

Message from Yvette Stanley, Ofsted National Director Regulation and Social Care, 3 July 2020

To children's social care providers and local authorities:

The news headlines may be full of increased opportunities for holidays in the Mediterranean, the re-opening of pubs and even Thorpe Park back for those ready for some white-knuckle experiences, but we know that much of the legacy of lock-down for vulnerable children is still to be found. Directors of children's services tell us they anticipate a significant rise in referrals once schools re-open fully in September and we know that the co-ordination of the local recovery is still very demanding. So, while there is much to feel optimistic about, we at Ofsted continue to think very carefully about how we can add greatest value moving forward. We expect to be able to give more detail on our plans for the autumn very soon.

During the lockdown we were pleased to be able to deploy significant numbers of our staff to work alongside you and across government. As we start to plan for their return I would like to thank you for your generosity as hosts and for the learning we have experienced alongside you during the response to Covid-19.

The children's social care sector has been extremely resilient during these challenging times. Vulnerable and disadvantaged children will continue to rely on the compassion and expertise of social workers, support workers, foster carers, residential care staff alongside teachers and health professionals over the coming months. As we move back closer to our usual business as a regulator and inspectorate we hope to be able to utilise our individual and collective learning from recent months, and to support the greater understanding of the impact on the experiences and progress of our most vulnerable children and families.

Update to Coronavirus (COVID-19) guidance for children's social care

The Department for Education (DfE) has updated the [coronavirus \(COVID-19\) guidance for children's social care](#). Please find attached a letter outlining the changes that have been made.

Restraint and restriction of liberty in children's homes

We wanted to specifically bring to your attention the DfE guidance about the use of restraint following the amendments to the Regulations. Regulation 20 of the Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 was amended so that where it is agreed that restrictions on a child's movement if they become symptomatic or are confirmed as having coronavirus (COVID-19) are necessary and amount to a deprivation of liberty, then this can be enforced only if agreed by a Public Health Officer.

Please see the [guidance](#) for more details which provides answers to the following questions:

- What steps should local authorities and providers take if they believe it is necessary to restrict a child's movement if they become symptomatic or are confirmed as having coronavirus (COVID-19)?
- Does the amendment to regulation 20 cover cases where a young person is not symptomatic or confirmed as having coronavirus (COVID-19)?
- What can we do to manage a young person's behaviour if they are not complying with social distancing guidelines in residential provision (children's homes and foster care)?

Return to school leaflets

To supplement their attendance campaign, the government has published two leaflets aimed at parents and carers, children/young people, and teachers, encouraging attendance at school among those who are eligible. They are also very much seen as a resource to encourage attendance among vulnerable children for the last couple of weeks of the term. We are sharing them with you via the following link:

<https://coronavirusresources.phe.gov.uk/schools-/resources/leaflets/>

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.

We have had many forms successfully submitted using the new form. However, we have also had a small number of queries from settings where they have not been able to successfully use the new form. The most common issues have been where providers have been trying to use old links which appear active, but do not recognise the URN for the service, and also where they are using an old version of a web browser.

Also, online forms on gov.uk have a time-out feature. We have made a change to the form so that you are made aware through a time-out pop-up warning. If you have not interacted with the form after 12 minutes, you will see a 3 minute countdown warning. At that point you will be able to re-set the timer and continue to complete the form – there is no limit on the amount of times you can re-set the timer. However, after 15 minutes if you have not been able to re-set, a message will appear to inform you that you are signed out. This is a temporary fix, one which we hope will resolve many of the problems users have been facing. A longer term solution, one which better recognises the particular circumstances of children's social care providers, is being explored and we will update you in future emails.

The attached document provides some guidance that may be useful if you are having difficulty submitting the form. If after reviewing the document you are still unable to submit using the new form, please provide a screenshot of the page if possible when emailing us so we can fully and quickly investigate your problem.

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.