



Children's Care Home Standards: Monitoring Inspection Framework

December 2019

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List of Standards

The following standards are to be assessed as part of any given inspection:

Standard 1: the child's wishes and feelings

Standard 2: promoting a positive identity and potential through individualised care

Standard 3: promoting positive behaviour and relationships

Standard 4: promoting good health and wellbeing

Standard 5: children missing from care

Standard 6: safeguarding children

Standard 7: promoting educational achievement and leisure activities

Standard 8: promoting and supporting contact

Standard 9: providing a suitable physical environment for the child

Standard 10: preparation for a placement

Standard 11: promoting independence and moves to adulthood and leaving care

Standard 12: statement of purpose and children's guide

Standard 13: suitability to work with children

Standard 14: the child's right to privacy

Standard 15: sufficient staffing of the home

Standard 16: training, development and qualification of staff

Standard 17: staff support and supervision

Standard 18: handling allegations and suspicions of harm

Standard 19: managing effectively and efficiently and monitoring the home

Standard 20: maintaining records

Standard 21: notification of significant events

Standard 22: care plan and review

The inspection principles

Through analysing international models of monitoring inspection frameworks for children's care home provision, inspections for Seychelles shall follow the following principles:

- **Intelligent:** Work will be evidence-led and evaluation tools and frameworks will be valid and reliable;
- **Responsible:** Frameworks will be fair. We will seek to reduce inspection burdens and make our expectations and findings clear.
- **Focussed:** Time and resources will be focussed on where they can lead directly to improvement.

Our approach is further underpinned by the following three areas:

To focus on the things that matter most to children's lives

Children's care home inspections should focus on the experiences and progress of children. We regularly ask children, and the adults who look after them, what matters most about children's experiences and progress. Using this to guide us, we focus the criteria for our judgements on the difference that providers are making to children's lives. Adults can only support children well if they are given the time, resources and information they need to do this, so we also take account of the quality of the support that the adults who care for children receive.

To be consistent in our expectations of providers

It is important that professionals and members of the public can compare services that do similar things. We make this possible by being consistent in what we expect from providers. We use the same judgement structure and the same evaluation criteria for all children's care homes. This includes taking a similar approach to deciding on the frequency of inspections.

To prioritise our work where improvement is needed most

Inspections shall be conducted in a way that focuses resources where they are needed most. If leaders and managers have shown that they can consistently deliver services for children well, a decision may be made to return less often or to do a more proportionate inspection.

However, the risk to children of not inspecting as frequently is always taken into account. A broad range of information shall be used to tell determine whether standards are slipping. Inspectors are always able to go back to good and outstanding providers more quickly if there are concerns.

The focus of inspections

There is a consistent and clear focus on evaluating the impact of care and support on the experiences and progress of children and young people.

This means that:

- Inspectors will assess the presence of policies and procedures in place; however, more time will be allocated towards looking at the impact of services on children's lives;

- Inspectors will give the minimum notice of inspection, so that they can see settings as they are on a day-to-day basis, and so that the time providers may spend preparing for inspection is reduced as much as possible;
- We have set out as clearly as possible the details of the information required by inspectors to assist their inspection; this will enable providers to produce their best evidence whenever notice of inspection is given.

Judgement structure

Our judgement structure stems from the first principle of inspection – to focus on the things that matter most to children’s lives – and places the progress and experiences of children and other people who use children’s services at the core of inspections.

Inspections follow the 4-point scale (**Outstanding, Good, Requires Improvement to be Good, and Inadequate**) to make judgements on the overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account:

- how well children and young people are helped and protected, and
- the effectiveness of leaders and managers.

This is carried out in relation to all 22 standards outlined on the second page of this document.

The judgement about how well children and young people are helped and protected is a limiting judgement. This means that if inspectors judge any area relating to these standards to be inadequate, then the ‘overall experiences and progress’ judgement will always be inadequate.

The judgement of the effectiveness of leaders and managers is a graded judgement. If inspectors judge this area to be inadequate, this is likely to lead to a judgement of inadequate, and certainly no more than requires improvement, for ‘overall experiences and progress’.

Inspectors will make the limiting and graded judgements first so that they can take these into account for the ‘overall progress and experiences’ judgement.

How inspectors use the evaluation criteria

Inspectors will use the descriptions of what ‘good’ looks like as the benchmarks against which to grade and judge performance. The judgement, however, is not derived from a checklist. It is a professional evaluation of the effectiveness and impact of the care and support provided on the experiences and progress of children and young people. Failure to meet all of the criteria for ‘good’ will not automatically lead to a judgement of ‘requires improvement’.

Some criteria will have less relevance than others in some settings because of the nature of the setting and the needs of the children and young people.

Even when all the criteria are relevant, there is always a degree of professional judgement in weighing and balancing evidence against the evaluation criteria.

The inspector judges a setting to be good if they conclude that the evidence sits most appropriately with this finding.

Required evidence, gradings and grading guidance

Inspectors look at several areas of required evidence for each judgement. The areas of required evidence are set out in the bullet points at the beginning of the evaluation criteria for each judgement.

Standard 1: the child's wishes and feelings

Areas of required evidence:

- Children's views, wishes and feelings are acted upon in the day-to-day running of the home and important decisions or changes in the child's life, unless this is contrary to their interests.
- Children understand how their views have been taken into account, and where significant wishes or concerns are not acted upon, they are helped to understand why.
- All children communicate their views on all aspects of their care and support.
- Children have access to independent advice and support from adults who they can contact directly and in private about problems or concerns, which is appropriate to their age and understanding.
- Children can take up issues in the most appropriate way with support and without fear that this will result in any adverse consequences.
- Children receive prompt feedback on any concerns or complaints raised and are kept informed of progress.
- The views, wishes and feelings of children and those significant to them are taken into account in monitoring staff and in developing the home.

Good

Children are able to build trusted and secure relationships with adults who are looking after them. Staff know the children well, listen to them, invest time in them, protect them and promote their welfare. Children are able to develop an appropriate sense of permanence and belonging. They make progress and have a range of positive experiences.

Children are supported to actively participate in day-to-day and more complex decisions about their lives, as appropriate. They are sensitively helped to understand where it may not be possible to act on their wishes and where other action is taken that is in their best interests. Children have access to, and are actively encouraged to involve, an independent advocate and, where appropriate, an independent visitor.

Children know how to complain. The setting's complaints policy is easy to understand, accessible and child-focused. Children understand what has happened as a result of their complaint. Their complaints are treated seriously and are responded to clearly. Urgent action is taken and practice and services improve accordingly.

Children can identify a trusted adult they can talk to about any concerns. They report that adults listen to them, take their concerns seriously and respond appropriately.

Requires improvement to be good

The experiences and progress of children and young people are likely to require improvement when there is evidence of the following:

The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children so that they receive positive experiences and make good progress.

There are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded and promoted.

Inadequate

The experiences and progress of children and young people are likely to be judged inadequate if there is evidence of the following:

There are serious and/or widespread failures that mean children are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded.

Their care and experiences are poor and they are not making, or not likely to, make progress.

Outstanding

The experiences and progress of children and young people are likely to be judged outstanding if, in addition to meeting the requirements of a good judgement, there is evidence of the following:

Professional practice consistently exceeds the standard of good and results in sustained improvement to the lives of children, even where they have complex or challenging needs. There is significant evidence of change and improvement because of the excellent quality of care provided. The progress of children is exceptional, taking into account their starting points.

The experience of living in the home enhances children's life chances. For children with the most complex needs, staff are able to evidence the sustained benefit to the lives of children in their care. There are examples of excellent practice that are worthy of wider dissemination.

Research-informed practice, some of which may be innovative, continues to develop from a strong and confident base, making an exceptional difference to the lives and experiences of children.

Standard 2: promoting a positive identity and potential through individualised care

Areas of required evidence:

- Children receive personalised care that promotes all aspects of their individual identity and are each treated as an individual rather than as a member of a group.
- Staff support children's social and emotional development and enable children to develop emotional resilience and self-esteem.
- Staff meet children's individual needs as set out in the child's care plan, taking into account where appropriate their relationship with the wider group of children.
- Children exercise choice in the food that they eat and are able to prepare their own meals and snacks, within the limits that a reasonable parent would set.
- Children exercise choice and independence in the clothes and personal belongings that they buy and have these needs met, within the limits that a reasonable parent would set.
- Children develop skills and emotional resilience that will prepare them for independent living.
- Children receive a personal allowance appropriate to their age and understanding that is consistent with their care plan.

Good

Staff place the well-being of individual children at the centre of their practice, irrespective of the challenges they may present. All their achievements are celebrated and appropriately rewarded. Their day-to-day needs are met, such as routine, privacy, personal space, nutritious meals and enjoyable mealtimes. Children have appropriate, carefully assessed, supported contact (direct and/or indirect) with their family, friends and other people who are important to them, such as previous carers. There are no unnecessary restrictions in place. Staff work proactively and positively with parents and former carers to promote meaningful and safe contact and continuity of care, where appropriate.

Leaders and staff work proactively with the local community, including neighbours, faith groups, leisure organisations and local businesses, to support children to use the facilities and to develop a sense of belonging, security and purpose.

Children are treated with dignity and respect. They experience care and help that are sensitive and responsive to their identity and family history, including age, disability, ethnicity, faith or belief, gender, gender identity, language, race and sexual orientation. The care and help assist them to develop a positive self-view and to increase their ability to form and sustain attachments and build emotional resilience and a sense of their own identity. The care and help also assist them to overcome any previous experiences of neglect and trauma.

Children are able to build trusted and secure relationships with adults who are looking after them. Staff know the children well, listen to them, invest time in them, protect them and promote their welfare. Children are able to develop an appropriate sense of permanence and belonging. They make progress and have a range of positive experiences.

Requires improvement to be good

The experiences and progress of children and young people are likely to require improvement when there is evidence of the following:

The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children so that they receive positive experiences and make good progress.

There are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded and promoted.

Inadequate

The experiences and progress of children and young people are likely to be judged inadequate if there is evidence of the following:

There are serious and/or widespread failures that mean children are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded.

Their care and experiences are poor and they are not making, or not likely to, make progress.

Outstanding

The experiences and progress of children and young people are likely to be judged outstanding if, in addition to meeting the requirements of a good judgement, there is evidence of the following:

Professional practice consistently exceeds the standard of good and results in sustained improvement to the lives of children, even where they have complex or challenging needs. There is significant evidence of change and improvement because of the excellent quality of care provided. The progress of children is exceptional, taking into account their starting points.

The experience of living in the home enhances children's life chances. For children with the most complex needs, staff are able to evidence the sustained benefit to the lives of children in their care. There are examples of excellent practice that are worthy of wider dissemination.

