



The Dialogue  
quick overview of SCCIF updates

# Context

- Ofsted inspection updates have been made to local authority and residential care process
- These take account of recent updates to statutory guidance ([Working Together to Safeguard Children](#) and the [Children's Social Care: National Framework](#)) and considered the [Families First Partnership programme](#) guide – designed to help local partners implement the reforms.



# Key themes

- The inspection processes for both the children's services and children's residential care are increasing the focus on the experiences of children,

“Most changes relate to the evaluation criteria for the experiences and progress of children in need of help and protection.”



# Unregistered children's homes

- the ongoing use of unregistered homes remains an area of concern and use of these will be part of the challenge in local authority inspections

“We are very clear that using unregistered provision is unlawful. Under the updated framework, inspectors will challenge local authorities on their use of unlawful unregistered homes and how they plan to stop using them.”

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# Registering children's homes in an emergency

Exceptional circumstances may include

- applications for children's homes in areas where there is extremely high demand and insufficient placement options
- provision that will offer highly specialist care for children with complex support needs and/or disabled children
- provision that was historically registered incorrectly and has been instructed to register with an alternative regulator



# timescales

- if you have all information ready and are prepared to open in an emergency determination will be made in 2-6 months
- Standard applications are likely to take between 6-18 months



# SCCIF for residential services

- The focus of the update is the evaluation of the experience of the child.
- This is in line with the wider emphasis on the experiences of children in receipt of care
- There is less reliance on the information provided in advance of an inspection and more about the view of the lived experience in the home



# Updates summary to children's homes SCCIF

- i. more nuanced approach to inspection
- ii. looking at the child's lived experience of being in the home
- iii. looking to staff relationships and their understanding of the child
- iv. quality of relationships and the "feel" of the home
- v. promotion of stability and prevention of placement breakdown/unnecessary moves
- vi. capture what has genuinely changed and matters/mattered for the child
- vii. clarity of and involvement with multi-agency partners
- viii. supporting family relationships

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# References

<https://socialcareinspection.blog.gov.uk/2026/03/20/what-to-know-about-the-april-2026-updates-to-inspection-of-local-authority-childrens-services/>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/social-care-common-inspection-framework-sccif-childrens-homes/social-care-common-inspection-framework-sccif-childrens-homes>





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