted and qualified and are able to deliver high-quality services to hosts and children. Arrangements for recruitment and appraisals are robust.

Leaders and managers regularly monitor the quality of support provided. They use learning from practice and feedback to improve the experiences of and support for children. This includes, for example, direct testimony from children, hosts, professionals and other stakeholders. They learn from complaints, staff feedback and any serious events. They identify strengths and areas for improvement. They implement clear development plans that continually improve the experiences of children.

Action is taken to address all issues of concern, including any concerns or complaints from

children and local residents. Proper investigations are carried out. Placing and host authorities are engaged as necessary. Effective action has been taken to address all requirements and recommendations from previous inspections. Leaders and managers do all they can to ensure that the accommodation is homely and well maintained.

Leaders and managers ensure that plans for individual children comprehensively address their needs. The service works proactively and positively with other agencies and professionals and, when appropriate, with families and previous carers.

If children are not settling into their accommodation, leaders and managers take steps to ensure that the plan is reviewed with the placing authority to consider what to do next.

Leaders and managers challenge effectively and take action when they are concerned that placing authorities are not making decisions that are in children's best interests; when any statutory requirements relating to looked after children or care leavers are not met, or when they cannot keep children safe.

Leaders and managers understand the plans for the children. They drive the achievement of important milestones, goals and permanence for their futures. Leaders and managers monitor the progress that individual children make and can demonstrate the positive impact that a placement has had on individual children's progress and life chances.

Managers and staff receive regular and effective supervision that is focused on children's experiences, needs, plans and feedback. Supervision is recorded effectively.

Staff and leaders receive effective support and challenge, including through team and management meeting. Professional development for staff and leaders results in the right environment for good practice to thrive.

Training, development and induction activities are effective and are focused on ensuring that the service can meet the specific needs of the children it is responsible for. Activities are evaluated to ensure that they lead to effective practice. Leaders, managers and staff

are up to date with current practice in their specialist area.

Staff work collaboratively to provide consistency and stability. There are clear responsibilities and accountabilities, and staff have a sense of shared ownership about their practice. Staff report that they are well led and managed, and there is other evidence to support this.

Leaders and managers make child-centred decisions when making decisions about children, including considering the needs of other people already living at the accommodation.

The service operates in line with its statement of purpose which, along with the young person's guide, is kept under review and clearly sets out the ethos and objectives of the service. The young person's guide is accessible and easily understood by children, including those who speak English as an additional language.

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

Case records reflect children's lives and the work that is carried out with them. Case records reflect children's achievements and clearly relate to the plans for their futures. The style and clarity of records increase the understanding that children have about their histories, background and experiences. They are able to see them, challenge them or contribute to them as they wish, with appropriate support.

The registered person ensures that notifications of all significant events that relate to the welfare and protection of children placed with the provider's carers are made to the appropriate authorities. The registered person takes the necessary action following the incident to ensure that the child's needs are met and that they are safe and protected.

The culture of the service is characterised by high expectations and aspirations for all children. This is demonstrated in practice.

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

Staff receive regular and effective support that is focused on children's experiences, needs, plans and feedback.

Effective support for hosts contributes to high-quality support for children in supported lodgings.

Staff understand the impact of adverse childhood experiences and apply that understanding to their everyday practice.

Supported accommodation providers recruit staff and hosts who can meet the diverse needs of children.

Legal context

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

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

His Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) is the registration authority for supported accommodation and other establishments and agencies to which Part 2 of that Act applies.

[The Care Standards Act 2000 \(Extension of the Application of Part 2 to Supported Accommodation\) \(England\) Regulations 2022](#) sets out the legal basis to register and inspect supported accommodation and, when necessary, enforce compliance with the Act and the relevant regulations. Regulation 2 defines a supported accommodation service.

When inspecting supported accommodation services, Ofsted considers the knowledge and understanding gained from previous inspections and from the following:

- the [Care Standards Act 2000](#)
- the [Supported Accommodation \(England\) Regulations 2023](#)
- [Guide to supported accommodation regulations, including quality standards](#)
- the [Care Standards Act \(Registration\)\(England\) Regulations 2010](#)

The regulations, the government guide and the SCCIF

Supported accommodation providers must meet the statutory requirements of the regulations. When they do not, inspectors identify clearly what they must do in the form of setting requirements or through enforcement action.

The DfE has published the [Guide to supported accommodation regulations, including quality standards](#) (the Guide). Registered persons must have regard to the Guide in interpreting and meeting the regulations. If providers do not take account of the Guide, this may indicate a failure to meet the regulations.

We will make requirements when regulations are breached and will also make recommendations for improvement.

Inspectors consider:

- the impact on children of any breach of regulations
- how the breach should influence the outcome of the inspection, including any enforcement action

A failure to meet a regulation does not automatically lead to [outcome 2](#) ('inconsistent quality'). We may still make requirements when we give an outcome 1 ('consistently strong').

In making a recommendation, inspectors should refer to the Guide. They should always provide enough detail to ensure that the registered person is clear about what they need to do. The relevant part of the Guide should be summarised, and the page and paragraph number included.

