

Message from Yvette Stanley, Ofsted National Director Regulation and Social Care, 21 August 2020

To children's social care providers and local authorities:

Yvette's intro: Yesterday I published my blog about expectations of social work visits to children. You can read it in full at: <https://socialcareinspection.blog.gov.uk/2020/08/20/childrens-social-care-visits-what-to-expect/>

Despite the tremendous pressure that children's social care has been under since lockdown began in March we have seen much resilience and adaptability: new ways of working, and local authorities, schools, early years and wider services going above and beyond for children. Some of this we've seen first-hand, through our inspectors deployed in local authorities to help with their wider COVID-19 efforts. We may be living in the 'new normal' for some time to come, but I have no doubt that you will continue to meet the challenges of these extraordinary times to do the very best you can for children.

Registrations

As we restart inspection activity with the programme of assurance visits from September, we will maintain a fast track process for very specific circumstances: those placements directed by the court or an emergency application that is COVID-related and made by a local authority or a private/voluntary provider on behalf of a local authority.

During the pandemic while routine inspection has been suspended, we are aware that in some circumstances we have been able to progress applications more quickly. These applications have been submitted to us complete and well considered. We know this will be more complex when there are more competing demands on inspectors time. We are looking at our working practices during lockdown to see if there is any learning we can carry forward. We will aim to progress completed registrations within 16 weeks. As ever, the more complete and considered the application, the better able we are to make timely decisions.

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.

When accessing the new form through Ofsted online please make sure that you click on the social care serious notification and not an 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), 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.