Research-informed practice, some of which may be innovative, continues to develop from a strong and confident base, making an exceptional difference to the lives and experiences of children.

Standard 3: promoting positive behaviour and relationships

Areas of required evidence:

- The home has high expectations of all children and staff.
- There is an environment and culture to promote models and support positive behaviour that all staff understand and implement.
- The home has a clear written policy on managing behaviour, which includes supporting positive behaviour, de-escalation of conflicts, discipline, control and restraint, that all staff understand and apply at all times.
- All staff understand, share and implement the home's ethos, philosophy and approach to caring for children.
- Children develop and practice skills to build and maintain positive relationships, be assertive and resolve conflicts positively.
- Children are encouraged to take responsibility for their behaviour, in a way that is appropriate to their age and abilities.
- Each home meets children's emotional and behavioural needs.
- Sanctions and rewards for behaviour are clear, reasonable and fair and are understood by all staff and children.
- Staff understand and manage their own feelings and responses to the emotions and behaviours presented by children, and understand how past experiences and present emotions are communicated through behaviour.
- Staff are supported to manage their responses and feelings arising from working with children, particularly where children display challenging behaviour or have difficult emotional issues. Staff are supported to understand how children's previous experiences can manifest in challenging behaviour.
- Children do not identify bullying as a problem at the home. Staff and children understand bullying is unacceptable. Staff working in the home understand their role in helping to prevent and counter bullying by any adult or child living or working in the home.
- Staff in the home are trained to recognise and deal with any indications or incidents of bullying, to act proactively and intervene positively, engaging with those who bully as well as those who are bullied.
- Physical restraint is only used in exceptional circumstances, to prevent injury to any person (including the child who is being restrained) or to prevent serious damage to the property of any person (including the child who is being restrained).
- Restraint is not used as a punishment, nor to force compliance with instructions where significant harm or serious damage to property are not otherwise likely. Use of restraint is set out in the home's behaviour management policy.
- Where children's homes use restraint, staff are trained in the use of physical restraint techniques that are appropriate and not excessive, and only use the home's agreed techniques. Training is regularly refreshed. All children and staff are given an opportunity to discuss incidents of restraint they have been involved in, witnessed or been affected by, with a relevant adult.
- Where any sanctions, disciplinary measures or restraint are used, children are encouraged to have their views recorded in the records kept by the home.
- Each home only carries out searches of a child, their room or their possessions in accordance with the home's guidance.
- Each home regularly reviews incidents of challenging behaviour, and examines trends or issues emerging from this, to enable staff to reflect and learn to inform future practice.

- The home's approach to care minimises the need for police involvement to deal with challenging behaviour and avoids criminalising children unnecessarily.

Good

The culture of the home is characterised by high expectations and aspirations for all children. The ethos and objectives of the home are demonstrated in practice.

Positive behaviour is consistently promoted. Staff use effective de-escalation techniques and creative alternative strategies that are specific to the needs of each child or young person and planned in consultation with them where possible.

Children feel protected and are protected from harm, including neglect, abuse, sexual exploitation, accidents, self-harm, bullying and radicalisation. There is a strong, robust and proactive response from all those working with children that reduces actual harm or the risk of harm to them. That response includes regular and effective contact and planning with the child's allocated social worker and their family, if this is appropriate and in accordance with plans for their future.

Children develop skills and strategies to manage their own conflicts and difficult feelings through developing positive relationships with staff. There are clear, consistent and appropriate boundaries for children.

Conflict management is effective and includes the appropriate use of restorative practices that improve relationships, increase children's sense of personal responsibility and reduce the need for formal police intervention. Children receive help and support to manage their behaviour and feelings safely. Staff respond with clear boundaries about what is safe and acceptable and seek to understand the triggers for behaviour.

Children are treated with dignity and respect. They experience care and help that are sensitive and responsive to their identity and family history, including age, disability, ethnicity, faith or belief, gender, gender identity, language, race and sexual orientation. The care and help assist them to develop a positive self-view and to increase their ability to form and sustain attachments and build emotional resilience and a sense of their own identity. The care and help also assist them to overcome any previous experiences of neglect and trauma.

Restraint is used only in strict accordance with the legislative framework to protect the child or young person and those around them. All incidents are reviewed, recorded and monitored and the views of the child or young person, dependent on their age and understanding, are sought and understood.

Any searches of children or their rooms and possessions are carried out sensitively by appropriately trained staff with due consideration given to their need to feel safe and to have their dignity and needs respected. All searches are appropriately recorded, including the reasons for the search, efforts to seek the young person's consent, any risk assessment and management oversight of the decision to undertake a search.

Requires improvement to be good

The help and protection offered to children and young people are likely to require improvement if children are not yet receiving good enough help and protection, but there are no serious failures that leave them either being harmed or at risk of harm.

Inadequate

The help and protection offered to children and young people are likely to be inadequate if there are serious and/or widespread failures that leave children being harmed, at risk of harm or their welfare not being safeguarded.

Outstanding

The help and protection offered to young people are likely to be judged outstanding if there is evidence of the following:

Professional practice results in sustained improvement to the lives of children; highly effective planning manages and minimises risks inside and outside of the home; where children are new to the home, any risks are well understood and are significantly reducing; proactive and creative safeguarding practice means that all children, including the most vulnerable, have a strong sense of safety and well-being and they are unlikely to be missing from the home on a regular basis; children are involved in creating ways to deescalate situations and finding creative alternative strategies that are effective.

Research-informed practice, some of which may be innovative, continues to develop from a strong and confident base, making an exceptional difference to the lives and experiences of children.

Standard 4: promoting good health and wellbeing

Areas of required evidence:

- Children's physical, emotional and social development needs are promoted.
- Children understand their health needs, how to maintain a healthy lifestyle and to make informed decisions about their own health.
- Children are encouraged to participate in a range of positive activities that contribute to their physical and emotional health.
- Children have prompt access to doctors and other health professionals, including specialist services, when they need these services.
- Children's health is promoted in accordance with their care plan and staff are clear about what responsibilities and decisions are delegated to them, and where consent for medical treatment needs to be obtained.
- Children's wishes and feelings are sought and taken into account in their health care, according to their understanding, and staff advocate on behalf of children.
- Staff have received sufficient training on health and hygiene issues and First Aid, with particular emphasis on health promotion.
- Staff receive guidance and training to provide appropriate care if looking after children with complex health needs.
- The home has good links with health agencies, including specialist services where appropriate, such as mental health services and reproductive health services.
- Staff involved in delivering therapeutic interventions have appropriate training and expertise and access to regular supervision.
- Specific therapies are used only a) where there is a clear and widely accepted theoretical or evidence base underpinning its effectiveness, and b) with the continuing agreement of the child's responsible authority (e.g. Social Services) or a person with parental responsibility, *and* of the child concerned where the child is of sufficient understanding.
- Each child's wishes and feelings are sought and taken into account in their health care, according to their understanding.
- Medicines which are kept in the home are stored safely and are accessible only by those for whom they are intended.
- Prescribed medication is only given to the child for whom it was prescribed, and in accordance with the prescription. Children who are able and wish to keep and take their own medication, can do so safely.
- There is a written record of all medication, treatment and First Aid given to children during their placement.
- The home has any physical adaptations or equipment needed to provide appropriate care for children.

Good

Children are in good health or are being helped to improve their health or to manage lifelong conditions. Their health needs (including their mental and sexual health needs, as appropriate) are identified. They have access to local health services when they need them. Arrangements for managing medication are safe and effective and promote independence wherever possible. Staff develop effective relationships with health professionals to promote good health.

Specialist help is made available according to the individual needs of children. The help is available, as soon as it is needed, at the intensity required and for as long as it is required. Where services are not available or children are waiting for a long time for help, the home is proactive in challenging and escalating concerns with the placing authority and/or other partners.

Any specific type or model of care delivered or commissioned by the home is provided by staff who are suitably trained, experienced, qualified and supervised. There is evidence of benefits to children and the care is reviewed regularly.

Requires improvement to be good

The experiences and progress of children and young people are likely to require improvement when there is evidence of the following:

The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children so that they receive positive experiences and make good progress.

There are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded and promoted.

Inadequate

The experiences and progress of children and young people are likely to be judged inadequate if there is evidence of the following:

There are serious and/or widespread failures that mean children are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded.

Their care and experiences are poor and they are not making, or not likely to, make progress.

Outstanding

The experiences and progress of children and young people are likely to be judged outstanding if, in addition to meeting the requirements of a good judgement, there is evidence of the following:

Professional practice consistently exceeds the standard of good and results in sustained improvement to the lives of children, even where they have complex or challenging needs. There is significant evidence of change and improvement because of the excellent quality of care provided. The progress of children is exceptional, taking into account their starting points.

The experience of living in the home enhances children's life chances. For children with the most complex needs, staff are able to evidence the sustained benefit to the lives of children in their care. There are examples of excellent practice that are worthy of wider dissemination.

Research-informed practice, some of which may be innovative, continues to develop from a strong and confident base, making an exceptional difference to the lives and experiences of children.

Standard 5: children missing from care

Areas of required evidence:

- The care and support provided to children minimises the risk that they will go missing and reduces the risk of harm, should the child go missing.
- Staff working within the home know and implement the home's policy in relation to children going missing and their role in implementing that policy.
- Staff are aware of current legislation and government guidance on the measures they can take to prevent a child leaving without permission, and do not exceed these.
- Staff actively search for children who are missing, including working with police where appropriate.
- If a child is absent from the home and their whereabouts is not known (i.e. the child is missing), the home's procedures are compatible with protocols and procedures maintained and managed by the police for the area where the home is located.
- Children are helped to understand the dangers and risks of leaving the home without permission and are made aware of where they can access help if they consider running away.

Good

Children who go missing experience well-co-ordinated responses that reduce actual harm or risk of harm to them. Risks are well understood and minimised. There is a clear plan of urgent action in place to protect them and to reduce further harm or the risk of harm. The home is aware of, and implements in full, the requirements of the statutory guidance for children who are missing. It challenges the local authority where an independent return home interview is not offered or arranged by the local authority. The home takes appropriate steps to escalate concerns. Parents and carers are made aware of incidents where the child has been or is missing, where this is appropriate and relevant to the plans for that child's future care. Staff look for children when they are missing.

Requires improvement to be good

The help and protection offered to children and young people are likely to require improvement if children are not yet receiving good enough help and protection, but there are no serious failures that leave them either being harmed or at risk of harm.

Inadequate

The help and protection offered to children and young people are likely to be inadequate if there are serious and/or widespread failures that leave children being harmed, at risk of harm or their welfare not being safeguarded.