We will use the full range of our enforcement powers when necessary to safeguard children's safety and welfare.

Notice of inspection

The inspection support team (IST) announces the inspection by 9.30 am by telephone and will follow up with an email to the provider. IST will agree arrangements for the lead inspector to speak to the RSM later in the morning.

Although inspectors will not arrive on site until 2 working days after the announcement of the inspection, the inspection effectively starts at the point of announcement. Information gathered before arriving on site will form part of the evidence base.

The email giving notice will set out practical arrangements for the inspection, including the information requirements (as set out in Annex A which will be published shortly).

During the follow-up call from the lead inspector (and other calls between the provider and inspector that may be necessary during the notice period), the provider will be able to discuss and agree plans for the inspection. These may include agreeing the inspection timetable and making arrangements to speak to children, leaders, staff/supported lodgings 'hosts', and other professionals. The lead inspector may also request the provider to supply relevant documents, such as updated policies or statement of purpose.

If the RSM is not available, the nominated individual should confirm who is to be the first point of contact for Ofsted during the inspection. If the RSM is the same person as the nominated individual, the provider should identify who should act as the first point of contact.

Notifying children of the inspection

During the follow-up call, the lead inspector will ask the provider to share with children information about the inspection. This information will be in writing and will include inspector contact details should children wish to contact Ofsted, and a brief survey of children's views that they may wish to complete and share with inspectors. This information should be shared in ways that are most accessible for individual children.

This survey is additional to the [point-in-time survey](#).

Scheduling and the inspection team

Frequency of inspection

We inspect supported accommodation providers at least once in a 3-year inspection window, as set out in the [Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills \(Fees and Frequency of Inspections\) \(Children's Homes etc.\) Regulations 2015](#) as amended.

We operate a rolling 3-year programme of inspection for each supported accommodation provider. This means that, rather than a static 3-year cycle where all providers are inspected within each 3-year window, each provider will usually be inspected in the 3-year period following its individual inspection. The 3-year period begins on the 1 April in the year following its individual inspection. For example, for providers inspected between April 2025 and March 2026, a new 3-year cycle begins on 1 April 2026.

We usually reinspect providers with serious or widespread weaknesses (outcome 3) within 6 months of their previous inspection. We usually return to inspect providers that require improvement within 18 months (outcome 2).

Length of inspection

For an inspection of a supported accommodation provider, 2 inspectors (1 lead inspector (LI) and 1 team inspector (TI)) spend a maximum of 3 days each on site within 1 working week.

Timeframe

Day	Inspection activity
1	Notice given to provider/inspection preparation (LI and TI – full day)
2	Inspection preparation (LI/TI/s)
3	On-site inspection (LI/TI)
4	On-site inspection (LI/TI)
5	On-site inspection; complete evidence gathering/assess findings/provide feedback (LI/TI)
8 to 12	Report-writing; inspection evidence and report submitted for quality assurance (LI)
25	Draft report sent to the registered provider within 18 working days from the end of the inspection. The provider then has up to 5 working days to send in comments on the draft report or submit a formal complaint
30	Provider returns the report with comments or submits a formal complaint within 5 working days
37	Final report sent to the registered provider within 30 working days of the end of the inspection (longer if there has been a complaint)
42	The final report published on the Ofsted reports website 5 days after it is sent to the provider

Figure 1: Ofsted’s post-inspection and complaints procedure



[View this information in an accessible format.](#)

For smaller providers (for example, fewer than 5 group-living premises, or fewer than 10 sole occupancy/supported lodgings premises), it is likely that 1 inspector will carry out the inspection. The time on site should usually be reduced to 2 days, including feedback.

For larger providers (for example, more than 25 premises across more than 1 category of accommodation), the regulatory inspection manager (RIM) may agree to more than 2 inspectors being deployed on the inspection (or, in certain circumstances, to the LI and TI spending more time on site). The RIM and the LI will also consider the geographical spread of provision when making decisions about the deployment of inspectors.

Inspectors will usually share verbal feedback, including the provisional outcome, with the provider on the inspectors' last day on site. Inspectors will usually leave site by 3 pm after giving feedback.

Deferrals

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. A provider may request a deferral of an inspection at the earliest opportunity/start of the inspection. This will be considered in line with our [deferral policy](#). We make these decisions on a case-by-case basis.

Analysis and preparation during the 2-day planning stage

Inspectors are allocated 2 full days to prepare for the on-site inspection. Inspectors use the period before arriving on site to review the information held by Ofsted so that the fieldwork is properly focused and used to best effect in collecting evidence.

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

- the provider's statement of purpose, guide and other documents provided at registration
- any concerns and complaints received
- serious incident notifications
- information provided in Annex A (which will be published shortly), including details of child-level information to inform case-sampling choices
- any changes to registration, including change of manager or the nominated individual
- any post-registration enforcement activity
- point-in-time questionnaire responses

In addition, the inspector takes account of relevant background and context information, such as the most recent inspection of the local authority and any linked service where the service is

situated.

