



**CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE - 15 JANUARY 2018**

**OFSTED INSPECTION FRAMEWORK: INSPECTION OF LOCAL
AUTHORITY CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

**REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY
SERVICES**

Purpose of report

1. The purpose of this report is to explain to the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee details of the new Ofsted Inspection Framework: Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) which was published in November 2017. The Committee is asked to note the detail of the Inspection Framework.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

2. There are no specific corporate policies and plans which are relevant however the Ofsted Continuous Improvement Action Plan reviewed by the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee will inform the new self-evaluation component of the inspection framework. The previous judgement of 'requires improvement' determines that Leicestershire will be subject to a standard 2 week inspection as well as the other components identified within the ILACS system.
3. The Committee has continued to have oversight of the Continuous Improvement Action Plan based on the 17 recommendations arising from the Single Inspection Framework (SIF) November 2016.

Background

4. The Inspection of Local Authorities is a new system for ensuring more regular contact with Local Authorities and comprises an inspection framework, self-evaluation, annual conversation and focussed visits.
5. The new inspection process will mean that Local Authorities have more regular contact with Ofsted giving opportunity to identify any issues of concern and action being taken in a more timely way. The Ofsted grade awarded determines the type of inspection at the next visit and what support is required before a visit.
6. Principles of the inspection framework are:-
 - i. A focus on practice and timely reflection on the experience of children in the area;
 - ii. A system that is proportionate, flexible and bespoke;
 - iii. Actions prioritised where improvement is needed the most.

7. The 'whole system' approach is informed by:-
 - i. An annual self-evaluation submission by the Local Authority;
 - ii. An annual review of the self-evaluation with an Ofsted regional representative;
 - iii. Ofsted's intelligence.
8. There will be a three yearly inspection cycle of 'Standard Inspections' for local authorities that 'Requires Improvement' or 'Short Inspections' for local authorities rated Good or Outstanding. Local Authorities judged to be 'requires improvement' will receive two focussed visits in the three year cycle and, for those rated Good/outstanding at least one visit.
9. 5 days' notice of a standard inspection will be given and the inspection will last for 2 weeks. Information and data is submitted to the inspection team in the 5 days' notice period, which is akin to Joint Targeted Area Inspection.
10. The standard inspection will evaluate experience and progress of:-
 - i. Children in need of help and protection including early help;
 - ii. Children in care and achieving permanence;
 - iii. Care leavers and transition;
 - iv. Effectiveness of leaders, managers and local governance;
 - v. The authority's own evaluation of the quality and impact of its performance and practice is accurate and to be reliable.
11. Judgements will be on:-
 - i. Children in need of help and protection including early help;
 - ii. Children in care and Care leavers;
 - iii. Impact of leaders;
 - iv. Overall effectiveness.
12. Short inspections will be carried out over 1 week and cover the same areas, but will focus on 'non-deterioration' and any improvements needed. Both standard and short inspections will require the development of an action plan.
13. Focus visits are thematic and will look at one or more aspect of the service, will be contained within 1 week and result in narrative findings. Concerns from a focus visit will not usually result in an inspection, as the expectation is that the local authority will respond to the narrative letter, although an action plan is not required.
14. The annual self-evaluation should address:
 - i. What is known about the quality and impact of social work practice;
 - ii. How it is known;
 - iii. What the improvement plans are for the next 12 months to maintain or improve practice.
15. The self-assessment should be submitted 1 month before meeting with the Ofsted representative.

16. Evaluative areas are similar to SIF, such as thresholds, decision making, multi-agency working, having a learning culture and being able to respond to specific vulnerabilities (e.g. Children with Disabilities and Child Protection) seem to be more explicit requirements.
17. Auditing of cases for the inspection is no longer required. The local authority will provide a list of audited cases (within a 6 months' timeframe) and the inspection team will review a selection of these audits and have follow-up conversations with the relevant children/families.

Joint Targeted Inspections

18. Joint Targeted Area Inspections (JTAs) were introduced in early 2016. They essentially combine the principles used in previous Ofsted thematic inspections with a range of proposed frameworks that sought to inspect multiple agencies that deliver services in a Local Authority area.
19. As an area inspection involving a number of agencies, JTAs bring together Ofsted, CQC, HMIC and HMIP. The scope of an inspection will always cover multi-agency arrangements in respect of a particular 'deep dive' theme. To date, two themes have been completed (Child Sexual Exploitation and, Children Living with Domestic Abuse and Neglect). It is understood that the theme for January 2018 will return to Child Sexual Exploitation and Domestic Abuse.

Resource Implications

20. There is no additional resource requirement arising from the new framework other than those normally anticipated as part of the inspection process. The self-assessment is being completed in preparation for the Leicestershire County Council annual Ofsted conversation that is due to take place on 7 March 2018.

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

21. None.

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Equality and Human Rights Implications

The new Inspection Framework system will consider these aspects as has happened under previous inspection frameworks. An Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment (EHRIA) is not required in relation to the new inspection system.

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