

News for children and young people

Inspecting services that help and protect children and inspecting services that care for looked after children and care leavers

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Ofsted inspects how local councils help, protect and look after children, including those leaving care.

Last year, we decided to change the way we inspect services for children, young people, carers and families. We wanted to inspect how well social workers and other professionals help, protect and look after children. We also wanted the reports to describe what difference the help is making to children and young people. We asked you what you thought.

We asked you about our ideas for two new sorts of inspection:

1. The first was how different sorts of inspectors could check on how children were kept safe instead of being harmed. We were going to work with inspectors from other places that look at keeping children safe – like the inspectors who check on the police, on probation and on prisons.
2. The second was checking on how local councils cared for looked after children and care leavers. We were going to work on this with inspectors who check on health services. We wanted to do just this one new inspection instead of three different inspections like we used to do. We used to do separate checks on children's social care, on adoption, and on fostering.

We asked you for your views with a web survey. Some of you filled in paper surveys for us. 183 of you told us what you thought about our first new sort of inspection; 155 told us what you thought about the second one. Yet another 183 people on our 'Your Say' panel said what they thought. Another 20 children from the Children's Rights Director's 'BeHeard' panel had their say. And we met groups of children and young people on some Children in Care councils, and with the Who Cares Trust.

Most of you liked our ideas for the two new sorts of inspection. You gave us good ideas on how to make sure children had their say in these inspections. You liked our plans to check on how well different services all work together to keep children safe.

Some of you were worried about us doing just the one inspection of how councils care for children they look after and help care leavers. You thought we might miss things we had found out when we used to do three separate inspections.

Care leavers told us we should check on what happened after leaving care. You thought we should check on how well young people are helped to get ready to be independent. We changed our plans because of what you told us. One big change was that we added a special check on services for care leavers. We will now inspect how well they are supported and helped to start their lives as young adults.

Then we tried out our new inspections. We did five test inspections about keeping children safe. We did three test inspections of how councils care for looked after children and help care leavers.

We learned a lot from these test inspections. Actually trying them out made us think we still hadn't got things right. Doing the two new sorts of inspections didn't work well. We need to do just one new inspection. This would check on helping children and keeping them safe and the same inspection would check on how councils care for looked after children and help care leavers.

With just the one inspection, we will only have to visit once. But we will find out a lot about what the area is like for children and young people.

In our new inspection we will see how good councils are at these five things:

- helping children and keeping children safe
- caring for children who are looked after
- helping care leavers
- helping children who need to be adopted
- running all these different services.

We want people to tell us what they think of the most recent changes we have made. There is a survey on our Ofsted website. There isn't a separate survey for children, but you can fill in the one on the website if you want to.

When we have heard what people think, we will make any last changes. Then we will start our new inspections in September.