The plan for the on-site inspection should identify:

- lines of enquiry
- any areas of apparent weakness or significant strength
- areas where further evidence needs to be gathered

Discussions with children and professionals do not have to be in person and may be held during the off-site stage of the inspection when necessary or practicable.

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

Questionnaires

Each year, Ofsted uses [online questionnaires](#) to gather a range of views about different types of setting. Where relevant, this includes the views of:

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

We send links to the questionnaires annually to each provider by email and ask them to distribute those links on our behalf. The responses are submitted directly to Ofsted.

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

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

Please note that inspectors also ask providers to share a short survey with children when announcing the inspection.

Notifications and reports made under regulation 27

Inspectors must regularly review notifications and reports under [regulation 27](#). This is important activity. Inspectors must focus on both the content and quality of the reports to ensure that

- there is effective monitoring of the provider
- these activities support improvement in the experiences and progress of children

Information from any of these sources may lead to:

- further activity, such as speaking to the RSM and/or responsible individual or other stakeholders
- inspections being rescheduled, based on either identified concerns within reports and/or notifications, or a failure to submit reports or notifications
- lines of enquiry for the next inspection; emerging lines of enquiry must be noted in the inspection database and inform pre-inspection planning

Notifications

Registered persons (providers and managers) must [notify Ofsted without delay about specific events and incidents](#) as set out in regulation 27 of the [Supported Accommodation \(England\) Regulations 2023](#).

Providers should refer to the online guidance and the Guide. They should seek advice from their link inspector about individual cases if they are uncertain how to proceed.

If the inspector identifies issues that give them cause for concern about the welfare of a child, they should ask for evidence that shows what has been done to help and protect the child.

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

Whenever there are concerns about the safety or welfare of a child, the inspector must contact the RSM. This is so that Ofsted is fully aware of the actions being taken by the providers, the placing authority and other relevant parties, such as the host local authority and the police, to promote and safeguard the welfare of the child.

Managers and staff should take into account the appropriate parts of the statutory guidance outlined in [Working together to safeguard children](#).

If the inspector has any concern about the practice of either the placing or the host local authority, this is managed in line with [Ofsted's safeguarding policy](#).

The DCS must be notified immediately of the concerns so that they can review the situation. This information will also inform planning for any forthcoming local authority inspection.

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

The on-site inspection

At the heart of our inspections is a constructive, respectful and empathetic dialogue between inspectors and providers.

During the planning stage, the inspector and provider will agree where the on-site inspection will start, such as at the head or main office of the registered provider, or at one of the provider's premises where children live.

At the start of the on-site inspection, the inspector/s will confirm their identity by producing their Ofsted inspector authorisation or identification card and identity badge. All inspectors are subject to regular and updated enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks. They do not need to carry paper copies of DBS checks.

The inspector/s will always meet with the RSM/person in charge as soon as possible after arriving on site in order to:

- confirm the timetable
- arrange to interview the RSM during the inspection
- outline any lines of enquiry for the inspection
- give the provider the opportunity to share any current information or personal issues, relating to any of the children, staff or supported lodgings hosts, of which the inspectors need to be aware during the inspection
- arrange the approximate time that the inspectors will give verbal feedback and who is to receive this; they will normally give feedback to the RSM and the nominated individual, as appropriate. Additional senior staff linked to the service may also attend, at the discretion of the inspector/s and RSM
- check the RSM's welfare, and whether any steps need to be taken to ensure their well-being. This should include being clear how to contact who is responsible for their welfare on a day-to-day basis, to be able to pass on welfare concerns when appropriate and necessary
- provide the opportunity to raise any issues, concerns or seek clarification about the inspection and explain how the provider can raise any matters during the inspection itself
- provide an opportunity for the RSM to discuss and/or give us information on potential equalities duties, including reasonable adjustments for individuals

Inspectors will agree a process for keeping managers informed of progress throughout the inspection. This will normally mean regular meetings with managers to enable them to raise concerns or seek clarification. They will inform managers if there is evidence that the service may have serious or widespread weaknesses. The inspector will emphasise that final decisions about the inspection outcome are not made until the feedback meeting at the end of the inspection.

Evaluating the experiences and progress of children

Inspections will focus on the impact of service delivery on children's overall experiences and progress by evaluating the experiences of a representative sample of children that reflect the size

and scope of the provider, and the diversity of the children accommodated. The views of children will be central to inspectors' evaluation.

Inspectors will demonstrate safe and sensitive practice by:

- telling staff where conversations with children are taking place and who is involved
- being sensitive to the fact that some children may not want to be involved in the inspection
- explaining to children that they will not include comments that will identify them in the inspection report or in feedback to staff
- where appropriate, explaining to children that information suggesting that they or another child are at risk of harm will be passed to an appropriate person able to take necessary action about that concern

The extent to which inspectors look at the experiences and progress of individual children will vary, depending on lines of enquiry. Inspectors will evaluate practice relating to a sample of individual children selected from the information supplied by the provider during the notice period. These will usually include, where possible:

- children who have recently moved into their accommodation
- children who live a considerable distance from their local authority
- children who have been living in their accommodation for at least 12 months
- children who will shortly be moving on to new accommodation
- children who have recently left the accommodation

Inspectors will evaluate the support provided for children across all the categories of accommodation provided by the service.