Outstanding

The help and protection offered to young people are likely to be judged outstanding if there is evidence of the following:

Professional practice results in sustained improvement to the lives of children; highly effective planning manages and minimises risks inside and outside of the home; where children are new to the home, any risks are well understood and are significantly reducing; proactive and creative safeguarding practice means that all children, including the most vulnerable, have a strong sense of safety and well-being and they are unlikely to be missing from the home on a regular basis; children are involved in creating ways to deescalate situations and finding creative alternative strategies that are effective.

Research-informed practice, some of which may be innovative, continues to develop from a strong and confident base, making an exceptional difference to the lives and experiences of children.

Standard 6: safeguarding children

Areas of required evidence:

- Children’s safety and welfare is promoted in the home. Children are protected from abuse and other forms of significant harm.
- Staff actively promote the welfare of children living in the home.
- Staff make positive relationships with children in the home, generate a culture of openness and trust and are aware of - and alert to - any signs or symptoms that might indicate that a child is at risk of harm.
- Staff encourage children to take appropriate risks as a normal part of growing up. Children are helped to understand how to keep themselves safe, including outside the home and when using the Internet or social media.
- The home implements a proportionate approach to any risk assessment.
- Staff are trained in appropriate safe-care practice, including skills to care for children who have been abused. For providers who offer placements to disabled children, this includes training specifically on issues affecting disabled children.
- The residential care home manager and staff work effectively in partnership with other agencies concerned with child protection (e.g. Social Services, schools, hospitals, the police, etc.).
- Unchecked visitors are adequately ‘chaperoned’ when on the home’s premises.
- Visitation procedures of children’s care homes (as mandated by Social Services) are strictly adhered to.
- Staff take all reasonable steps to ensure that children are not treated as a ‘commodity’ in the vetting and matching process for adoption, and that all adoption policies and procedures set by Social Services are strictly adhered to.

Good

Children feel protected and are protected from harm, including neglect, abuse, sexual exploitation, accidents, self-harm, bullying and radicalisation. Any discriminatory behaviours are challenged and help and support are given to children about how to treat others with respect. There is a strong, robust and proactive response from all those working with children that reduces actual harm or the risk of harm to them. That response includes regular and effective contact and planning with the child’s allocated social worker and their family, if this is appropriate and in accordance with plans for their future.

Any risks associated with children offending, misusing drugs or alcohol, self-harming, going missing or being sexually exploited are known and understood by the adults who look after them. Individual, up-to-date risk assessments effectively address any known vulnerabilities for each child and set out what action should be taken to address the risks. There are plans and help in place that are reducing actual harm or the risk of harm and there is evidence that these risks are being minimised.

Staff working within the home are clear about, and follow, procedures for responding to concerns about the safety of a child or young person. Any child protection concerns are immediately shared with the placing and/or host local authority as required and a record of that referral is retained. There is evidence that staff follow up the outcome of the referral quickly and that appropriate action has

been taken to protect the child or young person from further harm. Where the setting is not satisfied with the response from either the local authority where the setting is situated or the placing authority, it escalates its concerns appropriately, including by writing to the director of children's services in the local authority placing the child.

The home has effective links with local authorities, designated officers and other important safeguarding agencies, including the police. There is good communication about safeguarding issues, such as any injuries sustained during restraints or allegations against staff. The home has good relationships with relevant local voluntary sector organisations that may be able to offer specialist support to children in keeping themselves safe.

Staff understand the risks that use of the internet may pose for children, such as bullying, sexual exploitation and radicalisation. They have well-developed strategies in place to keep children safe and to support them in learning how to keep themselves safe.

Requires improvement to be good

The help and protection offered to children and young people are likely to require improvement if children are not yet receiving good enough help and protection, but there are no serious failures that leave them either being harmed or at risk of harm.

Inadequate

The help and protection offered to children and young people are likely to be inadequate if there are serious and/or widespread failures that leave children being harmed, at risk of harm or their welfare not being safeguarded.

Outstanding

The help and protection offered to young people are likely to be judged outstanding if there is evidence of the following:

Professional practice results in sustained improvement to the lives of children; highly effective planning manages and minimises risks inside and outside of the home; where children are new to the home, any risks are well understood and are significantly reducing; proactive and creative safeguarding practice means that all children, including the most vulnerable, have a strong sense of safety and well-being and they are unlikely to be missing from the home on a regular basis; children are involved in creating ways to deescalate situations and finding creative alternative strategies that are effective.

Research-informed practice, some of which may be innovative, continues to develop from a strong and confident base, making an exceptional difference to the lives and experiences of children.

Standard 7: promoting educational achievement and leisure activities

Areas of required evidence:

- Children, including pre-school and older children, have a home which promotes a learning environment and supports their development.
- Children have access to a range of educational resources to support their learning, and have opportunities beyond the school day to engage in activities which promote learning.
- Children are supported to attend school, college or alternative provision regularly.
- Children are helped by staff to achieve their educational or training goals. This includes providing support, facilities and opportunities as needed. Staff work with a child's education provider to maximise each child's achievement and to minimise any underachievement.
- Each home is working in a way to fully promote and value children's education.
- The home maintains regular contact with each child's school, college, and other education settings, with staff attending all parents' meetings as appropriate in line with the care plan. Staff advocate for the child where appropriate.
- Staff engage and work with schools, colleges, other organisations, and Social Services to support children's education, including advocating to help overcome any problems the child may be experiencing in their educational setting. Staff have up-to-date information about each child's educational progress and school attendance record.
- Children who have been suspended or excluded from school have access to appropriate education and training, so that they are supported and enabled to resume full-time education.
- Children develop their emotional, intellectual, social, creative and physical skills through the accessible and stimulating environment created by the home. Children are supported to take part in school-based and out-of-school activities.
- Children pursue individual interests and hobbies. This includes taking part in a range of activities, including leisure activities and trips.
- Staff understand what is in the child's care plan and have clarity about decisions they can make about the day-to-day arrangements for the child, including such matters as education, leisure activities, overnight stays, holidays, and personal issues such as haircuts.
- Staff are supported to make reasonable and appropriate decisions within the authority delegated to them, without having to seek consent unnecessarily.
- Children take part in age-appropriate peer activities as agreed by the home's staff in a way similar to how a reasonable parent might reach agreement with their children, taking into account the framework of the care plan, decision-making and any assessment of risk to the child.
- Children are encouraged and enabled to make and sustain friendships with children outside the home, which may involve friends visiting the home.

Good

Children attend school or other educational provision; they are learning and making good progress from their starting points. Staff are ambitious for children and support children to attend and do well in their education. There is effective liaison with schools and colleges. Where children are excluded, have no school place or attend school on a part-time basis, staff support educational activity throughout the day and advocate for a return to full-time education as soon as possible.

Children enjoy access to a range of social, educational and recreational opportunities, including activities in the local community. They are able to participate in after-school activities, community-based activities, school trips and holidays. They are supported to engage in faith-based activities if they wish.

Children are supported to develop their independence according to their individual needs, while protecting themselves from being in unsafe situations or with unsafe people. The home challenges the responsible placing authority when staff have concerns about the future plans for the young person, including the timing of leaving care.

Requires improvement to be good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers is likely to require improvement if there is evidence of the following:

The characteristics of good leadership and management are not in place.

Where there are weaknesses in practice, leaders and managers have identified the issues and have plans in place to address them or they are less serious and there is capacity to take the necessary action.

Inadequate

The judgement on the effectiveness of leaders and managers will be inadequate if:

The experiences, progress or protection of children are inadequate and leaders and managers do not know the strengths and weaknesses of the home. They have been ineffective in prioritising, challenging and making improvements, and/or

The provider has not taken effective and timely steps to appoint an appropriate, permanent manager within a reasonable timeframe and/or the appointed manager has not registered as soon as possible.

Outstanding

The effectiveness of leaders and managers is likely to be judged outstanding if, in addition to meeting the requirements of a good judgement, there is evidence of the following:

Leaders and managers are inspirational, confident and ambitious for children and young people and influential in changing the lives of those in their care.

They create a culture of high aspiration and positivity and they have high expectations of their staff to change and improve the lives of the children they are responsible for.

They lead by example, innovate and generate creative ideas to sustain the highest quality care for children.

They know their strengths and weaknesses well and can provide evidence of improvement over a sustained period.

They have working relationships with partner agencies and schools that ensure the best possible care, experiences and futures for children.

Standard 8: promoting and supporting contact

Areas of required evidence:

- Children are supported and encouraged to maintain and develop family contacts and friendships, subject to any limitations or provisions set out in their care plan and any court order. Appropriate forms of contact are promoted and facilitated for each child, including where appropriate: visits to the child in the home, visits by the child to relatives or friends, meetings with relatives or friends, letters, exchange of photographs and electronic forms of contact.
- Staff have appropriate training, supervision and support if they are required to supervise and facilitate contact.
- Emergency restrictions on contact are only made to protect the child from significant risk to their safety or welfare.
- Ongoing restriction on communication by the child is agreed by the child's Social Worker, and takes the child's wishes and feelings into account.
- The home feeds back to Social Services any significant reactions a child has to contact arrangements or visits with any person.
- Staff understand what decisions about contact are delegated to them, in line with the child's care plan, and to make those decisions in the child's best interests.

Good

Staff place the well-being of individual children at the centre of their practice, irrespective of the challenges they may present. All their achievements are celebrated and appropriately rewarded. Their day-to-day needs are met, such as routine, privacy, personal space, nutritious meals and enjoyable mealtimes. Children have appropriate, carefully assessed, supported contact (direct and/or indirect) with their family, friends and other people who are important to them, such as previous carers. There are no unnecessary restrictions in place. Staff work proactively and positively with parents and former carers to promote meaningful and safe contact and continuity of care, where appropriate.

Children are able to build trusted and secure relationships with adults who are looking after them. Staff know the children well, listen to them, invest time in them, protect them and promote their welfare. Children are able to develop an appropriate sense of permanence and belonging. They make progress and have a range of positive experiences.

Requires improvement to be good

The experiences and progress of children and young people are likely to require improvement when there is evidence of the following:

The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children so that they receive positive experiences and make good progress.

There are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded and promoted.

Inadequate

The experiences and progress of children and young people are likely to be judged inadequate if there is evidence of the following:

There are serious and/or widespread failures that mean children are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded.

Their care and experiences are poor and they are not making, or not likely to, make progress.

Outstanding

The experiences and progress of children and young people are likely to be judged outstanding if, in addition to meeting the requirements of a good judgement, there is evidence of the following:

Professional practice consistently exceeds the standard of good and results in sustained improvement to the lives of children, even where they have complex or challenging needs. There is significant evidence of change and improvement because of the excellent quality of care provided. The progress of children is exceptional, taking into account their starting points.

The experience of living in the home enhances children's life chances. For children with the most complex needs, staff are able to evidence the sustained benefit to the lives of children in their care. There are examples of excellent practice that are worthy of wider dissemination.

