

Joint inspections focusing on children's mental health

New inspections will examine how local services respond to children living with mental ill health, including:

- local authorities
- schools
- the police
- youth offending teams
- health professionals

The series of 6 joint targeted area inspections (JTAI) involving Ofsted, Care Quality Commission (CQC), HMI Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services, and HMI Probation will begin in September this year. The inspections will include an evaluation of 'front door' services and how agencies are identifying and responding to children with mental ill health.

Inspectors will also undertake a deep dive inspection of how agencies assess and support the mental health of children aged 10 to 15 years old who are subject to child in need or child protection plans, or are a looked-after child.

Last year, statistics published by the NHS showed that one in 9 children aged 5 to 15 years old had a mental health disorder. In each area, inspectors will look at how agencies identify and intervene early to support children experiencing mental ill health.

[Guidance published today](#) sets out how the inspections will work in practice.

Ofsted's National Director for Social Care, Yvette Stanley, said:

At a time when local authorities and their health partners are making difficult decisions about resources, it's important that the needs of children with mental ill health are being met.

We are all responsible for children's mental health. We don't expect frontline practitioners to diagnose conditions, but we do expect them to be able to identify concerns and to know where to turn to for advice and support.

These inspections will help us to see where children's mental health needs are being met and where things need to improve.

Ursula Gallagher, Deputy Chief Inspector of General Practice and Children's Health, Care Quality Commission, said:

As part of the recommendations in our review of children and young people's mental health services, we called for national action to make sure local services work together to support children and young people's mental health needs.

As regulators, we also need to demonstrate the joined-up working that we expect to see in local systems. Coming together for these joint targeted area inspections, we will be able to provide an in-depth view of how agencies are supporting the mental health of children in some of the most vulnerable circumstances, and whether progress is being made to improve their care and support.

Chief Inspector of Probation Justin Russell said:

Through our inspections of youth offending services, we have found support for children and young people with mental health issues to be variable across England and Wales.

We look forward to working with our partners to identify good and poor practice in this area. We want to ensure troubled children and young people get the support they need to thrive, not just survive.

[JTAs](#) look at how effectively agencies are working together in their local area to help and protect children. Each set of joint inspections evaluates the multi-agency response to a particular issue or theme.

The findings from each inspection are published in a letter to local partnerships, clearly setting out what they are doing well and what they need to do to improve.

When all 6 inspections are complete, an overview report will be published to highlight learning and good practice on the theme of children living with mental ill health.