

Ofsted to visit local authorities and children's social care providers

Ofsted is to visit local authorities and children's social care providers from September. The visits will provide assurance that vulnerable children are getting the help, care and protection that they need, amid concerns that some have fallen out of sight during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Today the inspectorate has published [new guidance for local authorities](#) and the [children's social care providers it regulates and inspects](#) on how the visits will work in practice.

The visits will not result in a graded judgement, and the findings will be published, setting out what is going well and what needs to improve. For the services it regulates, Ofsted will still be able to use its enforcement powers where it has serious concerns.

Although regulated providers will not receive an inspection grade, the reports will have all the information that commissioners need to help them make the right decisions for children.

Inspectors will look at the experiences of children and how local authorities and providers have made the best possible decisions for children in the context of the pandemic. For local authorities, that includes how they have joined up schools and social care services while schools were closed, to stop vulnerable pupils from slipping through the net.

Ofsted will visit as many providers and local authorities as possible, prioritising those it has concerns about. It will also include a sample of local authorities judged good or outstanding at their last inspection to identify good practice that will help others with their recovery plans.

Full inspections of local authorities will not resume until January 2021 at the earliest, while routine inspections of social care providers, such as children's homes, are on hold until April 2021.

Yvette Stanley, Ofsted's National Director for regulation and social care, said:

The normal lines of sight to our most vulnerable children haven't been in place in recent months. It's vital that we get back into local authorities and other social care providers to look at how children are being cared for and protected.

We are acutely aware of the pressure children's social care is facing in the wake of COVID-19. This is not about judging, but offering reassurance to children, families, and those commissioning services. We also want to highlight the excellent work local authorities and providers are doing to make sure children get the

help, protection and care they deserve in very difficult circumstances.