Research-informed practice, some of which may be innovative, continues to develop from a strong and confident base, making an exceptional difference to the lives and experiences of children.

Standard 9: providing a suitable physical environment for the child

Areas of required evidence:

- Each home is situated in a location that supports its aims and objectives and proposed models of care for children and young people. This includes children being able to access external services, recreational activities and to maintain and develop relationships with family and friends.
- The home's location and design promote children's health, safety and wellbeing, and avoids factors such as excessive isolation and areas that present significant risks to children.
- The home provides a comfortable and homely environment and is well maintained and decorated.
- Physical restrictions on normal movement within or from the home are not used unless this is necessary to safeguard children and promote their welfare and development.
- Staff preparation and training cover health and safety issues. Staff are provided with written guidelines on their health and safety responsibilities. Where homes offer placements for disabled children, the accommodation provided must be suitable to the particular needs of the disabled children living in the home, which may include suitable aids, adaptations and other suitable equipment.
- Risk assessments of the whole children's home environment are carried out, to identify any potential sources of harm to the children. These are recorded in writing and regularly reviewed.
- There are clear emergency evacuation procedures that all staff and children are familiar with and have practiced so they know what to do in an emergency.
- Bedrooms are not shared unless each child freely agrees to the arrangement, and are not shared by children of different genders, or children of significantly different ages (other than siblings where this is appropriate). The choice of whether a child has a separate room (or shares) is made only after careful consideration of all available facts, including the risk of bullying or abuse.
- A request by a child to change bedrooms is given urgent consideration and agreed, if feasible.
- Bedrooms are not shared between children and staff or adult visitors.

Good

The manager and responsible individual ensure that the physical environment is maintained to a high standard, meets the needs of the children and feels and looks like a family home for children. Any damage or wear and tear is quickly and regularly repaired.

The physical environment for children is safe and secure and protects them from harm or the risk of harm. Risk assessments are regularly reviewed and updated and comply with statutory requirements.

Requires improvement to be good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers is likely to require improvement if there is evidence of the following:

The characteristics of good leadership and management are not in place.

Where there are weaknesses in practice, leaders and managers have identified the issues and have plans in place to address them or they are less serious and there is capacity to take the necessary action.

Inadequate

The judgement on the effectiveness of leaders and managers will be inadequate if:

The experiences, progress or protection of children are inadequate and leaders and managers do not know the strengths and weaknesses of the home. They have been ineffective in prioritising, challenging and making improvements, and/or

The provider has not taken effective and timely steps to appoint an appropriate, permanent manager within a reasonable timeframe and/or the appointed manager has not registered as soon as possible.

Outstanding

The effectiveness of leaders and managers is likely to be judged outstanding if, in addition to meeting the requirements of a good judgement, there is evidence of the following:

Leaders and managers are inspirational, confident and ambitious for children and young people and influential in changing the lives of those in their care.

They create a culture of high aspiration and positivity and they have high expectations of their staff to change and improve the lives of the children they are responsible for.

They lead by example, innovate and generate creative ideas to sustain the highest quality care for children.

They know their strengths and weaknesses well and can provide evidence of improvement over a sustained period.

They have working relationships with partner agencies and schools that ensure the best possible care, experiences and futures for children.

Standard 10: preparation for a placement

Areas of required evidence:

- Each home has (and implements) clear procedures for introducing children to the home, the staff and the other children living there, which also covers emergency and immediate placements. They help children understand what to expect from living in the home.
- The children's home only provides admission to children whose assessed needs they can reasonably expect to meet.
- Unless an emergency placement makes it impossible, children are given information before arrival about the home and any other information they need or reasonably request about the placement, in a format appropriate to their age and understanding. This should include photographs, where appropriate. Wherever possible, children are able to visit the home prior to a placement decision being made. Children can bring their favourite possessions into the home.
- The home does not operate in a way which increases the risk of separation of siblings.
- Each child can remain in the home until moving on is in their best interests (taking their wishes and feelings into account), unless this is impracticable or is against the welfare of others.
- A review must take place before a child is moved to another placement, except in an emergency (where Social Services would be informed and involved).
- Where children are leaving the home, they are helped to understand the reasons why they are leaving. Children are supported during the transition to their new placement, to independent living or to their parental home.
- Where a child moves to another placement, it is evidenced that this has been authorised by Social Services.

Good

Children who are new to the home are welcomed sensitively and with careful and considered planning. Where children leave the home, work promotes positive endings and helps with building their 'life story'. When endings are unplanned, then the welfare and well-being of children remain paramount and staff act at all times with this in mind. The needs and feelings of other children living in the home are taken into account.

Leaders and managers make child-centred decisions about children coming to live at the home, including giving consideration to the needs of children already living at the home.

Where children are not settling into the home, leaders and managers take steps to ensure that the plan is reviewed with the placing authority and the family (where this is appropriate) to consider the best steps to take next. They challenge effectively and take action when they are concerned that placing authorities are not making decisions that are in children's best interests, when the statutory requirements for looked-after children are not met or when they cannot keep children safe.

Requires improvement to be good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers is likely to require improvement if there is evidence of the following:

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They lead by example, innovate and generate creative ideas to sustain the highest quality care for children.

They know their strengths and weaknesses well and can provide evidence of improvement over a sustained period.

They have working relationships with partner agencies and schools that ensure the best possible care, experiences and futures for children.

Standard 11: promoting independence and moves to adulthood and leaving care

Areas of required evidence:

- Children are supported to a) establish positive and appropriate social relationships; b) develop positive self-esteem; c) prepare for the world of work and/or further or higher education; d) prepare for moving into their own accommodation; e) develop practical skills, including shopping, buying, cooking and keeping food, washing clothes, personal self-care, and understanding and taking responsibility for personal healthcare; f) develop financial capability, knowledge and skills, and g) know about entitlements to financial and other support after leaving care, including benefits and support from social care services.
- The home contributes to a regular process of review and works collaboratively with the young person's Social Worker in implementing the plan.
- Social Services and the home jointly discuss the progress of the child's readiness to move to any future accommodation where they would expect to take on greater responsibility and personal independence.

Good

Children are supported to take age-appropriate risks as part of their development of independent living skills.

Children are supported to develop their independence according to their individual needs, while protecting themselves from being in unsafe situations or with unsafe people. The home challenges the responsible placing authority when staff have concerns about the future plans for the young person, including the timing of leaving care.

Requires improvement to be good

The experiences and progress of children and young people are likely to require improvement when there is evidence of the following:

The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children so that they receive positive experiences and make good progress.

There are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded and promoted.

Inadequate

The experiences and progress of children and young people are likely to be judged inadequate if there is evidence of the following:

There are serious and/or widespread failures that mean children are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded.

Their care and experiences are poor and they are not making, or not likely to, make progress.

Outstanding

The experiences and progress of children and young people are likely to be judged outstanding if, in addition to meeting the requirements of a good judgement, there is evidence of the following:

Professional practice consistently exceeds the standard of good and results in sustained improvement to the lives of children, even where they have complex or challenging needs. There is significant evidence of change and improvement because of the excellent quality of care provided. The progress of children is exceptional, taking into account their starting points.

The experience of living in the home enhances children's life chances. For children with the most complex needs, staff are able to evidence the sustained benefit to the lives of children in their care. There are examples of excellent practice that are worthy of wider dissemination.

Research-informed practice, some of which may be innovative, continues to develop from a strong and confident base, making an exceptional difference to the lives and experiences of children.

Standard 12: statement of purpose and children's guide

Areas of required evidence:

- The children's home has a clear Statement of Purpose which is available to and understood by staff and children and reflected in any policies, procedures and guidance. It is available to Social Services and any parent or person with parental responsibility.
- The aims and objectives of the Statement of Purpose are child-focused and show how the service will meet outcomes for children.
- Subject to the child's age and understanding, the children's home ensures the child receives the children's guide at the point of placement and that the contents of the children's guide is explained to the child in a way that is accessible.
- The guide includes a summary of what the home sets out to do for children, and how they can find out their rights.
- Where a child requires it, the guide is available when appropriate through suitable alternative methods of communication (e.g. sign language, pictures, tape recording, translation into another language, etc....).

Good

The home is effectively and efficiently managed by a permanent, suitably experienced and qualified registered manager. The statement of purpose, which is kept under review, clearly sets out the ethos and objectives of the home. The culture of the home is characterised by high expectations and aspirations for all children. The ethos and objectives of the home are demonstrated in practice.

Requires improvement to be good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers is likely to require improvement if there is evidence of the following:

The characteristics of good leadership and management are not in place.

Where there are weaknesses in practice, leaders and managers have identified the issues and have plans in place to address them or they are less serious and there is capacity to take the necessary action.

Inadequate

The judgement on the effectiveness of leaders and managers will be inadequate if:

The experiences, progress or protection of children are inadequate and leaders and managers do not know the strengths and weaknesses of the home. They have been ineffective in prioritising, challenging and making improvements, and/or

The provider has not taken effective and timely steps to appoint an appropriate, permanent manager within a reasonable timeframe and/or the appointed manager has not registered as soon as possible.

Outstanding

The effectiveness of leaders and managers is likely to be judged outstanding if, in addition to meeting the requirements of a good judgement, there is evidence of the following:

Leaders and managers are inspirational, confident and ambitious for children and young people and influential in changing the lives of those in their care.

They create a culture of high aspiration and positivity and they have high expectations of their staff to change and improve the lives of the children they are responsible for.

They lead by example, innovate and generate creative ideas to sustain the highest quality care for children.

They know their strengths and weaknesses well and can provide evidence of improvement over a sustained period.

They have working relationships with partner agencies and schools that ensure the best possible care, experiences and futures for children.

Standard 13: suitability to work with children

Areas of required evidence:

- All people working in - or for - the children's home are interviewed as part of the selection process and have references checked to assess suitability before taking on responsibilities.
- The residential care home manager can demonstrate, including from written and electronic records, that it consistently follows good recruitment practice, and all applicable current statutory requirements and guidance, in staff recruitment. This includes any police checks undertaken on prospective staff members. All personnel responsible for recruitment and selection of staff are trained in, understand and operate these good practices.
- The children's home has a record of the recruitment and vetting checks which have been carried out on those working (including as volunteers) for the children's home which includes: a) identity checks; b) police checks; c) checks to confirm qualifications which are a requirement and those that are considered by the children's home to be relevant, and d) at least two references, preferably one from a current employer and, where possible, a statement from each referee as to their opinion of the person's suitability to work with children.
- The record must show the date on which each check was completed and who carried out the check. Police check information must be kept in secure conditions and be destroyed by secure means as soon as it is no longer needed.
- The residential care home manager's system for recruiting staff and others includes an effective system for reaching decisions as to who is to be appointed, as well as the circumstances in which an application should be refused in light of any criminal convictions or other concerns about suitability that are declared or discovered through the recruitment process.
- Staff members and others subject to the above checks do not normally start work at the home until all the checks required are completed.
- Where practicable, children are involved in the recruitment of staff in the home.
- Where a person is suspected to be a threat to the wellbeing of children by a children's care home or by Social Services, they will not be considered suitable to work there. Children's care homes must keep and demonstrate evidence of such cases, and notify Social Services when relevant.

