coramBAAF
adoption • fostering • kinship

Consultation

Improving the way Ofsted inspects children's social care

October 2026

ILACS proposals: The content of our inspection frameworks

1.0 Our ambition for ILACS inspections: What do you think about our proposed statement of ambition for children's social care inspections in relation to ILACS?

1.1 We welcome the statement of ambition. We think that more clarity is required in relation to the ambition that "Where possible, our frameworks are aligned to reflect that social care providers and local authorities have a shared responsibility to children". This is an important ambition but it would be helpful to have clarity on how this will be achieved through the inspection framework and reported against.

2.0 How can ILACS inspections support local authorities to meet the needs of children who have the most complex lives?

2.1 Ofsted could share examples where organisations have made improvements and examples of good practice. For example through webinars and briefings that highlight the changes and improvement that organisations have made and how they have delivered that.

3.0 How can ILACS inspections encourage providers and local authorities to make sure that children are able to receive the right type of care and support in the right place?

3.1 How information and records are stored and logged should be part of an inspection in order that those who are care experienced or adopted and wishing to access their information in the future are guaranteed to be able to do so in a timely manner. Whilst there is guidance and regulation around record keeping, modern systems, digitisation of systems alongside wider regionalisation of services is resulting in fragmentation. Records are often lost, fragmented, inaccurate or inadequate.

4.0 ILACS evaluation areas: What do you think about the proposed changes to ILACS evaluation areas?

4.1 Local authority engagement with family networks (aligned with the Children's Social Care National Framework Outcome 3)

4.2 Yes we think it's necessary as you need the lever of inspection to further support, scaffold and enable local authority practice with kinship families and the development of the kinship local offer.

4.3 The evaluation should focus on these areas:

- Is there a Kinship Local Offer (KLO)? Is it a list of services or a more nuanced articulation of how kinship is baked into all elements of the system?
- What is the experience of the people receiving the KLO?
- How well does the LA identify kinship families at every part of the system, e.g. Family Hubs, Early Help etc?
- How well does the LA encourage depth of understanding and positive attitude towards kinship families – they need to be understood and valued for the care they provide to children from their family networks.
- How well does the LA understand the context of how the kinship arrangement was made in terms of determining their response and support offered? Kinship carers have told us that they feel more heard and understood when social workers have an understanding of what kinship carers have been through in terms of being assessed/they're not a blank canvas. This is particularly relevant when kinship carers are first in contact with or getting back in contact with the local authority.
- How well do LA's consult with kinship families to inform their work with them and development of KLO?
- There is a wider point about social care involvement with family networks across a child's journey in all stages, referral, assessment, safeguarding and planning. The plan for the child to maintain relationships should be embedded in the support they receive. Agencies should know who is important to a child and how this will work. This requires sustained engagement with the family network.
- When a child no longer lives with their birth parents there is a need for support for them to enable the child to have engagement with their family network. This is often an area where there is least level of support.

4.4 Links to a family network and knowing your history are a crucial part of any person's identity. Children who are unable to remain in the care of their family are dependent on others ensuring that as much as possible is recorded, preserved and retained and made available for them in order that they are able to make sense of their past. It is therefore crucial that all those involved with a child and their families take note of as much as possible even at the early stages of involvement with a family.

5.0 What do you think about our proposal to change how inspectors look at sufficiency as part of an ILACS inspection?

5.1 Available prospective adopters are part of sufficiency. It is not clear how inspectors will assess a local authority's sufficiency in relation to prospective adopters as these are under the remit of Regional Adoption Agencies and Voluntary Adoption Agencies. The local authority is obviously

part of the RAA but the delivery of this will be by the RAA. Whilst there are separate thematic reviews of Regional Adoption Agencies, how inspectors consider a Local Authorities sufficiency within this is complex and unclear.

