

Dialogue Regulation 44 Visitor's network March 2025



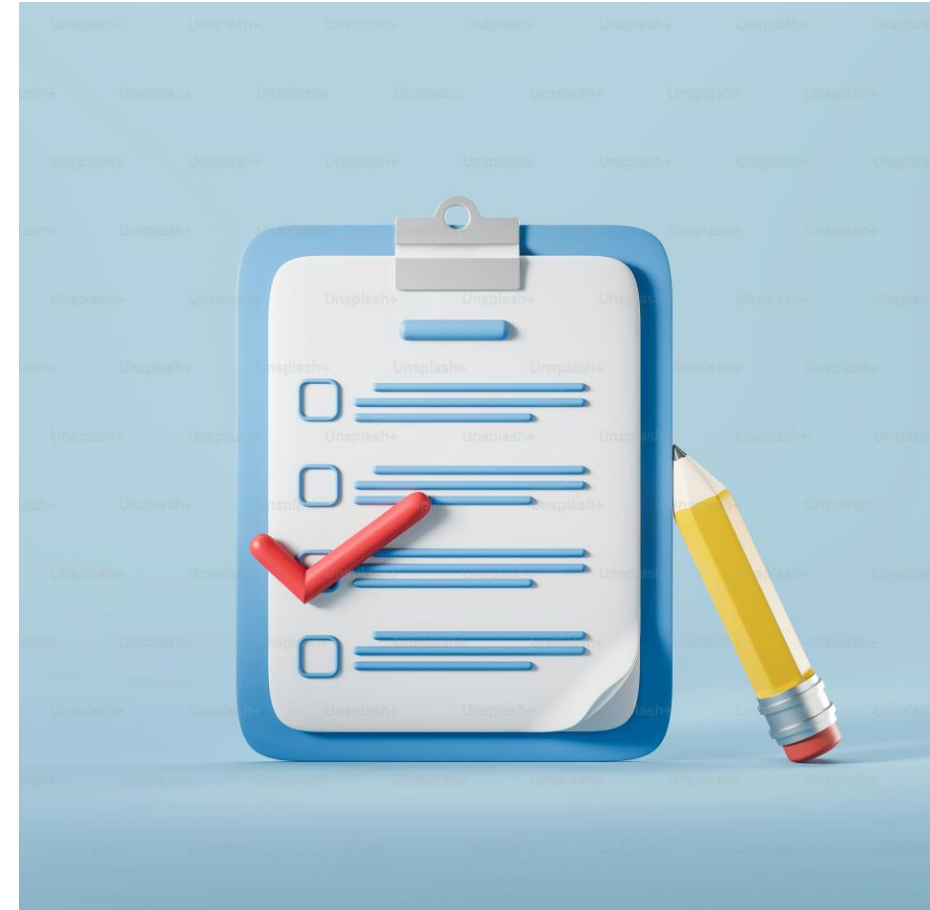
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Agenda

- Feedback from the regions
- Update- post Big Listen and DfE reforms
- Frequently asked questions
- Questions from 'the floor'



Purpose of visits

- Part of the safeguarding network for children
- Provide an opportunity for an independent person to visit the home so that children and staff can raise any concerns
- The report should include the IPs opinion, on whether
 - ❖ Children are effectively safeguarded
 - ❖ The conduct of the home promotes children's well being



Positive feed back

Some very good robust reports that are concise, evaluative and clear in recording actions and progress of children.

Some visitors who visit in the evening and weekend to ensure that they can speak and spend time with children

Some reports indicate IPs spending time with children month in month out, with a real sense of rapport and relationship. In these instances, it was more likely that children would share their views about the care they receive.

Some IPs visited at mealtimes, before the school run, or when they knew the RM would not be present, to observe how adults support the children throughout key times of the day, or when different staff were in charge.

IPs who were clear about the purpose of the visit and why they had visited at these specific moments in the child's day.



Areas for development

- Visits routinely carried out when the children are not there
- Visits which routinely include most of the visit, 'off site' accessing electronic recording systems remotely
- Reports which indicate that the IP only spoke with the manager
- Reports that state, 'records not available' – but not why?



Areas for development

- Some visits appear to be becoming 'mini SCCIF inspections, case tracking one child, splitting out the quality standards and so not looking at safeguarding each month, this style of visit does not always meet the regulation
- Small number of reports where the IP has said that children are not safeguarded, not said why, and no evidence that Ofsted/LA were contacted
- Reports received late, although providers should see the report before submitted, it is the IPs responsibility to make sure that are sent to Ofsted on time



Questions



Regulation 44 (7) (b) says the independent person must provide a copy of the independent person's report to—



upon request, the local authority for the area in which the home is located;



Who should be requesting this?