Good

The home is properly staffed and resourced to meet the needs of the children. Staff are suitably vetted and qualified and are able to deliver high-quality services to children and their families. Arrangements for recruitment and appraisals are robust and include children as appropriate.

Careful recruitment and regular monitoring of staff and volunteers prevent unsuitable people from being recruited and having the opportunity to harm children or to place them at risk. The relevant authorities and professional bodies are informed of any concerns about inappropriate adults.

Requires improvement to be good

The help and protection offered to children and young people are likely to require improvement if children are not yet receiving good enough help and protection, but there are no serious failures that leave them either being harmed or at risk of harm.

Inadequate

The help and protection offered to children and young people are likely to be inadequate if there are serious and/or widespread failures that leave children being harmed, at risk of harm or their welfare not being safeguarded.

Outstanding

The help and protection offered to young people are likely to be judged outstanding if there is evidence of the following:

Professional practice results in sustained improvement to the lives of children; highly effective planning manages and minimises risks inside and outside of the home; where children are new to the home, any risks are well understood and are significantly reducing; proactive and creative safeguarding practice means that all children, including the most vulnerable, have a strong sense of safety and well-being and they are unlikely to be missing from the home on a regular basis; children are involved in creating ways to deescalate situations and finding creative alternative strategies that are effective.

Research-informed practice, some of which may be innovative, continues to develop from a strong and confident base, making an exceptional difference to the lives and experiences of children.

Standard 14: the child's right to privacy

Areas of required evidence:

- Children's privacy and confidentiality are appropriately protected.
- Children's homes recognise and respect a child's privacy, and foster an environment where children have the space and time to 'think', 'feel', 'act' and 'do' in a manner that is private and meaningful to them, where appropriate.
- Children's homes and Social Services offer staff training that explores a child's right to privacy, and fosters working environments where children are encouraged to have appropriate and private moments where they do not feel as if their space is being invaded.
- Children's homes ensure that all staff members and service users comply with media policies regarding the display of children's faces on television, social media, news publications and other media outlets, and that regulation is followed where applicable.

Good

Children can identify a trusted adult they can talk to about any concerns. They report that adults listen to them, take their concerns seriously and respond appropriately. Children are treated with dignity and respect.

Children know how to complain. The setting's complaints policy is easy to understand, accessible and child-focused. Children understand what has happened as a result of their complaint. Their complaints are treated seriously and are responded to clearly. Urgent action is taken and practice and services improve accordingly.

Leaders and managers use learning from practice and feedback to improve the experiences and care of children including, for example, direct testimony from children, young people, parents, carers, other professionals and other stakeholders. They learn from complaints, staff feedback, placement successes and breakdowns, and any serious events. They identify strengths and areas for improvement and implement clear development plans that continually improve the experiences of children. Robust action is taken to address all issues of concern, including any concerns or complaints from children and local residents. Proper investigations are undertaken.

Requires improvement to be good

The help and protection offered to children and young people are likely to require improvement if children are not yet receiving good enough help and protection, but there are no serious failures that leave them either being harmed or at risk of harm.

Inadequate

The help and protection offered to children and young people are likely to be inadequate if there are serious and/or widespread failures that leave children being harmed, at risk of harm or their welfare not being safeguarded.

Outstanding

The help and protection offered to young people are likely to be judged outstanding if there is evidence of the following:

Professional practice results in sustained improvement to the lives of children; highly effective planning manages and minimises risks inside and outside of the home; where children are new to the home, any risks are well understood and are significantly reducing; proactive and creative safeguarding practice means that all children, including the most vulnerable, have a strong sense of safety and well-being and they are unlikely to be missing from the home on a regular basis; children are involved in creating ways to deescalate situations and finding creative alternative strategies that are effective.

Research-informed practice, some of which may be innovative, continues to develop from a strong and confident base, making an exceptional difference to the lives and experiences of children.

Standard 15: sufficient staffing of the home

Areas of required evidence:

- The overall number, competence and deployment of staff, both as a staff group and on individual shifts, can meet the individual needs of all children residing in the home.
- Adequate staffing ratios of one staff member to three children are maintained for children aged 0 – 12 years.
- Adequate staffing ratios of one staff member to five children are maintained for children and young people aged 12 – 17 years.
- Where a child presents complex additional needs, a staffing ratio of one staff member to that one specific child shall be maintained. This shall be supported by a detailed individual risk assessment for the child.
- Records of staff working in the home demonstrate the staffing level.
- Contingency plans are in place in the event of a shortfall in staffing levels.
- There are clear arrangements for staff to deputise in the absence of the residential care home manager's absence. The deputy of a residential care home manager has a sufficient level of relevant supervisory experience.
- Staff members who are placed in charge of the home and other staff at particular times (e.g. as leaders of staff shifts) have substantial relevant experience of working in the home and have successfully completed their induction and probationary periods.
- Staff rotas have time scheduled to ensure handovers are held and that they include the planning of spending time with individual children.
- The residential care home manager has in place a staff disciplinary procedure which is clear. The procedure clearly separates staff disciplinary processes from child protection enquiries and criminal proceedings, and is known by staff.
- The residential care home manager makes every effort to achieve continuity of staffing so that children's attachments are not overly disrupted.
- Where only one member of staff is on duty at any time, a risk assessment has been carried out and recorded in writing, identifying any likely risks to children, staff and members of the public.
- The staff group who are in day-to-day contact with children includes staff of both genders whenever possible. Staffing arrangements also take into consideration children's ethnic and cultural backgrounds and any disabilities they may have.
- The home puts sufficient provision in place to ensure that night time supervision of rooms, communal areas and the site is undertaken, where necessary.
- All care staff are at least 18 years old, and staff who are given sole responsibility for children or a management role are at least 21 years old. Within this requirement, no person works in a children's home unless they are at least four years older than the oldest child accommodated.
- Staff and residents know who is sleeping in the home each night.

Good

Careful recruitment and regular monitoring of staff and volunteers prevent unsuitable people from being recruited and having the opportunity to harm children or to place them at risk. The relevant authorities and professional bodies are informed of any concerns about inappropriate adults.

Requires improvement to be good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers is likely to require improvement if there is evidence of the following:

The characteristics of good leadership and management are not in place.

Where there are weaknesses in practice, leaders and managers have identified the issues and have plans in place to address them or they are less serious and there is capacity to take the necessary action.

Inadequate

The judgement on the effectiveness of leaders and managers will be inadequate if:

The experiences, progress or protection of children are inadequate and leaders and managers do not know the strengths and weaknesses of the home. They have been ineffective in prioritising, challenging and making improvements, and/or

The provider has not taken effective and timely steps to appoint an appropriate, permanent manager within a reasonable timeframe and/or the appointed manager has not registered as soon as possible.

Outstanding

The effectiveness of leaders and managers is likely to be judged outstanding if, in addition to meeting the requirements of a good judgement, there is evidence of the following:

Leaders and managers are inspirational, confident and ambitious for children and young people and influential in changing the lives of those in their care.

They create a culture of high aspiration and positivity and they have high expectations of their staff to change and improve the lives of the children they are responsible for.

They lead by example, innovate and generate creative ideas to sustain the highest quality care for children.

They know their strengths and weaknesses well and can provide evidence of improvement over a sustained period.

They have working relationships with partner agencies and schools that ensure the best possible care, experiences and futures for children.

Standard 16: training, development and qualification of staff

Areas of required evidence:

- There is a good quality learning and development programme which staff and volunteers are supported to undertake. It includes induction and in-service training to enhance individual skills and to keep staff up-to-date with professional and legal developments. Staff are equipped with the skills required to meet the needs of the children and purpose of the setting, and training keeps them up-to-date with professional, legal and practice developments, as well as reflecting the policies and legal obligations of the home.
- The learning and development programme is evaluated for effectiveness at least annually and - if necessary - is updated.
- New staff undertake an organisational induction covering core areas of training required to work with service users within 7 working days of starting their employment.
- All Social Workers and other specialist professionals (e.g. medical, educationalists, psychologists, therapists, etc....) are professionally qualified and, where applicable, registered by the appropriate professional body. They are appropriately trained to work with children and their families, and have a good understanding of residential child care and the policies and purpose of the home.

Good

The home is effectively and efficiently managed by a permanent, suitably experienced and qualified registered manager. Urgent action is taken to address any vacancy of the registered manager post.

Training, development and induction activities of staff members are effective. They are focused on ensuring that staff can meet the specific needs of the children who they are responsible for. Activities are evaluated to ensure that they lead to effective practice. Leaders, managers and staff are up to date with current practice in their specialist area.

Volunteers who work with children living in the home are trained, supervised and supported to undertake their roles appropriately and to provide a high-quality service that enhances the experiences of children.

Requires improvement to be good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers is likely to require improvement if there is evidence of the following:

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Inadequate

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They lead by example, innovate and generate creative ideas to sustain the highest quality care for children.

They know their strengths and weaknesses well and can provide evidence of improvement over a sustained period.

They have working relationships with partner agencies and schools that ensure the best possible care, experiences and futures for children.

Standard 17: staff support and supervision

Areas of required evidence:

- The employer is fair and competent, and operates sound employment practices and good support for its staff and volunteers.
- All staff, volunteers and the residential care home manager are properly managed, supported and understand to whom they are accountable.
- Staff have access to support and advice, and are provided with regular supervision by appropriately qualified and experienced staff.
- A written or electronic record is kept by the home detailing the time, date and length of each supervision held for each member of staff. The record is signed by the supervisor and the member of staff at the end of the supervision.
- All staff have their performance individually and formally appraised at least annually, and this appraisal takes into account any views of children the service is providing for.
- Staff and volunteers are easily able to access the advice needed to provide a comprehensive service for children and young people.

Good

Managers and staff receive regular and effective supervision that is focused on children's experiences, needs, plans and feedback. Supervision is recorded effectively. There are effective support and challenge, including through team and management meetings, to ensure that the professional development of staff and leaders results in the right environment for good practice to thrive. The emotional impact on staff of the work is recognised and managed well by leaders and managers.

Requires improvement to be good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers is likely to require improvement if there is evidence of the following:

The characteristics of good leadership and management are not in place.

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They create a culture of high aspiration and positivity and they have high expectations of their staff to change and improve the lives of the children they are responsible for.

They lead by example, innovate and generate creative ideas to sustain the highest quality care for children.