5.2 The same point applies in relation to the formation of regional fostering hubs and Regional Care Cooperatives. Clearly local authorities and these agencies are closely linked, however, the lines of accountability in relation to meeting sufficiency will be more challenging to define and therefore to inspect against. It would be helpful for Ofsted to set out how it will look at sufficiency in these contexts.

ILACS proposals: How we grade

6.0 Secure fit: What do you think about our proposal to introduce the 'secure fit' grading methodology for ILACS inspections?

6.1 Clarity will be required in relation to what the different grading means in practice to an area and what they need to improve upon.

7.0 5-point scale: What do you think about our proposal to introduce the 5-point grade scale for ILACS inspections?

7.1 Clarity will be required in relation to what the different grading means in practice to an area and what they need to improve upon.

ILACS proposals: How we report

8.0 Report cards: What do you think about our proposal to introduce report cards for ILACS inspections?

8.1 As this stands and as set out in the example provided with the consultation this is mainly signposting to the report and data. It might be helpful to have some context in the report card alongside the colour coding.

9.0 What are your views on including data and information in ILACS report cards?

9.1 Could potentially add context and nuance to the inspection reports. However, without adequate information this potentially risks people referring only to the summary/report card instead of more detailed nuanced information.

ILACS proposals: Children, young people, parents, carers and family engagement

10.0 How can we better engage with children and young people during ILACS inspections?

10.1 Children's views are extremely important but gathering these in the context of an inspection is complex. Seeking children's views could have an impact on the child, the people they are living

with and their own situation. Seeking children's views needs to be done carefully and sensitively and at the same time with consideration. There should also be reflection within an inspection of which children who have been able to be supported to engage with the inspection and those who have not. It would be helpful to identify where an inspection has gathered children's views to align against key areas being inspected e.g.:

- Experiences of children receiving Family Help
- Experiences of children in need of protection
- Experiences of children in care
- Experiences of care leavers

11.0 How can we better engage with parents, carers and families during ILACS inspections?

11.1 It is important to offer different forms of realistic engagement opportunities which are accessible to enable families to take part. Ofsted could set out the circumstances of the families that have been able to engage within their inspection reports so it is possible to understand which service has received feedback from parents, carers and families.

ILACS proposals: ILACS inspection scheduling

12.0 What do you think about our proposals for ILACS scheduling?

12.1 Local authorities will need clarity on the new scheduling and what the new types of visit that are described would likely entail. This is to enable them to be as effective as possible at ensuring improvements are made.

ILACS proposals: Additional questions

13.0 What effect do you think the proposed ILACS changes will have on leaders', practitioners' and inspectors' workload and wellbeing?

13.1 Services will need clear information about what the changes mean and what they need to be doing to meet the new criteria and scheduling.

14.0 What steps could we take to reduce or manage any unintended consequences of our proposals?

14.1 An unintended consequence could be in relation to broadening the people they consult with who receive or access services. The people likely to engage with Ofsted are possibly more likely to have stronger views one way or another about children's services. This means Ofsted may not get a fully representative view of experiences and this should be considered as part of inspections.

15.0 Do you have any other comments about our proposed changes to ILACS?

15.1 Ofsted should be looking at retention of records and information. They should consider a local authority's duty to retain records and in particular retention of adoption records, life story books and later life letters.

15.2 Accuracy and detail of recording of family network and those important to children is fundamentally important to children retaining relationships with those important to them. How this is recorded throughout the child's journey should be prioritised to improve outcomes.

Social care common inspection framework (SCCIF)

16.0 Would you like to share your views on our proposals for SCCIF?

16.1 Yes

SCCIF proposals: The content of our inspection frameworks

17.0 How can SCCIF inspections encourage providers and local authorities to make sure that children are able to receive the right type of care and support in the right place?

17.1 How does this requirement acknowledge that some services such as Independent Fostering Providers aren't responsible for the delivery or even the referral for additional services for a child. It would be important for Ofsted to set out what they are seeking from SCCIF providers in this context as part of an inspection.