We take into account individual children's starting points and circumstances during inspections. We recognise that even slight progress in a particular aspect of their lives may represent a significant improvement for some children. We also recognise that for some children, because of their experiences of trauma, abuse or neglect, progress is not always straightforward. Progress in one area may result in deterioration in another as they work through the impact of their past experiences.

Listening and talking to children

The views of children provide important evidence of their experiences and progress.

Inspectors assess how well the provider consults with children. As part of the inspection evidence, inspectors take into account children's views gathered by the provider.

Inspectors always try to meet with children during the inspection. Inspectors may use a variety of arrangements to speak to children, such as telephone calls and video calls, as well as visits to see children where they live. Where necessary, inspectors will make sure that they are able to hear the views of children who speak English as an additional language or who use alternative means of communication.

We will ask the provider to share a brief survey with relevant children. This will provide an opportunity for children to share their views on the support they receive, and it will include the contact details of the lead inspector, should they wish to speak to Ofsted.

Inspectors will always seek the consent of children to meet with them and will also make it clear that speaking to inspectors is entirely voluntary.

Visiting premises

Inspectors will always visit an appropriate range of premises to assess the quality of children's accommodation, including the suitability of their locations. When inspecting very small providers, this may mean that inspectors visit all, or nearly all, premises operated by the provider. Decisions about visits to premises will depend on the inspection lines of enquiry. Inspectors will always visit a sample of premises across all categories operated by the provider.

Inspectors will always seek the consent of children and, for supported lodgings provision, supported lodgings hosts before finalising arrangements to visit them in their homes.

Gathering views of other professionals

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

- placing social workers/personal advisers
- independent reviewing officers
- the virtual school headteacher
- school/college staff
- local police
- designated officer/s
- children's advocates

Inspectors ask providers for the relevant contact details.

Inspectors should always take account of privacy and confidentiality when talking to stakeholders during the inspection.

Documentary evidence

Inspectors will not routinely examine all policies and procedures. However, inspectors may review:

- children's records, as part of case sampling (for example, local authority care plans/pathway plans, or minutes/reports from statutory looked after children reviews and/or pathway plan reviews)
- any documents that demonstrate progress made by the child
- notes of supervision from the last 3 months
- minutes of any professional meetings
- health and safety checks
- staff training records
- staff recruitment records

Inspectors will focus on the impact of documents and how they work in practice (for example, risk assessments), rather than the format. What matters is that they are fit for purpose and provide enough information to all relevant people so that they can support the children safely and appropriately.

Supported lodgings

For supported lodgings service providers, inspectors will always review assessments of supported lodgings hosts and any other relevant information, such as records of matching decisions or host reviews.

Discussions with the RSM and staff

Individual interviews will be held with the RSM/person in charge and other staff. The number of staff spoken to will depend on the size of the provider but will include a sample of permanent staff and any agency staff working at the time of inspection.

The interview with the RSM/person in charge focuses on gathering evidence of the provider's impact on children's lives, and will usually address:

- issues that the inspector wishes to explore with the manager that have arisen from pre-inspection information, including any causes of concern
- how they involve children and young people in developing the provider's policies and practice, including the ways in which they seek and accommodate feedback
- how they monitor the impact of the service on children's lives and futures
- the help and protection that the service provides for children, including responses to children who go missing or, in the case of unplanned endings, to children's placements
- how they work in partnership with placing local authorities and with other services
- any recent significant incidents, and the provider's response to those incidents
- plans for future development of the service
- arrangements for supervision and appraisal of the RSM
- any further evidence the RSM may wish to share and discuss with the inspector/s

- management span of control

In most cases, inspectors will want to have confidential conversations with the staff and will usually ask to speak to them alone so the staff can express their views freely. However, individuals may ask to have a colleague present to support them if they prefer.

If inspectors see that a staff member is upset or distressed at any point during the inspection, inspectors will respond sensitively. Where appropriate, inspectors will consider suitable adjustments to enable the staff member to continue. Where appropriate, inspectors will inform those responsible for the person's well-being. The inspector will also contact their manager/regional duty manager to take advice.

There may be exceptional occasions when we need to consider pausing an inspection. We will consider these on a case-by-case basis according to our published [guidance on pausing inspections](#).

Feedback to providers

During the inspection, the inspection team will usually meet daily to discuss their findings and agree lines of enquiry. These discussions will assist the lead inspector to regularly share emerging findings about key strengths and weaknesses with the RSM or their nominated deputy.

To help RSMs understand how the inspection is progressing, and to continue the constructive professional dialogue where meetings are held to keep them informed of emerging findings, the manager can be accompanied by a colleague, where appropriate. This will allow them to raise any issues or concerns or to seek clarification, including anything related to the conduct of the inspection.