It is for the LA to request the report

Questions

- Should homes that suspend their registration temporarily still have Reg 44 visits?
- The SCCIF says
- These reports provide crucial information about the safety, welfare and progress of children. We therefore require that the independent person or provider sends the report for HMCI to us before the end of the month that follows the month in which the visit took place. **This requirement still applies when there are no children living in the home.**

Questions



Would it be appropriate for a visitor to contact Ofsted to seek their views as part of the Regulation 44 visit?



The SCCIF says-



If the independent person has serious concerns about the safety and welfare of children arising from their visit, they should contact Ofsted immediately by either contacting the assigned inspector or via EYRegulatoryandSocialCare@ofsted.gov.uk



The independent person should notify us if they consider that the provider has attempted to make amendments to the report that are not consistent with their findings or original report.

Questions



When we visit homes and there are children on DOL's and doors need to be locked and there are other children not on a DOL's , is that ok as long as they will be allowed to leave if they want to.



The manager should have arrangements in place so that children who are 'free to leave' can do so, as well as making sensible arrangements for the security of the property.

Questions



When I contact social workers and families of the children placed each month I don't always get a reply- is this OK?



Regulation 44- does not require you to contact social workers or other professionals. The regulation says that you should 'interview in private' 'as the independent person requires' - it does not say every month

T h e O f s t e d B i g L i s t e n

Building a better Ofsted

—...



Reset

our priorities



Refine

our practices



Rebuild

relationships



Social care

Who we heard from about social care

- Of the 16,033 people who responded to our main consultation, 15% answered questions about children's social care.
- More than 500 children who said they had a social worker shared their views through our children's consultation.
- We held focus group panels with care-experienced children and young people.
- We heard, through commissioned research, from over 1,700 people who work in the social care sector.



What we heard from children about social care

— . .

“I think everyone needs an Ofsted inspection to make sure provision standards are maintained in the face of challenges.”
(care leaver)



Children told us that the top priorities for Ofsted inspections should be:

- safety
- happiness
- support with education
- how involved children are in decisions about them.

What we will do

- We want to make sure that the changes we make are right for children and the sectors we inspect and regulate.
- We will be removing the overall judgments in all remits, but this will take time and the changes will not happen at the same time
- In SCCIF it is more complex as we don't have an aggregate judgement, and this will not be before April 2027 .
- We also want to align with government reforms where we can, to minimise change.



SCCIF 2025

Promoting stability for children

Tuesday 18 February 2025



Research and Analysis

- **Good decisions: children with complex needs in children's homes**
- A report on what 'complex needs' means to local authority and children's home staff and how they support children with these needs.
- Source: How local authorities and children's homes can achieve stability and permanence for children with complex needs (Ofsted, 2024)

Context: sufficiency



- Nearly all LAs (91%) said they often struggle to find suitable homes for children with complex needs. Some children wait months – or in the worst cases, years – for a stable home
- Most LAs reported that children with complex needs are often placed out of area, experience unplanned moves, have referrals rejected by homes and/or are served notice by their setting
- The lack of suitable homes means LAs resort to placements they do not want to use

Context - concerns about impact on Ofsted judgements



- 60% of LAs said it was 'often' or 'always' a reason that homes rejected referrals for children with complex needs – but a similar % of providers said that this was 'never or rarely' a factor in their decision-making
- Good or outstanding homes said to be more cautious when making referral decisions because they do not want to risk being downgraded.

What do we want to see?

- Providers more prepared to look after children with high and/or multiple needs
- Providers are more likely to stick with children, even in difficult times
- Inspections have an enhanced focus on how providers promote and sustain stability for children, especially those with high and/or multiple needs
- Inspection outcomes reflect good practice in this area

Main points – risk-aware, not risk-averse

- We have made a small number of changes to the SCCIF to reinforce and clarify intent – **that we will have a sharp focus on how providers promote and sustain stability for children, including those with high needs**
- Blog published March 11 which includes more details

DfE Reform Programme

- Keeping Children Safe, Helping Families Thrive, Breaking down barriers to opportunity
- November 2024
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-helping-families-thrive>
- <https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3909>

Any questions



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