

Consultation on integrated inspections of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers and joint inspection of the Local Safeguarding Children Board

This is a joint consultation document from Ofsted, the Care Quality Commission, HMI Constabulary, HMI Probation and HMI Prisons on proposals for the inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers and the inspection of the Local Safeguarding Children Board. The inspectorates seek the widest possible range of views from those who have an interest in, or expertise relating to, child protection and provision for children looked after and care leavers in order to ensure that the changes proposed take proper account of the needs and circumstances of all interested parties.

Question 1a.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposal for how we will conduct the integrated inspection?

Agree

This is a positive opportunity to explore how professionals can work together better to provide the kind of joined up, holistic support that families need. 4Children has long called for integrated support across all local agencies at the earliest possible opportunity to prevent struggling families from falling into crisis. Requiring professionals to work together under an integrated inspection framework is a useful tool towards making this happen.

Question 1b.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the criteria to identify the local authority areas where we will conduct an integrated inspection?

Agree

4Children would argue that a holistic family approach is adopted, and that the voices of children, young people and their families are listened to. The model developed by 4Children sets out an approach we believe will make a real difference to the lives of vulnerable children:

1. By 'breaking the cycle' of intergenerational problems through holistic family support;
2. Through early intervention, before problems turn into crisis
3. By offering "turnaround" support for those families and individuals in crisis (which is an inevitable point, even with early intervention measures in place, some will reach)

Report of the Children's Commission's inquiry on Child Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups highlighted, all too often those tasked with protecting our children do not act early enough, instead watching the risks grow from the side-lines and waiting until children have been abused or involved in crime before they intervene. Competing demands on reduced

budgets are presenting significant challenges. However, every child that we fail and allow to become a victim of abuse will have to deal with the consequences of that failure for the rest of their life.

The Children's Commissioner found that although there are many hard working professionals in both statutory and voluntary agencies who are working to protect young people, and have set out examples of where joint working between agencies means they have been able to find the resources to do this work and do it well. The integrated inspection will have a crucial role at ensuring that lessons learnt, not only from the Children's Commissioner, but also the reports to publish in late 2014 from Louise Casey on lessons learnt from the tragic case of sexual abuse and exploitation in Rotherham.

Question 2a.

To what extent do you agree or disagree that Ofsted, CQC and HMIC should use the same judgment structure?

Strongly agree

Only through a single judgement structure will we be able to identify the how professionals can work together better to provide the kind of joined up, holistic support that families need, and provide a national framework to ensure no postcard lottery.

A shared judgement on the LSCB

At the same time all five inspectorates will make a shared judgement about the effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB). This shared judgement will take account of the contribution of the local authority, health services, police force, probation services and (where relevant) the prison service.

See paragraph 42 of the full consultation document for further detail.

A question on the specific evaluation criteria is asked later in this survey.

Question 2b.

To what extent do you agree or disagree that the inspectorates should make a shared judgment about the effectiveness of the LSCB?

Strongly agree

Question 3a.

To what extent do you agree or disagree that Ofsted should continue to use the judgement criteria outlined in the single inspection framework when conducting an integrated inspection?

Strongly agree

The evaluation criteria - CQC

The characteristics of 'good' in the CQC proposals have been developed from their single agency inspection programme key lines of enquiry. To ensure that there is a coherent approach across inspectorates, this has to include some additional detail. Once the characteristics have been finalised, there will be a review back to the single agency methodology to update the key lines of enquiry and ensure consistency in the areas of activity assessed

See paragraphs 49-70 of the full consultation document for CQC's proposals

Question 3b.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the criteria CQC propose for evaluating the effectiveness of health services:

The overall effectiveness of health services? (paragraphs 63-67)

No answer

The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection - health services? (paragraph 68)

No answer

The experiences and progress of children looked after and care leavers - health services? (paragraph 69)

No answer

Leadership, management and governance - health services? (paragraph 70)

No answer

The evaluation criteria - HMI Constabulary

HMIC's contribution to the integrated inspection includes the review of the overall service that is provided by police forces to safeguard children who need help and protection. HMIC will focus on the experiences and outcomes of children within the geographical boundaries of the local authority area and report on the performance of the police serving that area.

See paragraphs 71-81 of the full consultation document for HMIC's proposals

Question 3c. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the criteria HMIC propose for evaluating the effectiveness of the police force:

Overall effectiveness of the police force? (paragraphs 75-79)

No answer

The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection - the police force? (paragraph 80)

No answer

Leadership, management and governance - the police force? (paragraph 81)

No answer

The evaluation criteria - HMI Probation

HMI Probation will inspect a small sample of cases held by providers of probation services and youth offending teams in the local authority area. We are proposing that the quality of the work to protect children, including, in the case of youth offending services, children looked after, be assessed against the criteria set out in the full consultation document.

See paragraphs 82–97 of the full consultation document for HMI Probation’s proposals.

Question 4a.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the criteria HMI probation proposes for evaluating the effectiveness of:

The National Probation Services and Community Rehabilitation Companies? (paragraphs 84-90)

No answer

Youth offending teams? (paragraphs 91-97)

No answer

The evaluation criteria - HMI Prisons

When an integrated inspection is carried out where there is a custodial establishment or detention facility within the local authority area, HMI Prisons will endeavour to align its own inspection schedule so that the work can be completed simultaneously.

(See paragraphs 98-107 of the full consultation document for HMI Prison’s proposals)

Question 4b. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the criteria HMI Prisons propose for evaluating the effectiveness of custodial and detention services?

No answer

How we will report

We will not make an aggregate judgement, but we will bring together the key findings from all agencies about the help, protection and care of children and young people into a summary report.

In addition, we intend to produce individual agency reports that will focus on the key strengths and weaknesses in the individual agencies.

The summary report and individual agency reports will be combined into one document for publication.

(See paragraphs 108-111 of the full consultation document for further details)

Question 5: To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposals for how we will report our findings?

Disagree

We believe that an aggregate judgement, setting out actions and intervention measures necessary, will be necessary for the outcomes of joint-agency working to improve. Responsibility for producing a holistic 'judgement' from the findings could rest with a body such as the Office of the Children's Commissioner.

Joint inspection of the LSCB

All the inspectorates will together evaluate the effectiveness and influence of the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) and the contribution of partners to making a difference to the lives of children and young people locally. We will make a shared judgement and produce a joint report.

See paragraphs 112–118 of the full consultation document for our full shared criteria for the inspection of the LSCB.

Question 6: To what extent do you agree or disagree with our shared criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of the LSCB?

Agree

We know that too often LSCB's are failing to protect and look after young people and children, as the recent serious case reviews at Rochdale and Rotherham. As the experience from both shows, children can be highly vulnerable, often being several placed into the care of the local authority for protection. In this case the children were consistently turned away and written off when they were most in need, by organisations and professionals who were there to help. We need a system which sets sights high for vulnerable children and which expects and enables all professionals to work together to co-ordinate determined meaningful action in response. Only then can we stand a chance of offering all of our children the safe and secure future that they deserve. Providing a shared judgement and report on the effectiveness and influence of the LSCB within a local authority area.