If the RSM is not present, inspectors will agree a process with the nominated individual (if available) for keeping other people informed of progress throughout the inspection.

Shortfalls that could have an immediate impact on the safety of children, young people and/or staff must be brought to the immediate attention of the RSM or another senior person.

In most cases, inspectors will want to have confidential conversations with the staff and will usually ask to speak to them alone so the staff can express their views freely. However, individuals may ask to have a colleague present to support them if they prefer.

If inspectors see that a staff member is upset or distressed at any point during the inspection, inspectors will respond sensitively. Where appropriate, inspectors will consider suitable adjustments to enable the staff member to continue. Where appropriate, inspectors will inform those responsible for the person's well-being. The inspector will also contact their manager/regional duty manager to take advice.

At the end of the inspection, the lead inspector provides oral feedback, which will be a summary of main findings and provisional outcome to the RSM. It should be noted that the quality assurance process may, on occasion, result in changes to the outcome or draft report. In exceptional circumstances, an inspector may need additional time after the on-site inspection to take advice

before giving feedback. The date of the final feedback is counted as the last day of the inspection.

When giving the final feedback, inspectors should:

- cover the main findings of the inspection against the evaluation criteria, including both strengths and weaknesses
- use the evaluation criteria to indicate how they have arrived at the provisional outcome and confirm that the report is sent in draft to the RSM for comment on factual accuracy
- ensure that the provider has the opportunity to raise any issues or concerns, or seek clarification about the inspection, and knows that they can contact Ofsted on the working day after the end of the inspection, if needed
- explain that the final report and outcome are subject to a quality-assurance process

Feedback should not usually last more than an hour and is likely to be considerably shorter.

If the feedback is likely to be challenging or to raise sensitive issues, the inspector will be sympathetic to the implications of this feedback. The inspector will discuss with the provider which other people should attend the feedback meeting to ensure that the necessary support is given. Attendance at the feedback meeting is voluntary and any attendee may leave at any time.

Managers may share the provisional inspection outcome and findings with whoever they deem appropriate. However, providers should be cautious and sensitive to the risk of creating uncertainty if they share them with children, as provisional outcomes may change. Provisional inspection outcomes may also be shared, in confidence, with others who are not involved with the setting. This may include colleagues, family members, medical advisers and/or their wider support group. However, the information should not be made public.

Making requirements and recommendations

Requirements

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

When imposing a requirement, inspectors must ensure that there is sufficient evidence to support the breach and that they are able to show that this is having an impact, or is likely to have an impact, on children's experiences and progress. They must weigh up and balance evidence from more than one source to support making a requirement.

The requirement should refer to the specific regulation and should be detailed enough for the registered person to be clear about what they need to do to correct the breach of regulation. It should state a date by which they should achieve this.

In deciding whether to impose a requirement, the inspector must assess the extent of the impact, or potential impact, on the experiences and progress of children. The inspector should determine

whether the matter could be dealt with more appropriately by making a recommendation.

The inspector will always impose requirements when there are significant concerns for the welfare, safety and quality of care for children.

Sometimes, the registered person needs to take action to meet a requirement that they can address quickly. Inspectors may impose a requirement with a date for completion that is likely to be before the registered person will receive their inspection report. In such cases, at the final feedback meeting, the inspector must be clear about the nature of the recommendation and the timeframe for completion.

Recommendations

Inspectors make recommendations when necessary to improve practice.

In making a recommendation, inspectors should refer to the quality standards. They should always give enough detail for the manager in charge to be clear what they need to do. The relevant part of the quality standards should be summarised. Inspectors may also make recommendations in relation to other relevant statutory guidance, such as:

- [Working together to safeguard children](#)
- [Statutory guidance for children who run away or go missing from home or care](#)

If, during an inspection, the registered person rectifies a minor administrative error that has minimal impact on the experiences and progress of children, an inspector may not need to make a requirement or recommendation about that matter. However, they may refer to it in the leadership and management section of the report.

Where the registered person has failed to comply with a requirement within the timescale set by the inspector, we consider carefully whether it is necessary to take any enforcement action to address the breach and the associated risks to children. Enforcement action may include issuing a compliance notice.

If the provider has not acted on recommendations made at a previous inspection, the inspector considers carefully the impact of this on children and may impose a requirement.

Compliance notices and enforcement action

Ofsted's compliance powers are set out in the [Care Standards Act 2000](#) and associated regulations. Further details can be found in Ofsted's [enforcement policy for supported accommodation](#).

We serve a compliance notice following an inspection if:

- we consider that this is the most appropriate way to promote the welfare of children, or we

believe that they are at risk of harm or are being harmed

- a registered provider has failed to comply with a requirement made at an inspection and we consider this to be the best way to deal with it

Serious or widespread weaknesses: next steps

When a supported accommodation is found to have serious or widespread weakness ([outcome 3](#)) at a full inspection, this leads to a post-inspection debrief as soon as possible, and then a case review. The timing of the case review should be proportionate to the risk and certainly no later than 5 working days following the inspection.