They know their strengths and weaknesses well and can provide evidence of improvement over a sustained period.

They have working relationships with partner agencies and schools that ensure the best possible care, experiences and futures for children.

Standard 18: handling allegations and suspicions of harm

Areas of required evidence:

- All staff and volunteers understand what they must do if they receive an allegation, or have suspicions that a person may have: a) behaved in a way that has, or may have, harmed a child; b) possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child, or c) behaved towards a child in a way that indicates he or she is unsuitable to work with children.
- The children's home ensures that the required actions are taken, or have been taken, in any relevant situation of which it is aware.
- The children's home procedure is in line with Government guidance and requirements, including the duty to refer information to statutory bodies. It is known to staff, volunteers and children.
- The home's protection procedures - and how staff will be supported should there be an allegation - are made available to staff and volunteers. The provider takes any comments on these procedures into account.
- The provider's child protection procedures are submitted for consideration and commented to Social Services (or other senior officers responsible for child protection matters in that department). Any conflicts between locally agreed procedures and those of other responsible authorities are discussed and resolved as far as possible.
- The children's home has a designated person, who is a senior manager, responsible for managing allegations. This designated person has responsibility for liaising with Social Services and for keeping the subject of the allegation informed of progress during and after the investigation.
- Allegations against people that work with children are reported by the designated person to Social Services. This includes allegations that - on the face of it - may appear relatively insignificant.
- A clear and comprehensive summary of any allegations made against a particular member of staff, including details of how the allegation was followed up and resolved, a record of any action taken and the decisions reached, is kept on the person's confidential file and a copy is provided to the person as soon as the investigation is concluded. The information is retained on the confidential file, even after someone leaves the organisation.
- Investigations into allegations or suspicions of harm are handled fairly, quickly, and consistently in a way that provides effective protection for the child, and at the same time supports the person who is the subject of the allegation.

Good

Investigations into allegations or suspicion of harm are shared with the appropriate agencies and are handled fairly, quickly and in accordance with statutory guidance. Children are supported and protected. Support is given both to the person making the allegation and the person who is the subject of the allegation.

Requires improvement to be good

The help and protection offered to children and young people are likely to require improvement if children are not yet receiving good enough help and protection, but there are no serious failures that leave them either being harmed or at risk of harm.

Inadequate

The help and protection offered to children and young people are likely to be inadequate if there are serious and/or widespread failures that leave children being harmed, at risk of harm or their welfare not being safeguarded.

Outstanding

The help and protection offered to young people are likely to be judged outstanding if there is evidence of the following:

Professional practice results in sustained improvement to the lives of children; highly effective planning manages and minimises risks inside and outside of the home; where children are new to the home, any risks are well understood and are significantly reducing; proactive and creative safeguarding practice means that all children, including the most vulnerable, have a strong sense of safety and well-being and they are unlikely to be missing from the home on a regular basis; children are involved in creating ways to deescalate situations and finding creative alternative strategies that are effective.

Research-informed practice, some of which may be innovative, continues to develop from a strong and confident base, making an exceptional difference to the lives and experiences of children.

Standard 19: managing effectively and efficiently and monitoring the home

Areas of required evidence:

- There are clear and effective procedures for monitoring and controlling the activities of the home. This includes any serious incidents, allegations, complaints about the provision, and the quality of the provision. Children in the home are regularly involved in contributing to monitoring the operation of the home, and their views and any concerns are seriously taken into account.
- The manager regularly monitors, in line with regulations, all records kept by the home to ensure compliance with the home's policies, to identify any concerns about specific incidents and to identify patterns and trends. Immediate action is taken to address any issues raised by this monitoring.
- Management of the home ensures all staff's work is consistent with these regulations, the home's policies and procedures.
- Where the home encounters any management personnel changes – either on any given day, temporarily or permanently – these are communicated in writing to Social Services in an efficient and timely manner.
- Where the home's designated lead point of contact with Social Services is not at work for any reason, procedures are in place to notify Social Services of whom the relevant designated member of staff to contact in their absence would be.
- Managers and staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities. The level of delegation and responsibility of the manager and staff, and the lines of accountability, are clearly defined.
- Clear arrangements are in place to ensure appropriate management of the home when the residential care home manager is absent.

Good

Leaders and managers actively and regularly monitor the quality of care provided. Those employed to undertake external monitoring have the necessary skills and experience. Leaders and managers use learning from practice and feedback to improve the experiences and care of children including, for example, direct testimony from children, young people, parents, carers, other professionals and other stakeholders. They learn from complaints, staff feedback, placement successes and breakdowns, and any serious events. They identify strengths and areas for improvement and implement clear development plans that continually improve the experiences of children. Robust action is taken to address all issues of concern, including any concerns or complaints from children and local residents. Proper investigations are undertaken. Placing and host authorities are engaged as necessary. Effective action has been taken to address all requirements and recommendations from previous inspections.

The staff team works collaboratively to provide consistency and stability. There are clear responsibilities and accountabilities and the staff team has a sense of shared ownership about its practice. Staff report that they are well led and managed and there is other evidence to support this.

Requires improvement to be good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers is likely to require improvement if there is evidence of the following:

The characteristics of good leadership and management are not in place.

Where there are weaknesses in practice, leaders and managers have identified the issues and have plans in place to address them or they are less serious and there is capacity to take the necessary action.

Inadequate

The judgement on the effectiveness of leaders and managers will be inadequate if:

The experiences, progress or protection of children are inadequate and leaders and managers do not know the strengths and weaknesses of the home. They have been ineffective in prioritising, challenging and making improvements, and/or

The provider has not taken effective and timely steps to appoint an appropriate, permanent manager within a reasonable timeframe and/or the appointed manager has not registered as soon as possible.

Outstanding

The effectiveness of leaders and managers is likely to be judged outstanding if, in addition to meeting the requirements of a good judgement, there is evidence of the following:

Leaders and managers are inspirational, confident and ambitious for children and young people and influential in changing the lives of those in their care.

They create a culture of high aspiration and positivity and they have high expectations of their staff to change and improve the lives of the children they are responsible for.

They lead by example, innovate and generate creative ideas to sustain the highest quality care for children.

They know their strengths and weaknesses well and can provide evidence of improvement over a sustained period.

They have working relationships with partner agencies and schools that ensure the best possible care, experiences and futures for children.

Standard 20: maintaining records

Areas of required evidence:

- The home has - and implements - a written policy that clarifies the purpose, format and content of information to be kept on the registered person's files and information to be kept on the child's files. Staff understand the nature of records maintained and follow the home's policy for the keeping and retention of files, managing confidential information, and access to files (including files removed from the premises). There is a system in place to monitor the quality and adequacy of record keeping and take action when needed.
- Children and their parents understand the nature of records maintained and how to access them.
- Information about individual children is kept confidential and only shared with those who have a legitimate need to know the information. This must be approved by Social Services in the first instance.
- Information about other children involved in an event is kept confidential. This confidentiality must be reflected in all record-keeping and note-taking of events.
- Entries in records are legible, clearly expressed, non-stigmatising and distinguish as far as possible between fact, opinion and third-party information.
- Information about the child is recorded clearly and in a way which will be helpful to the child when they access their files now or in the future. Children are actively encouraged to read their files, other than confidential or third-party information and to correct errors and add personal statements.
- Staff support and encourage the child to reflect on and understand their history, according to their age and understanding, and to keep appropriate memorabilia of their time in the placement. Staff record and help children make a record of (subject to age and understanding) significant life events.
- The residential care home manager works with Social Services to ensure effective sharing of information held in the home's records about the child. The residential care home manager provides copies of the records and documents in relation to children placed by Social Services immediately, on receipt of a written or electronic request from Social Services.

Good

Case records reflect children's everyday lives and the work that is undertaken with children. They reflect their achievements and clearly relate to the plans for their futures. The style and clarity of records increases the understanding that children have about their histories, background and experiences. The records are available to children who are able to see or contribute to them as they wish, with appropriate support.

Requires improvement to be good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers is likely to require improvement if there is evidence of the following:

The characteristics of good leadership and management are not in place.

Where there are weaknesses in practice, leaders and managers have identified the issues and have plans in place to address them or they are less serious and there is capacity to take the necessary action.

Inadequate

The judgement on the effectiveness of leaders and managers will be inadequate if:

The experiences, progress or protection of children are inadequate and leaders and managers do not know the strengths and weaknesses of the home. They have been ineffective in prioritising, challenging and making improvements, and/or

The provider has not taken effective and timely steps to appoint an appropriate, permanent manager within a reasonable timeframe and/or the appointed manager has not registered as soon as possible.

Outstanding

The effectiveness of leaders and managers is likely to be judged outstanding if, in addition to meeting the requirements of a good judgement, there is evidence of the following:

Leaders and managers are inspirational, confident and ambitious for children and young people and influential in changing the lives of those in their care.

They create a culture of high aspiration and positivity and they have high expectations of their staff to change and improve the lives of the children they are responsible for.

They lead by example, innovate and generate creative ideas to sustain the highest quality care for children.

They know their strengths and weaknesses well and can provide evidence of improvement over a sustained period.

They have working relationships with partner agencies and schools that ensure the best possible care, experiences and futures for children.

Standard 21: notification of significant events

Areas of required evidence:

- The residential care home manager has a system in place to notify within a set period of time Social Services staff of the occurrence of significant events. The system includes what to do, where a notifiable event arises at weekends.
- A written record is kept which includes details of the action taken, and the outcome of any action or investigation, following a notifiable event.
- The residential care home manager has a system for notification to responsible authorities of any serious concerns about the emotional or mental health of a child.
- Following such an incident, the home contacts Social Services to discuss any further action that may need to be taken.

Good

The registered person ensures that notifications of all significant events that relate to the welfare and protection of children living in the home are made to the appropriate authorities. The registered person takes the necessary action following the incident to ensure that the child or young person's needs are met and that they are safe and protected.

Requires improvement to be good

The help and protection offered to children and young people are likely to require improvement if children are not yet receiving good enough help and protection, but there are no serious failures that leave them either being harmed or at risk of harm.

Inadequate

The help and protection offered to children and young people are likely to be inadequate if there are serious and/or widespread failures that leave children being harmed, at risk of harm or their welfare not being safeguarded.

Outstanding

The help and protection offered to young people are likely to be judged outstanding if there is evidence of the following:

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Research-informed practice, some of which may be innovative, continues to develop from a strong and confident base, making an exceptional difference to the lives and experiences of children.

