

# Inspection of safeguarding and looked after children services

## 1. The new Inspection

All local authority areas will have at least one **Inspection of safeguarding and looked after children services** in the three-year period following 1 April 2009.

The purpose of the inspection is to evaluate the contribution made by relevant services towards ensuring that children and young people are properly safeguarded and to determine the quality of service provision for looked after children and care leavers.

These new inspections have a clear focus on evaluating outcomes for children and young people and the impact that practice and services have on improving outcomes, including through managing risk and minimising the incidence of child abuse and neglect.

Nottingham expects to have an **Inspection of safeguarding and looked after children services** in 2010. The maximum notice period for the full **Inspection of safeguarding and looked after children services** is usually 10 working days, so it is important to engage relevant parties as quickly as possible. The inspection will include not only the City Council but its key partners, such as the primary care trusts and the police.

## 2. Elements of the Inspection

Inspection teams will normally consist of at least three Ofsted inspectors and a Care Quality Commission inspector.

Following notification of the date of the inspection, children will need to be encouraged and enabled to complete and submit their views through these confidential surveys:

- all looked after children and young people aged eight and over (Care4Me survey)
- all children and young people aged eight and over who have left the council's care during the previous 12 months (AfterCare survey).

During the inspection, inspectors will always speak with children and young people and seek views of their parents and carers.

In addition to reviewing case files and evaluating the documentation already held by Ofsted and its partner inspectorates and commissions, and the evidence provided by the local authority and its partners in advance of the fieldwork element of the inspection, inspectors will conduct meetings and hold discussions with users, managers, health professionals and agencies, police, other staff and stakeholders.

Inspectors will usually be on site for up to 10 working days. Inspectors will take account of the extent to which service providers have sought and acted on the views of children, young people and carers in reviewing and improving services and outcomes generally. They will also consider the views of those users and stakeholders they speak to during on-site evidence gathering.



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The inspection will specifically evaluate the effectiveness of the work of the Children's Partnership Board and Nottingham City Safeguarding Children Board, including the impact the boards have on improving outcomes for children and young people. Any important weaknesses identified by inspectors during the Inspection will be reflected in the judgements reached regarding the effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Children Board and the Children's Trust Board.

Inspections of safeguarding will assess the effectiveness of the Children's Partnership and local children's organisations and assess whether their policies comply with statutory requirements and guidance. In doing this, the inspection will take a broad view of the following.

- How well agencies and professionals work together to identify, safeguard and promote the welfare of potentially vulnerable groups of children and young people that live in their area. These groups might include asylum-seeking children, children in secure settings, disabled children and children treated by health services.
- How well practice is supported and underpinned by effective local policy-making and implementation.

The inspection will also scrutinise the work of the Corporate Parenting Board and its impact on improving the outcomes for looked after children and care leavers. The looked after children element of the Inspection will focus on:

- outcomes achieved
- impact of services
- quality of risk management and decision-making in identifying which children need to be taken into care
- quality of care planning, review and support for children in care and care leavers
- placement stability
- safeguarding of looked after children
- access to, and attendance at, suitable schools
- support for families and carers
- the effectiveness of corporate parenting approaches
- preparation for leaving care and adult life and the subsequent support.

The outcomes of the most recent unannounced annual inspection of contact, assessment and referral will be taken into account by inspectors when evaluating evidence and arriving at judgements, particularly in relation to spreading any good or better practice identified and in tackling areas for development.

### 3. How might it affect you?

We know that the inspectors will want to talk to staff at all levels from a wide range of agencies. In some ways this is similar to what happened during our Joint Area Review (JAR) in early 2007. Inspectors will also want to talk to children, young people and their parents and carers.

Some staff, such as those employed in children's social care, have a more significant role to play in work to safeguard children and with looked after children. However, the inspection is much wider than an inspection of those areas led by social care. Inspectors will want to know how staff work

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together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and ensure that looked after children receive appropriate support and priority.

Staff that inspectors will want to talk to may include, for example:

- meeting with a focus group of staff from schools, or visiting one or more schools
- meeting with a focus group of staff from children's centres or again visiting one or more centres
- meeting with focus groups of social care staff
- meeting with a focus group of health staff
- interviewing members of the Children's Partnership and/or the Nottingham City Safeguarding Children Board and various senior managers and lead officers from across the Children's Partnership.

The inspection is likely to cover areas such as:

- The effectiveness of our early intervention processes and whether staff from all agencies understand their responsibilities in relation to the Common Assessment Framework
- How effective our recruitment processes are in preventing unsuitable people from working with children
- The extent to which we listen to children, young people and families when planning services, either for them as individuals or more widely.

These inspections will contribute to Ofsted's annual reviews of the performance of each local authority's children's services functions and will be taken into account in Her Majesty's Chief Inspector's statutory annual performance rating for each authority.

A single report will follow each inspection. It will contain separate sections and grades for safeguarding and looked after children. The outcome of the inspection will help us to improve services and further strengthen our partnership. We will also have the opportunity to showcase some of the excellent work that we are doing in Nottingham.

### 4. Further Information

Children and Families Services have established an Inspection Core Group, chaired by the Director of Safeguarding to lead the preparation for this inspection.

This is the first in a series of concise briefings relating to the inspection of safeguarding and looked after children services.

Further details of the framework for these inspections will be made available on the Nottingham Children's Partnership website at: [www.nottinghamchildrenspartnership.org.uk](http://www.nottinghamchildrenspartnership.org.uk)