The inspector and their manager have the post-inspection debrief. It provides an opportunity for them to discuss the inspection and the quality of the evidence, and to consider a recommendation for further action to take to the case review. The recommendation of further action should include scheduling future inspections and/or compliance action. The [enforcement policy](#) has detailed information about the enforcement options available and the arrangements for following up enforcement activity.

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

We usually carry out a full inspection of providers that have been found to have serious or widespread weaknesses within 6 months of the previous inspection. The timing and nature of subsequent inspection and monitoring visits, however, are set on a case-by-case basis.

If the concerns are serious, we are likely to return to carry out a monitoring visit to check that the manager and responsible person have taken sufficient steps to safeguard and protect the welfare of children. Any monitoring visit usually results in a published report, although the regional director can decide not to publish monitoring reports in exceptional circumstances.

An inspection visit takes place sooner if any further significant concerns arise during this period or if an earlier inspection is necessary to make statutory requirements to safeguard and protect the welfare of children.

The inspection report

The report should be succinct and evaluative. Inspectors' analysis must include clear evidence for their professional judgements. Reports for settings that have several weaknesses may require more detail but should still focus on the main issues only. Inspectors should ensure that the reports are concise and say only what needs to be said. The report will include a short summary of the reasons for the inspection outcome.

Reports should address the overall quality of each relevant category of accommodation and identify, as appropriate, where strengths and weaknesses lie.

The report will provide a short summary of findings that support the outcome, followed by sections that address findings under the 3 main areas of evidence:

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

Reports should be anonymised so that premises where children live are not identified.

Feedback to children

Inspectors write a letter to the children that summarises the inspection findings following the inspection. This will not be published. If children need an adapted form of the letter, it should be sent to the provider with a request for the document to be adapted into a suitable format.

When we know that children use individual systems of communication other than verbal communication, or children have limited receptive and expressive language skills, we still provide a letter. It can be short, include pictures and be set in simple, clear sentences.

It is anticipated that the provider will translate the letter, if necessary, for those children who speak English as an additional language and for those who use alternative systems of communication. The letter will set out an expectation that the provider will help children to understand their letter from Ofsted.

The lead inspector will decide whether to use one way of providing feedback to all children or different methods to individual children, depending on the individual circumstances and the varying nature of provision.

Quality assurance and arrangements for publishing the report

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

Any proposed change of the provisional outcome given at verbal feedback during the inspection will be discussed by the appropriate managers within Ofsted. On these rare occasions, the inspector must inform the provider of the revised outcome and provide reasons for the changes before the provider receives the draft report.

We will send the draft inspection report to the provider within 18 working days of the end of the inspection.

The provider will have 5 working days to comment on the draft report, process and findings.

We will consider all comments and we will respond to the comments when we share the final report with the provider. This will be within a maximum of 30 working days after the inspection.

We expect managers to share the inspection outcome and findings with whoever they deem appropriate.

Following the inspection, we will ask providers for feedback about the inspection through a post-inspection survey. This is sent to the provider when it receives the final inspection report. We will use feedback from providers to improve the quality of inspections.

Conduct during inspections

Ofsted's [code of conduct](#) sets out the expectations for both inspectors and providers. At the start of the inspection (usually during the preparatory conversations) the lead inspector will explain these expectations and will ask providers to read the code. Inspectors will work constructively with providers and staff, demonstrating professionalism, courtesy, empathy and respect at all times.

Concerns or complaints about an inspection

Concerns

Most of Ofsted's work is carried out smoothly and without incident. If concerns do arise during the inspection, they should be raised with the lead inspector or quality assurance manager as soon as possible during the inspection visit. This provides an opportunity to resolve the matter before the inspection is completed. Any concerns raised, and actions taken, will be recorded in the inspection evidence.

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

If an issue remains unresolved, the provider can contact Ofsted on the working day after the end of the inspection. This will be an opportunity for the provider to raise informal concerns about the inspection process or outcomes, ask about next steps or highlight information they feel was not fully considered during the inspection. This will be directed to a RIM who is independent of the inspection to discuss and to resolve, where appropriate, at the earliest opportunity.

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

Complaints

If it is not possible to resolve concerns during the inspection, shortly after the inspection or through submitting comments in response to the draft report, the provider may wish to lodge a formal complaint when it receives the final report. The inspector will ensure that the provider is informed that it is able to make a formal complaint, and that [information about how to complain](#) is available.

Monitoring visits

Monitoring visits are carried out according to the general principles of the SCCIF. They are usually carried out for any of the following reasons:

- to follow up concerns
- following an outcome 3
- to monitor compliance with a notice

Timing and frequency

The decision to carry out a monitoring visit is usually taken at a case review. The frequency of monitoring visits is decided on a case-by-case basis and may be as frequent as weekly if that is what is needed. Timing and frequency are determined by any dates included in compliance notices and the nature of the concerns.

Monitoring visits will usually take place following enforcement action or may take place after an outcome 3. Monitoring visits are usually unannounced.