Standard 22: care plan and review

Areas of required evidence:

- Children understand, within their level of understanding, the purpose and content of their plan and the reasoning behind any decisions about their care.
- Each child's care plan is monitored by a key worker within the home who ensures that the requirements of the plan are implemented in the day-to-day care of that child.
- The home contributes effectively to each child's care plan review.
- The home assists the child to put forward their views, wishes and feelings in each review process, and helps to ensure that these are fully taken into account.
- The home ensures that if a child is not visited by their Social Worker at the frequency expected, or within a reasonable time following a request for a visit originated by the child, this is raised at the child's next review. The home must have procedures in place to communicate this to Social Services in a timely manner.
- The result of all statutory reviews is recorded on the child's file, and individuals responsible for pursuing actions at the home arising from reviews are clearly identified.

Good

Leaders and managers take steps to ensure that plans for individual children comprehensively identify their needs. Plans take into account the local authority care plan for each child. Leaders and staff work proactively and positively with other agencies and professionals. They seek to build effective working relationships with parents and social workers from placing authorities and with the local authority where they are located to secure positive outcomes for children.

Leaders and managers understand the plans for the children and actively drive the achievement of important milestones, goals and permanence for their futures. Leaders and managers monitor the progress that individual children make and can demonstrate the positive impact that living at the home has had on individual children's progress and life chances.

Requires improvement to be good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers is likely to require improvement if there is evidence of the following:

The characteristics of good leadership and management are not in place.

Where there are weaknesses in practice, leaders and managers have identified the issues and have plans in place to address them or they are less serious and there is capacity to take the necessary action.

Inadequate

The judgement on the effectiveness of leaders and managers will be inadequate if:

The experiences, progress or protection of children are inadequate and leaders and managers do not know the strengths and weaknesses of the home. They have been ineffective in prioritising, challenging and making improvements, and/or

The provider has not taken effective and timely steps to appoint an appropriate, permanent manager within a reasonable timeframe and/or the appointed manager has not registered as soon as possible.

Outstanding

The effectiveness of leaders and managers is likely to be judged outstanding if, in addition to meeting the requirements of a good judgement, there is evidence of the following:

Leaders and managers are inspirational, confident and ambitious for children and young people and influential in changing the lives of those in their care.

They create a culture of high aspiration and positivity and they have high expectations of their staff to change and improve the lives of the children they are responsible for.

They lead by example, innovate and generate creative ideas to sustain the highest quality care for children.

They know their strengths and weaknesses well and can provide evidence of improvement over a sustained period.

They have working relationships with partner agencies and schools that ensure the best possible care, experiences and futures for children.

How inspectors use the quality standards

Children's homes must meet the statutory requirements of the regulations. Where they do not, inspectors identify clearly what they must do in the form of setting requirements or through enforcement action. A failure to meet a regulation does not automatically lead to a "requires improvement" judgement. Requirements may still be made where providers are judged to be good.

Types of inspection

The following types of inspections can be carried out: full inspections, interim inspections and monitoring inspections.

- A **full inspection** is carried out at least once annually. This inspection is conducted against the evaluation criteria and will result in a set of graded judgements. The inspector will normally be on site for up to 2 days;
- An **interim inspection** is carried out for some children's homes at least once annually. This inspection focuses on the effectiveness of the home and the experiences and progress of children since the most recent full inspection. The judgement will be made on a 3-point scale: improved effectiveness; sustained effectiveness; or declined in effectiveness. The inspector will normally be on site for one day;
- There are further specific inspections related to particular children's homes. If there is an incident, a complaint or concerns, a **monitoring inspection** may be conducted. Monitoring visits may also be undertaken to review any building work, to ensure that the design and layout remains suitable for achieving the aims and objectives set out in the home's statement of purpose. Where inspectors may wish to gather information on a particular aspect of care or service provision or monitor specific issues or compliance with a notice, a monitoring inspection may take place also.

Notice of an inspection

All inspections of children's care homes are unannounced.

Homes will be asked to give the inspector access to premises and records, as well as space for the inspector to work. The inspector may need some help to navigate the system where records are electronic. Homes do not need to provide files in hard copy, unless these are already used, although the inspector may ask for specific reports or documents to be printed.

Request for information at an inspection

When notification of an inspection is given, inspectors give the provider a copy of the inspection framework and agree when the information will be available. The information supports the inspection process and informs the inspection findings.

Specifically, inspectors want to assure themselves that:

- Where children are considered to be at risk of, or subject to, child sexual exploitation or extremism, all agencies are working together to support the child;
- Return home interviews are being offered when children have been missing from the home;
- Children are receiving the educational provision as outlined in their relevant plan;

- There are plans in place to ensure that staff are appropriately vetted and qualified to work in a children's care home.

Where an agency has not fulfilled their statutory duties or met the child's needs as identified in their care plan, the inspector should evaluate the action the manager has taken.

Frequency and type of inspections

Children's care homes that were judged inadequate or require improvement to be good at their last full inspection are inspected at least twice in each year-long inspection period.

In most instances where a home is inspected twice during the year, one inspection is a full inspection and the other is an interim inspection. Different patterns of inspection may occur if a home has been judged inadequate or if a home is not operating at the time of inspection.

At least one full inspection of homes that were judged as outstanding or good during a year-long inspection period are carried out. Initial risk assessments for every children's home judged as good or outstanding at the start of the inspection year are conducted, to inform an initial decision of whether these homes will be subject to a second inspection (an interim inspection) in addition to a full inspection.

This takes into account:

- The most recent interim inspection;
- Information from complaints, whistle-blowers and local authorities;
- Changes to the home's management;
- Any other relevant information.

If a home is judged to have declined in effectiveness at an interim inspection after being judged outstanding or good at a full inspection, we then decide when to inspect it again.

If there is an incident, complaint or concern, a monitoring inspection may be conducted.

Monitoring inspections may also be carried out to review any new building work, to ensure that the design and layout remains suitable for achieving the aims and objectives set out in the children's home's statement of purpose or, where we wish to gather information on a particular aspect of care or service provision, to monitor specific issues or compliance with a notice.

Scheduling

The scheduling of inspections takes account of:

- Legal requirements;
- Previous inspection findings;
- Complaints and concerns about the service;
- Returned questionnaires from children, young people, social workers and other stakeholders;
- Notifications.

Where possible, the same inspector will not inspect a home for more than three consecutive full inspections.

Length of inspection

Children’s homes are usually inspected by a single inspector. For a full inspection of a children’s home, an inspector usually spends a maximum of 2 days on site. For interim inspections, the inspector is usually on site for a maximum of 1 day.

Inspectors should consider whether the length of time on site should be reduced in certain circumstances, such as for inspections of homes with a very small number of children. Inspectors should consider:

- a risk assessment that takes into account previous inspection judgements, notifications and any serious incidents;
- the number of children who live in the home;
- the size of the establishment, including the number of separate homes on site.

Deferrals

Inspections will not normally be deferred. An inspection will only be deferred when it might place children or others at risk if it goes ahead or if the ability to gather secure evidence is severely restricted. These conditions might include:

- serious weather conditions that make access to sites difficult or dangerous or both;
- a serious incident where the presence of an inspector would have an adverse impact on the safety and well-being of children, young people or adults.

Timeframe for an inspection from planning to publication of the report

Full inspection

Day 1:	Preparation
Day 2:	Site visit
Day 3:	Site visit
Day 4:	Drafting report
Days 5 to 8:	Inspection evidence and report submitted for quality assurance
Day 21:	Report sent to the registered provider for any comments on factual accuracy within a maximum of 18 working days of the end of the inspection
Day 26:	Provider returns the report within 5 working days with any comments on factual accuracy
Day 31:	The final report will be published within a maximum of 28 working days of the end of the inspection

What happens before a full inspection

Analysis and planning

Pre-inspection analysis and planning are important parts of all inspections. Inspectors are allocated 1 day to prepare for a full inspection and half a day to prepare for an interim inspection. This time should be used to review the information held by the lead agency and to ensure that the fieldwork is properly focused and used to best effect in collecting first-hand evidence. Inspectors look at the information that is already held about the home, including:

- Previous inspection reports;
- Completed questionnaires from children, young people, parents and stakeholders and associated summary reports;
- The home's statement of purpose and children's guide;
- Any concerns and complaints received;
- Notifications of serious events;
- Any changes to registration, including change of manager or the responsible individual;
- Any enforcement activity within the last inspection year.

In addition, the inspector should always familiarise themselves with relevant background and context information, such as the most recent inspection of the local authority, any linked setting (including possible unregistered schools) and review of the local safeguarding children board/partners where the home is situated.

The inspector carries out an analysis of the available evidence and information and must record their planning notes on the inspection database. The plan for the inspection sets out lines of enquiry, any areas of apparent weakness or significant strength, or areas where further evidence needs to be gathered.

The focus of the inspection may change during its course as further evidence emerges.

What happens during a full inspection

The start of the inspection

At the start of all inspections, the inspector always meets with the registered manager/ person in charge to:

- Outline the plan for the inspection and confirm whether it is a full or an interim inspection;
- Make arrangements to interview the registered manager during the course of the inspection; if the registered manager is not available and the responsible individual is not able to attend the inspection, the responsible individual should identify who is to be their representative during the inspection;
- Outline any lines of enquiry for the inspection, including those generated through the reading of the statement of purpose;
- Provide the person in charge with the opportunity to share any current information or personal issues relating to any of the children living in the home or members of staff that the inspector needs to be aware of during the inspection;

- Arrange the approximate time that verbal feedback will be given and who is to receive this; feedback will normally be given to the registered manager or senior member of staff present and the responsible individual; additional senior staff linked to the home may also attend at the discretion of the inspector, if agreed in advance;
- Where an inspection has been prompted following receipt of information describing a concern or allegations, the inspector should explain to the registered manager or person in charge of the establishment or agency the nature of that information, so that the manager is fully aware of the concerns. This provides an opportunity for the manager to provide additional information and for the inspector to be as open with them about the information as possible. If the information is from a whistle-blower or from someone who wishes to remain anonymous, then the utmost care must be taken to ensure that the person's identity is not revealed.

Listening and talking to children and young people

The views of children who live in or stay at the children's home provide important evidence of their experiences and progress. The inspector assesses how well the children's home consults with children. Children's views that have been gathered by the home are taken into account as part of the inspection evidence.

The inspector always tries to meet with children during the inspection. The inspector may make alternative arrangements to speak to children, such as telephone calls at a pre-arranged time. Sometimes, inspectors will spend time observing activities and situations where children are present rather than engaging in direct communication with them. This is to limit any stress caused to children. These approaches will be discussed throughout the inspection as necessary.

The inspector must take into account the specific communication needs of individual children. For some children, the inspector may request the assistance of staff who know and understand the young person's preferred means of communication, particularly if this is unique to the child. In other instances, it may also be appropriate for the inspector to spend time observing children and how they interact with staff and respond to their environment.

Inspectors have to balance spending sufficient time observing interaction between staff and children and avoid causing children distress or confusion because an adult who is unfamiliar to them is upsetting their routines and feelings of security. Inspectors will follow up with staff separately to explore any lines of enquiry arising from their observations.

