

Message from Yvette Stanley, Ofsted National Director Regulation and Social Care, 14 August 2020

To children's social care providers and local authorities:

As news of more local lockdowns continue we need to remember that while the majority of us are enjoying renewed freedoms many leaders, practitioners, carers, children and families continue to experience the social, emotional and psychological impact of the pandemic. Our best wishes and support go to all those in these circumstances. We continue to plan for our return to inspection and are watching very closely how local lockdowns develop so we can be as sensitive as possible to local areas moving forward.

SCCIF and ILACS: Restart guidance published on Monday

On Monday 17 August, we will publish guidance for assurance visits to providers inspected under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF). At the same time, we will publish amendments to the inspection of local authority children's services (ILACS) framework that sets out how we will carry out focused visits in the coming months.

This guidance will apply until we return to our routine programme of inspection. When the guidance is published it will be announced on the [Ofsted webpage](#) (you can subscribe to alerts for Ofsted publications under 'latest from Ofsted'). For SCCIF, visits will start at the beginning of September. We will visit as many places as possible during this interim period. We will prioritise settings that we have most concerns about or don't know enough about (for example, services that we haven't inspected since registration last year). Inspectors will contact the provider around 9am on Day 1 to announce the start of the visit.

For ILACS, we will give notice to local authorities (LAs) for the first focused visits in mid-September. We will visit a sample of LAs that includes some where we have concerns and some where we think we can highlight and share good practice. We're very pleased to be able to add a schools HMI to the team for these visits. This will help us look at how well LAs and schools have worked together to safeguard children's welfare during lockdown and see how they respond to any child protection concerns that they uncover when children return to school in September.

We won't be giving grades on either ILACS or SCCIF visits, but the findings in our published letters and reports will set out what is going well and what needs to improve. Reports following the SCCIF visits will make it clear whether or not inspectors identified any serious or widespread concerns. I have already written to all LAs making clear that commissioners should not rely only on the most recent inspection judgements when making decisions about the right care for children and young people.

We know that this will be a challenging time for providers and inspectors alike, and of course for children and their families too. In particular, the much greater reliance on

technology and remote working will test us and we will need to learn as we go. We are confident that the creative solutions that providers and local authorities have developed in recent months will help us all respond to these challenges and provide assurance about the help, protection and care of children and young people.

Notifying Ofsted of serious incidents – 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>. The new form is only available at this '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 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 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.