18.0 SCCIF evaluation areas: What do you think of our proposal to add an evaluation area on enduring relationships into the SCCIF?

18.1 We welcome this. However, it is important that this is considered properly and not through a tick box exercise e.g. just through counting the number of enduring relationships a child is believed to have based on the views of professionals. Deeper understanding of a child, their important relationships and how these are supported is required. This should include consideration and understanding of plans to address this that is aligned with the child's needs and wishes. The child's voice needs to inform which relationships should be prioritised, nurtured and maintained. For younger children they will need an adult to advocate which foster carer relationships are important to sustain and for older children their views should be actively sought.

18.2 Training and support for support for foster carers will be needed to support these relationships. There is a need for understanding how children respond to and have been impacted by trauma and loss. Evidence that foster carers have effective support and training in relation to this this alongside support from wider agencies, including local authorities in achieving this will be important.

19.0 What do you think about our proposal to add 'the quality of foster carer recruitment, assessment and support' as an additional evaluation area for independent fostering agencies?

19.1 This development is important to improving practice in recruitment, assessment and support across independent fostering agencies. Currently applicants and approved foster carers receive a wide range of experiences from the moment they make contact with a fostering agency until they stop fostering. These different experiences also impact the experiences for the children being cared for. It is also important to acknowledge how these varying experiences shape the view of applicants and approved foster carers which affects recruitment and retention. Ofsted is a key driver for consistency, rigour and adherence to best practice across independent fostering agencies.

19.2 It is important that there is clarity about how this evaluation will be inspected against and what criteria.

20.0 SCCIF proposals: How we report - What do you think about our proposal to introduce report cards for SCCIF inspections?

20.1 As this stands and as set out in the example provided with the consultation this is mainly signposting to the report and data. It might be helpful to have some context in the report card alongside the colour coding.

21.0 What are your views on including data and information in SCCIF report cards?

21.1 Could potentially add context and nuance to the inspection reports and report cards. However, without adequate information this potentially risks people referring only to the summary/report card instead of more detailed nuanced information.

SCCIF proposals: Children, young people, parents, carers and family engagement

22.0 How can we better engage with children and young people during SCCIF inspections?

22.1 Children's views are extremely important but gathering these in the context of an inspection is complex. This is particularly the case when inspecting an independent fostering provider as the child may not fully understand the difference between a in independent fostering provider and a local authority. The arrangement and commissioning of who provides a child's care is not something a child will have had a choice or say in, nor may this ever have been explained to them. Seeking children's views in this context could have an impact on the child and their view of their own situation. This needs to be done carefully and sensitively. At the same time there should be consideration and reflection within an inspection of which children have been able to be engaged with and their circumstances and those the inspection has not been able to engage with.

23.0 How can we better engage with parents, carers and families during SCCIF inspections?

23.1 It is important to offer different forms of realistic engagement opportunities which are accessible to enable families and carers to take part. Ofsted could set out the circumstances of the families that have been able to engage with in their inspections so it is possible to understand which service most, if any, of the feedback has come from. Independent Fostering Agencies will likely have less involvement, responsibility and day to day interaction with parents and families as opposed to local authorities. It is important to be realistic about who inspectors might try to engage with and what they are trying to understand with this engagement.

SCCIF proposals: Additional questions

24.0 What effect do you think the proposed SCCIF changes will have on leaders', practitioners' and inspectors' workload and wellbeing?

24.1 Services will need clear information on what the changes mean and what they need to be doing to meet the new criteria.

25.0 Do you have any other comments about our proposed changes to SCCIF?

25.1 Ofsted should be looking at retention of records and information. They should consider Independent Fostering Agencies duties to retain records for children in care.

25.2 Accuracy and detail of recording of family network and those important to children is fundamentally important to children retaining relationships with those important to them. How this is recorded throughout the child's journey should be prioritised to improve outcomes.