Many of the experiences of children living in the home take place after the normal school, college or work day and it is therefore essential that the inspector is present at this time. The inspector should involve the children in inspection activity wherever they can. Opportunities to gather the views and experiences of children may include:

- Asking children to show inspectors around the premises;
- Holding structured meetings (as a general guideline, a meeting should not include more than 5 children);
- Having individual conversations;
- Joining in leisure activities such as computer or console games;
- Preparing snacks or drinks;
- Spending mealtimes with children;

- Conversations during homework;
- Outdoor activities.

Children, including those with limited or no verbal communication, may wish to share their views in a letter to the inspector. Inspectors demonstrate safe and sensitive practice by:

- Telling staff where conversations with children are taking place and who is involved;
- Being sensitive to the fact that some children may not want to be involved in the inspection;
- Explaining to children that they will not include comments that will identify them in the inspection report or in feedback to staff working in the home without their permission;
- Ensuring that staff are aware of any arranged meetings with children and that children may leave the meeting at any time;
- Where appropriate, explaining to that information suggesting that they or another child is at risk of harm will be passed by the inspector to an appropriate person able to take necessary action about that concern.

Observation of activities

Inspectors can use the home's scheduled activities as opportunities for observing and following lines of enquiry. These activities could include:

- Staff handover between shifts;
- Children's meetings;
- Staff meetings or briefings.

The privacy and confidentiality of personal information are respected at all times by inspectors. The inspector always involves staff in any decisions about children's involvement in the inspection.

Inspectors always try to strike a balance between the time taken to observe an activity and the significance of the likely evidence to be gained.

Gathering views of other professionals

Inspectors consult with professionals to inform the inspection findings. This is usually through a telephone call during the inspection and may not always take place on site. These professionals may include:

- Social workers;
- School staff;
- Local police;
- Social Services Senior Management (Principal Social Worker and/or Senior Social Worker).

Inspectors should always take account of privacy and confidentiality when talking to stakeholders on the telephone during the inspection.

Discussions with managers and staff

Individual interviews are held with the registered manager/person in charge and other staff. The inspector should always try to talk to the responsible individual. The number of staff interviewed depends on the size of home.

Where the registered manager is not available, the inspector should ask to interview the responsible individual.

The inspector always asks to interview the responsible individual where:

- There is no registered manager in post;
- There are concerns about the quality of care and/or the effectiveness of monitoring arrangements, or the quality of the leadership and management of the home or;
- Evidence indicates that the home is failing to protect children or;
- There are concerns about staffing, the premises or resources to manage and run the provision.

The interview with the registered manager usually covers:

- Issues that have arisen from pre-inspection information/early lines of enquiry;
- A discussion about the ethos of the home as described in the statement of purpose and any specific lines of enquiry arising from this;
- The registered manager's evidence of the effectiveness of the home on the experiences and progress of the children living there and those who have recently left; this includes how the home works with individual children to meet their needs and the help on offer to support them to make and sustain attachments with adults;
- Questions about the theoretical and professional understanding and approach to work with vulnerable and upset children;
- A summary of the needs of the children living at the home, including how any incidents or concerns are managed and the action taken to prevent similar situations or difficulties arising;
- Discussions about how regular routines are established for children around meal times, bed times, school and weekend activities;
- The registered manager's knowledge and understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the home and plans for future development and how they effectively lead the team and promote a culture of continuous improvement;
- Discussions about helping children to have safe contact with their families and friends;
- Follow-up on progress in response to previous requirements and recommendations;
- The quality and effectiveness of practice-related supervision received by the manager and given by the manager to staff;
- Challenge and enquiry about the relationship of the children's home with other professionals and services;
- Plans for staff development, including arrangements to ensure that staff have obtained appropriate qualifications by the relevant dates;
- Discussions about the recruitment and selection of staff to ensure that they have an appropriate qualification or are able to get one;
- The manager's qualification;
- Any further evidence that the manager may wish to highlight to the inspector.

During the inspection, the inspector shares emerging findings about the home's strengths and weaknesses with the registered person (usually the registered manager) so that they fully understand emerging issues. The inspector usually meets with the registered person at the end of day 1 to share emerging findings. The inspector normally sets out for the manager what they intend to consider later in the inspection (where relevant) so that the manager can prepare or direct inspectors to any specific

information or evidence required. Shortfalls that could have an immediate impact on the safety of staff or children should be brought to the attention of the manager or senior member of staff on duty as soon as the inspector has identified the problem. Inspectors want to establish that the monitoring systems in the home are robust enough to identify any strengths and weaknesses in practice. Inspectors do not spend time routinely counting medication or petty cash, undertaking vehicle checks, checking water temperatures or contents of fridges, freezers and food storage areas unless these are a specific line of enquiry. Inspectors should be prepared to alter interview arrangements if staff have to attend to the needs of children.

Examining records, policies and procedures

The home's statement of purpose should be available for the inspectors to assess and form part of the pre-inspection data.

Inspectors do not routinely examine all policies and procedures. Documents are examined where it is a line of enquiry for that individual inspection.

Inspectors focus on the impact of documents such as risk assessments and how they work in practice, rather than the format. What matters is that they are fit for purpose, and provide enough information to all relevant people so that they can care for the children safely and appropriately. Where paper or electronic personnel records are maintained at the home, the inspector may ask to see those records, if they are included within the lines of enquiry for the inspection. Homes can maintain electronic records if:

- They meet the requirements of regulation;
- Are appropriately accessible to children if they want to access their records;
- Staff have access to the information they require to care for those placed.

Where recruitment records are not maintained at the home, inspectors look at the home's list or electronic records that summarise the vetting and recruitment checks for staff. The manager must be able to provide evidence that they are satisfied that all staff working at the home are fit to do so and that recruitment and selection arrangements are robust.

How inspectors record the evidence

The inspector must analyse the information they gather on inspection and use their professional judgement to assess the impact on the experiences and progress of children and other service users.

The inspector's evidence should be clear, evaluative and sufficient to support the judgements.

The evidence should tell the story of the experiences and progress of children and other service users, as appropriate. Evidence should not include information that could identify individuals unless it is necessary to protect a child or to support further action.

The inspector can record direct quotes from children, adult service users and other interested parties in evidence to support judgements.

Throughout the inspection, inspectors maintain a record of their evidence. Summarised evidence must be sufficient to support the judgements and any recommendations or requirements. The inspector must ensure that the provider understands the evidence that the judgements are based on and any requirements that derive from the judgements.

Evidence may be scrutinised for quality assurance and will be considered in the event of any complaint.

Feedback at the end of the inspection

At the end of the inspection, the inspector will give verbal feedback of the main findings and provisional judgements. This feedback will usually be given to the responsible individual (as appropriate).

In some circumstances, the inspector may need extra time after the inspection fieldwork to take advice before giving feedback. The day of feedback is counted as the last day of the inspection.

The inspector should:

- Cover the main findings of the inspection, including both strengths and weaknesses;
- Clearly communicate the likely judgements;
- Indicate likely requirements and recommendations, providing a clear direction for improvement;
- Use the grade descriptors and the evidence to clearly indicate how the judgements have been reached;
- Confirm when the report will be sent to the manager for comments on factual accuracy.

Inspectors will not provide a written summary of the inspection or written feedback in advance of the inspection report being sent. Providers may choose to take their own notes at feedback.

Feedback to children and young people

Inspectors should give feedback to children and young people, as appropriate to their age and understanding. Inspectors should make efforts to address matters raised by children.

The inspection report: what is in the report and how the inspector checks and submits it

The report should be succinct and evaluative.

Inspectors' analysis must include clear evidence for their professional judgements. In most instances each inspection judgement section of the report should be no more than six to eight short paragraphs with each usually only two or three sentences long. Reports for settings that have several weaknesses or that are found to be outstanding may require more detailed explanations for the judgements but should still focus on the main issues only. Inspectors should ensure that the reports are long enough to say what needs to be said and no longer.

Children's Homes Reports

Published children's homes inspection reports are to be anonymised to protect children. Published inspection reports do not contain any of the following:

- The name of the home;
- The address of the home;
- Any information that identifies the location of the home;
- Any information that identifies an individual child or staff member at the home.

Published reports do, however, contain:

- The name of the responsible individual;
- The recent inspection history (if applicable);
- Details of any enforcement activity since the last inspection.

Child-friendly summary reports

Inspectors complete a child-friendly summary following every full inspection of a children's home. It can be short, include pictures and be set in simple, concrete sentences.

Conduct during inspections

Expectations of inspectors

It is important that inspectors and providers establish and maintain a positive working relationship based on courteous and professional behaviour. Inspectors are expected to uphold the highest professional standards in their work, and to treat everyone they meet during inspections fairly, with respect and with sensitivity.

In meeting this expectation, inspectors will:

- Inspect and evaluate objectively and impartially;
- Evaluate provision in line with frameworks, regulations and standards;
- Base all evaluations on clear and robust evidence;
- Declare all actual and perceived conflicts of interest and have no real or perceived connection with the provider that could undermine the objectivity of the inspection
- Report honestly and clearly, ensuring that judgements are fair and reliable;
- Carry out their work with integrity, treating all those they meet with courtesy, respect and sensitivity;
- Take all reasonable steps to prevent undue anxiety and to minimise stress for those being inspected;
- Act in the best interests and well-being of service users, prioritising the safeguarding of children at all times;
- Maintain purposeful and productive communication with those being inspected and inform them of judgements sensitively, but clearly and frankly;
- Respect the confidentiality of information, particularly about individuals and their work;
- Respond appropriately to reasonable requests;
- Take prompt and appropriate action on any safeguarding or health and safety issues.

Expectations of children's homes

- For inspection and regulation to be productive and beneficial, inspectors and children's homes must establish and maintain a professional working relationship that is based on courtesy and professional behaviour. Inspectors are expected to uphold the code of conduct, but we also expect children's homes to:
 - Be courteous and professional, treating inspectors with respect and sensitivity;
 - Apply their own codes of conduct in their dealings with inspectors;

- Enable inspectors to carry out their visit in an open and honest way;
- Enable inspectors to evaluate the provision objectively against the inspection evaluation criteria and relevant standards and regulations;
- Provide evidence – or access to evidence - that will enable the inspector to report honestly, fairly and reliably about their provision;
- Work with inspectors to minimise disruption, stress and bureaucracy;
- Ensure the good health and safety of inspectors while on their premises;
- Maintain purposeful and productive communication with the inspector or the inspection team;
- Bring any concerns about the inspection to the attention of inspectors promptly and in a suitable manner;
- Recognise that sometimes inspectors will need to observe practice and talk to staff and users without the presence of a manager or responsible individual.