

Message from Yvette Stanley, Ofsted National Director Regulation and Social Care, 10 07 2020

To children's social care providers and local authorities:

Earlier this week [HMCI announced](#) our plans to scale back up our visits in the autumn term. I want to take this opportunity to reassure you that inspectors will be taking full account of the challenges that COVID-19 has thrown at you. You have been critical service providers for our most vulnerable children and we recognise that you may have had to make some pragmatic decisions in difficult times. Inspectors will want to understand how you have remained child-centred in your practice and how you have remained focused on children's wellbeing. As we get back to inspection we want to be as supportive as possible in our shared mission to do the best we can for children.

Inspections following the easing of lock down

Throughout the pandemic, Ofsted has continued to undertake inspections within regulated settings where there are concerns. As mentioned above, from the autumn term Ofsted will start visiting across remits but in a different form prior and during the pandemic. Inspections will no longer give graded judgements, but we will set out findings in a report/letter to the provider and these will be published on our [reports website](#). We will make clear if there are any serious concerns about practice and/or the experiences of children and where necessary, make requirements and recommendations for improvement. Where required Ofsted will also continue to use enforcement powers in settings we regulate.

These interim inspection arrangements will not start before September 2020. For local authorities, the interim period will run initially until the end of December 2020. It might be necessary to extend this if measures for responding to and recovering from COVID-19 carry on into 2021. For regulated providers, the interim period will run until March 2021 (the end of the regulatory year) so that we can visit as many providers as possible under these arrangements. You can read further details on our GOV.UK page: [Ofsted's autumn 2020 plans](#).

Fit person interviews for managers of already-registered settings

As we return to face-to-face interviews and registration work as our usual practice, we understand the additional risks in conducting fit person interviews in children's homes. In the current circumstances we may conduct the interview remotely if:

- there is no separate, appropriate and safe space to conduct the interview
- we have no cause to interview the individual face to face
- we can get ID verification from another person in the organisation known to us (through a known responsible individual (RI), for example)

Please see guidance on [GOV.UK](#) that has been amended to clarify these arrangements.

Notifying Ofsted of serious incidents – new online form for registered providers

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

The new form and relevant guidance is available at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/tell-ofsted-about-an-incident-childrens-social-care-notification> and is the only form to use. Failure to do so will result in Ofsted not receiving your online notification. The new form is only available at the 'gov.uk' web address.

To check you have made a successful submission, you should have received a confirmation email from Ofsted forms (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 submitted.

Sending independent visitor reports and quality of care reviews to Ofsted

We shared this message with you previously. For the reasons set out below we would like to re-iterate it.

Social care providers are required by regulations to send certain reports to Ofsted when they have been produced. These include independent visitor reports for children's homes under Regulation 44 and quality of care reports for independent fostering agencies under Regulation 35.

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 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 and your independent visitor sends the reports to Ofsted, please pass this message to them on our behalf.

I hope this update is helpful to you. If you have any further queries or feedback, please continue to send them to socialcare@ofsted.gov.uk.

Best wishes,

Yvette.