

**Message from Yvette Stanley, Ofsted National Director Regulation and Social Care, 4 June 2021**

**Our monthly update for children's social care providers and local authorities:**

As things continue to return to normal, at Ofsted, and I'm sure across the sector too, thoughts are shifting towards what we can learn from our experience of COVID-19. We now have an opportunity to share our collective learning with the aim of maximising the pace and effectiveness of recovery.

I don't think we only need to look at previously high performing services and providers to learn lessons. Some local authorities and providers that were performing less well before the pandemic have begun to demonstrate their resilience and ingenuity, delivering effective services for children and families.

As the country slowly opens its borders, we have been working with government on the response to unaccompanied children returning to the UK from red list counties. Alongside other sector leaders, we have been very clear in our advice to officials and ministers that the response to these children must be child-centred, with a primary focus on their welfare. This isn't about minimising the public health risks arising from people returning from countries where there are more virulent forms of COVID-19. But the solution cannot be to make unaccompanied children to self-isolate in managed quarantine hotels.

We believe that the arrangements put in place for children returning to the UK to boarding schools could be replicated for unaccompanied children. If the child is returning to their family home or visiting family, the child's family home is the most appropriate place for them to quarantine, supported by local services where necessary. If the child is seeking asylum, they will become looked after children, and arrangements should be made for them to self-isolate by the relevant local authority.

As the weather improves, we will no doubt see an increasing number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children arriving at our ports and on our coasts. Again, this is placing huge pressures on local authorities at the point of entry. We all await the outcome of the Department for Education (DfE) consultation on a mandatory dispersal protocol, but in the meantime, I'm confident that all local authorities will do their bit for these children.

Thank you all for your continued professionalism and humanity in all that you do for children and families.

Finally, many of you will have heard the shocking and tragic news that Darren Coyne from the Care Leavers' Association died recently. Darren was a valued critical friend to Ofsted and a powerful champion for the rights of children in care and care leavers for many years. It was only in March that Darren spoke with such passion and clarity at our national conference. He is a huge loss to the care-experienced community and the wider sector. Our hearts go out to Darren's family, friends and colleagues at this very sad time.

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## **In care during COVID-19 – what children told us about lockdown**

Yvette recently published a [blog](#) setting out some of the early findings from our annual children's social care survey. The blog concentrated on what children told us about lockdown.

## **New government consultation: unregulated accommodation for looked after children and care leavers aged 16-17**

On Monday 24 May 2021 the government launched its [online consultation](#) on unregulated provision for older looked after children and care leavers. It seeks views from local authorities, providers and care-experienced children and young people on:

- the key indicators of whether a provider is delivering 'care' or 'support'
- what good provision looks like and what should be included in new national standards
- how accommodation should be inspected and regulated by Ofsted.

## **Registering as a children's social care provider**

### *Temporary changes to children's social care registration due to COVID-19*

Last year we made some changes to take account of the difficulties caused by the pandemic. We have now removed most of these and reverted back to the usual process for all new registration applications.

We have [set out](#) which changes to the usual process remain in place. This includes being able to complete a temporary health self-declaration if your GP is unable to return your form within 2 weeks, and continuing with a fast-track application process for local authorities to use specifically for registering children's home provision in an emergency.

### *Hard copy application forms*

We have an online application system for providers to apply to register. To date we have also made PDF forms available on our website that applicants could print off and use to submit their applications.

From 1 July 2021 we will no longer accept applications using the PDF form unless you are applying to register a residential holiday scheme for disabled children or if you are unable to complete the online form due to accessibility reasons.

We will be removing the PDF SC1, SC2 and SC3 forms from the website and directing those who need it for the reasons listed above to email us to request one.

We will return any paper applications sent to us from 1 July 2021 unless we have previously agreed that you can submit them.

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## **Notifying Ofsted of serious incidents – online form for registered providers**

We previously told you about the online form for informing Ofsted about serious events or incidents. We ask that registered providers use this form to send us this information.

The form and relevant guidance is available at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/tell-ofsted-about-an-incident-childrens-social-care-notification>. The form is only available at this 'gov.uk' web address.

When accessing the form through Ofsted online please make sure that you click on the social care serious notification and not on early years serious notification. Your first page should list social care settings. To check you have made a successful submission, you should have received a confirmation email from Ofsted forms ([ofsted.forms@notifications.service.gov.uk](mailto:ofsted.forms@notifications.service.gov.uk)), with the heading 'Ofsted received your serious incident report'. If you have not received this email then your form has not been successfully submitted to us.

### **Sending independent visitor reports and quality of care reviews to Ofsted**

Social care registered providers are required by regulations to send certain reports to Ofsted when they have been produced. We also ask some providers to share with us reports they have prepared under certain national minimum standards (NMS). These include:

- children's homes and secure children's homes – reports under regulations 44 and 45
- independent fostering agencies – reports under regulation 35 and NMS 25
- residential family centres – reports under regulations 23 and 25
- voluntary adoption agencies and adoption support agencies - reports under NMS 25
- residential holiday schemes for disabled children - reports made under regulations 29 and 30

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), there are likely to be delays in reviewing incoming post. Therefore, we ask that you send in these reports via email instead of post as this is the most effective way of sending us information at the moment.

Please email them to [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk) and include Ofsted's unique reference number (URN) for your service and the date on which any visit occurred.

If you are a children's home, please pass this message to your independent visitor on our behalf.

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I hope this update is helpful to you. If you have any further queries or feedback, please send them to [EYRegulatoryandSocialCare@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:EYRegulatoryandSocialCare@ofsted.gov.uk). We will send our next update on 2 July 2021.

Best wishes,

Yvette.