Compliance notices

A compliance notice sets out the actions a provider must take by a certain date to meet the relevant service-specific regulations for children's social care providers. The decision to issue a compliance notice is agreed and recorded at the case review.

Where we establish a number of actions on a statutory notice, or serve multiple statutory notices with different completion dates, then we schedule follow-up visits for each date or notice to ensure that the provider has met each specified action within the prescribed timescale.

We aim to complete follow-up visits the day after the required completion date for each notice or, at the very latest, within 5 working days of that date. In some instances, we may timetable the monitoring visit so that we can assess compliance with more than one notice.

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

We make a note on the inspection database of the reasons why it was not necessary to visit, for example if a fire officer has carried out a visit and given written confirmation of action taken, copied to Ofsted.

Monitoring visits are also likely to be agreed as part of the plan for the provider once the notice of proposal to cancel has been issued.

Other circumstances where we might carry out monitoring visits include those when a 'restriction of accommodation' notice is in place or when we have suspended a provider from continuing to operate.

Preparing for the monitoring visit

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

- the last inspection report
- requirement(s) set out in the last inspection report
- requirement(s) set out in any compliance notice
- letters from previous monitoring inspections
- any notifications received since the last inspection
- any action plan provided by the setting
- any other information recorded on the inspection database, such as information from other agencies, or complaints
- any enforcement action that should be monitored (for example, restriction of accommodation)

How inspectors carry out monitoring visits

Where the monitoring visit is carried out following an outcome 3, or to monitor the provider's response to compliance notices, or to determine whether requirements have been completed, it should:

- determine whether the requirements have been completed, and the impact of any completed requirements on the welfare and outcomes for children
- identify whether any additional concerns exist
- determine the capacity of the RSM to sustain the changes required
- consider any further action that may need to be taken
- review the evidence in order to determine whether a new inspection outcome can be given

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

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

The inspector must notify either the registered provider or RSM when they arrive on site.

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

To demonstrate the necessary improvement, providers and managers need to show that their actions have had a significant impact in achieving clear and sustainable progress. Good intentions and an inspirational outlook, or a recent change of manager following a period of poor leadership, do not in themselves give enough proof of the ability of the provider to sustain improvement.

Finding further concerns during monitoring visits

If it becomes clear that there are new or further issues of concern, or that in tackling the actions from the last inspection the provider has let other aspects slip so that children are at risk of harm or are not making sufficient progress, then the inspector should decide what further action needs to be taken. This includes new requirements and/or recommendations and compliance notices or other enforcement action such as restriction of accommodation or imposing of conditions.

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

How inspectors gather evidence in a monitoring visit

The inspectors will question how effective the provider's actions are in:

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

Evidence should be recorded in the inspection database. The evidence should reflect the areas for improvement that were identified in the inspection report. This section should include evidence of the most significant strengths and weaknesses and any new areas of improvement or breaches of requirement that need to be taken forward. The inspector must decide whether other aspects of practice that have deteriorated may lead to cause for concern in different areas.

Inspectors must decide whether the provider demonstrates its capacity to sustain any improvements it has made. Inspectors should also decide whether the improvements are having a marked and sustained impact on all areas of weakness.

Feedback at the end of the monitoring visit

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

- be clear about the evidence base that the judgement of improvement or continued concern is based on
- make clear any new issue(s) to take forward
- ensure that the provider is clear about the outcome of the visit and what the next step will be, especially if a new issue has arisen or improvement is not good enough
- be clear with the provider when the next steps will be confirmed if the inspector requires further advice
- explain that the outcome of a monitoring visit is published in the form of a report on the [Ofsted reports site](#) alongside the last report
- make clear that the text of the report may differ slightly from the oral feedback, but that the substance of the issues will not change
- ensure that the provider understands that the overall outcome 3 has not changed (where relevant), although progress and improvements may have been made

The inspector must contact the DCS of the placing authorities (where relevant) to advise them whether:

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

Monitoring reports

Ofsted will publish all monitoring reports on its [reports website](#), although regional directors can decide not to publish monitoring reports in exceptional circumstances.

At the beginning of the report, inspectors should provide a concise, clear explanation of the issues that we monitored at the visit. This explanation should accurately reflect the message given to the registered manager/person-in-charge when we announced the visit.

The next sentence should then state when we last visited the provider, and for what reason.

Monitoring reports should outline the significant developments and evidence of progress that have occurred since the last visit. They should clearly explain the action the provider has taken to address the requirements and the impact of any improvement, or not, on the care, experiences and progress of children.

The report must:

- set out the reason(s) for and purpose of the visit (if the visit is to follow up enforcement activity, the letter should clearly set this out, for example, ‘This provider is subject to a restriction of accommodation order. We are concerned that... In order to evaluate the progress the provider has made in addressing these concerns, we carried out a monitoring visit on...’; where this relates to compliance notices, there should be a short summary of the number of notices and an overview of the areas for concern)
- outline any significant developments and clearly explain the action the provider has taken to address the requirements and the impact
- evaluate where progress has been made and where progress has not been made
- clearly state the impact of continued concerns on children, alongside any action that Ofsted will be taking to notify placing local authorities and/or to protect children
- set out clearly where and what further action is needed

Inspectors must use clear language to indicate the level of concern, for example, ‘this visit has raised serious concerns about care and practice in [the provider]’.

