

## Message from Yvette Stanley, Ofsted National Director Regulation and Social Care, 24 July 2020

To children's social care providers and local authorities:

This week I gave evidence to the Education Select Committee as part of the Committee's inquiry into the impact of COVID-19 (coronavirus) on children's services and education. I was just one of a number of colleagues from across the sector invited to give evidence. It was good to be able to share what we've seen over recent months and get across the challenges ahead for the sector as we try to keep our children safe.

This week I've also written to all DCS to explain our [plans](#) for assurance visits of registered social care providers from September 2020. The letter (attached) suggests that local authorities may wish to revisit their commissioning frameworks to take into account that we will not be making graded judgements about providers at these visits. I have asked that they refer to the most recently published report to see what our current view of practice at a provider is, and not just look at the previous judgement.

I hope anyone taking a break in the next week is able to have a restful one, and my continued thanks to everyone providing cover and emergency duty over the summer.

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### Social care services for disabled children and young people

This has been a particularly challenging time for disabled children, and as more services are re-opening the DfE are encouraging local authorities to prioritise the re-opening of respite provision for disabled children, young people and their families. On that basis they have updated their guidance on this in the [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): guidance for children's social care services](#):

*Have any changes been made to short break services (also known as respite) and what are local authorities doing to deliver this support to families?*

Families caring for a disabled child or young person are entitled to short breaks services (also known as respite). We recognise the challenges for local authorities and providers in providing short breaks throughout the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, as well as the significant impact of reduced provision on families and on children and young people themselves.

We are encouraging local authorities to prioritise support for disabled children, and to consider flexible and pragmatic options to deliver that support; for example, some local authorities have made more use of direct payments beyond their usual criteria. Direct payments may be used to enable families to purchase respite care and equipment to use at home, for the child or young person and/or their siblings. Direct payments could also be used to support families with a disabled child whose usual services have been suspended or reduced.

Local authorities and respite providers will need to work together to risk assess and adapt short break services which have been suspended or reduced so that they can resume vital provision for disabled children/young people and families. This includes disabled children and young people who have been advised to shield due to being clinically extremely vulnerable. Further information on care for people who are shielding can be found within the guidance on shielding and protecting people who are clinically extremely vulnerable from coronavirus (COVID-19).

### **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> 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](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. We have attached some guidance to help you do this.

### ***Online form unavailable this weekend***

We are updating our database from 5pm today (Friday 24 July) until 8am on Monday 27 July. This means the online form for telling us about serious incidents is unavailable during this time.

If you need to use this form over the weekend, please wait until the morning of Monday 27 July when the form is available again. Waiting until 27 July to complete the form will not count as a delay in contacting Ofsted.

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

**Dave Hill**