

Briefing note to Scrutiny Resources Panel on Consultation on the Framework for Inspection of Children's Services

3rd February 2005

Background

Following the Children Act 2004 receiving royal assent in November 2004 the government is consulting widely on arrangements which underpin the proposals in the Act. The consultation on the inspection of children's services consists of four papers, which together form the Framework for Inspection of Children's Services. These are the Framework consultation, Annual Performance Assessment consultation, Joint Area Review consultation and Judgment and Evidence criteria consultation.

The proposed arrangements are designed to fulfill the intentions set out in the Children Act 2004 for the part to be played by inspection. They have been devised by the ten inspectorates and commissions, which inspect settings and other services for children and young people. The Framework sets out principles about the purpose, coverage, conduct, reporting and quality of inspection of children's services.

The Framework aims to ensure that inspections evaluate and report consistently on the extent to which services improve the well being of children and young people as according to the outcomes set out in Every Child Matters:

- staying safe
- being healthy
- enjoying and achieving
- making a positive contribution
- achieving social and economic well-being

Inspections will cover front-line provision of services for children and young people, whether this provision is made by the public, private or voluntary sectors.

The inspection framework will include joint area reviews and annual performance assessments. As such, the proposed principles for inspection will cover these reviews as well as any separate inspections of local authority and other services that support front-line provision.

The Framework for Inspection of Children's Services

The Framework proposes a set of principles that will govern the way in which inspections will be conducted. The four principles will be applied to joint area reviews and annual performance assessments which are separate forms of inspection but form part of the overall Framework put forward for consultation.

The principles will also apply to any separate inspections of local authority and other services provided for children and young people. These are set out below:

- purpose of inspection
 - the inspection aims to improve outcomes for children and young people
- coverage of inspection
 - the inspection evaluates and rates service contribution to the five key outcomes for children and young people.
 - the inspection assesses the quality and management of services for children and young people
- conduct and reporting of inspection
 - inspection is proportionate to risk and tailored to needs and circumstances
 - inspectors aim to keep disruption to the organisations inspected and their service users to a minimum
 - inspectors aim to secure the co-operation and confidence of those being inspected and contribute actively to the improvement of services
 - inspectors take account of the views of children and young people and of their parents and carers and seek to involve them in inspections in other ways

- quality of inspection
 - inspectors evaluate the process and benefits of inspection and seek continually to improve its quality

Annual Performance Assessment of Council Services for Children

Inspectors from Ofsted and the Commission for Social Care and Inspection (CSCI) will conduct the annual performance assessments. In doing so they will assess the extent to which services provided by councils contribute to achieving the outcomes for children and young people. The assessments will not involve fieldwork but will draw on performance data, council self-assessment and evidence from previous inspections of services and of settings such as day care centres.

Judgements arising from the assessments will provide ratings for the children and young people service strand of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA). Judgements from the assessments will also inform the joint area reviews.

Joint Area Reviews of Children's Services

Joint area reviews will be carried out in all children services authorities within three years. The review will apply to all settings and services and will focus on the experience of children and young people in children's services authority areas, no matter who provides the service.

Inspectors will aim to conduct reviews at the same time as corporate assessments under the CPA so that the two processes are fully integrated thereby reducing burdens on children's services providers. Each joint area review will lead to a published report that will recommend improvements and highlight good practice.

Key judgements and evidence

The Framework puts forward a set of key judgements and evidence which will be used in annual performance assessments and joint area reviews and will apply to all services for children and young people. The judgements and evidence are set out according to the five outcomes outlined in Every Child Matters: Change for Children and are outlined in the attached framework.

The first performance assessment for Walsall will be in July 2005 and the joint area review is provisionally scheduled for 2008.

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OUTCOMES FRAMEWORK

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Published with *Every Child Matters: Change for Children*, 1 December 2004
This replaces all other previous versions