Inspectors can clearly state that the provider is likely to be subject to further enforcement action where this is the case. The details of intended action cannot be included as this may prejudice any action we are likely to take and be seen to impede the provider’s right of appeal, where relevant.

Review of the monitoring report and evidence base

The monitoring visit report and evidence base will be reviewed by the inspector’s manager before the draft report is sent to the provider for comment. This is to ensure that they accurately reflect the improvements made and that the evidence base supports any further enforcement action we may wish to take.

The draft monitoring report is then shared with the provider and finalised using the same process and timescales as a standard inspection report (see the [‘Quality assurance and arrangements for publishing the report’ section](#)).

Providers with no children placed

If, when the first inspection after registration is due to take place, no child has been placed with a provider since its registration, inspectors should seek to delay the inspection until the provider has begun to accept placements. The first inspection of a supported accommodation provider will usually occur within 3 years of its registration date.

Newly registered supported accommodation providers that are not yet accommodating children are required to tell us when the first child arrives to stay. This will help us to arrange an appropriate first inspection date.

If no child is placed with the provider at the time of inspection, the inspector should decide whether

a planned inspection should be postponed.

If there are no placements at the time of the inspection but children have been placed since the last inspection, it may be possible to use information about their placements as evidence.

Inspectors should consider the likely evidence that can be collected to support the inspection outcomes.

Checks on nominated individuals

[The Supported Accommodation \(England\) Regulations 2023](#) require providers to appoint a nominated individual.

A provider must demonstrate to Ofsted that the nominated individual they appoint is able to meet the requirements of regulation. Ofsted's inspectors scrutinise the steps providers have taken to determine that a nominated individual who has been appointed to a registered establishment or agency is fit to supervise the management of an establishment or agency.

For further information, see [Changes to children's social care services that are registered and/or inspected by Ofsted](#).

Providers with no RSM

The [Care Standards Act 2000](#) requires any person who carries on or manages a supported accommodation service to be registered with Ofsted. It is a criminal offence to operate or manage a supported accommodation service without registering with Ofsted under [section 11 of the Care Standards Act 2000](#).

[The Supported Accommodation \(England\) Regulations 2023](#) require the provider to notify Ofsted if the RSM is to be absent for 28 days or more, or if they leave. Providers must do this at least 1 month before a known absence of the manager and, in an emergency, within 1 week of the absence.

Any failure to notify Ofsted of the absence or change of a manager, or failure to put in place satisfactory management arrangements, will be taken into account when planning and carrying out inspections. For more information, see [Changes to children's social care services that are registered and/or inspected by Ofsted](#).

Actions to be taken may include, but are not limited to, bringing the date of the inspection forward and using this information to inform our judgement about the leadership and management of the service. If a provider fails to notify Ofsted of a change of manager, this may also influence our assessment of its fitness to manage. For more information about what regulatory action Ofsted can take, you should refer to the [social care enforcement policy](#).

Incomplete inspections

We will apply [Ofsted's policy on incomplete inspections](#) where appropriate.

Safeguarding and child protection concerns

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

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

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

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

The 'Prevent' duty

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

Inspectors should note the detail of any relevant concerns or referrals made by the responsible individual and how effective the multi-agency response has been. The DfE has published [advice for schools and childcare providers on the 'Prevent' duty](#), and inspectors should note where this applies to the type of setting inspected.

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

Female genital mutilation: the duty to notify police

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

The duty applies where the professional either:

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

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

Reporting concerns about the administration and management of controlled drugs

Providers must report incidents related to controlled drugs (including loss or theft) to their local NHS controlled drugs accountable officer at NHS England. They should also report incidents to the police, if necessary.

If inspectors become aware of an incident related to controlled drugs that the provider has not reported to the appropriate authority, they should convene a case review to consider next steps. Actions may include the Ofsted region making the referral. This action is in addition to any regulatory action or recommendations made because of the concern. Inspectors should make a referral even when there are no requirements or recommendations to be made.

Use of personal data

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

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

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

legislation.

Annex for figures

Ofsted's post-inspection and complaints procedure

Steps	Description
Step 1	The provider should raise any concerns during an inspection with the lead inspector in the first instance
Step 2	If an issue remains unresolved, the provider can ring Ofsted during the inspection or on the working day after
Step 3	We will normally send a draft report to the provider within 18 working days of the end of the inspection
Step 4	Within 5 working days of us sending a draft report, the provider can raise minor points about the report or submit a formal complaint
Step 5a	We will consider minor points of clarity or factual accuracy quickly so that the report can be published promptly
Step 5b	We will respond to any formal complaint before we finalise and send the report to the provider
Step 6	We will normally send the final report to the provider within 30 working days of the end of the inspection (longer if there has been a complaint). The report will be published on our website 5 working days later

[See Figure 1.](#)

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