

Scrutiny understanding and working with Ofsted to improve Children's Services

This is a roundtable event to explore the changes to Inspecting local authority children's services (ILACS) and how Scrutiny can meaningfully add value to the process: [Inspecting local authority children's services - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/inspecting-local-authority-childrens-services)

1:00	Welcome and introductions	Camilla de Bernhardt Lane, CfGS Associate
1:05	The ILACS inspection regime and expectations for Councillors	Jeremy Gleaden, Senior HMI Ofsted
1:25	Invitation for Councillors and officers to share their experiences and general discussion about Scrutiny impact on Children's Services	Camilla de Bernhardt Lane
2:25	Conclusions and reflections	
2:30	Close	

Questions to be explored include:

- What role (if any) does Scrutiny and non-Exec Members in general have before, during and after the inspection?
- How do Scrutiny members understand, and meaningfully engage with their Ofsted judgement?
- How does Scrutiny best get involved with consideration of Ofsted findings?
- What involvement in the future can Scrutiny expect with the new Ofsted process?
- How have different authorities supported their DCS and Cabinet Member through a negative inspection result, whilst also holding to account?
- How are authorities' scrutiny function working with the corporate parenting board?
- How have different authorities continued to achieve critical friend challenge when there has been a positive inspection result?

What is the ILACS framework?

In 2018, Ofsted adopted a new framework for inspecting local authority services for children in need of help and protection, children in care and care leavers.

The framework, Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS), is available in full on the Ofsted website. During parts of the pandemic, Ofsted suspended some of the planned inspections, which means that some local authorities are only now receiving their first inspection under the new legislation.

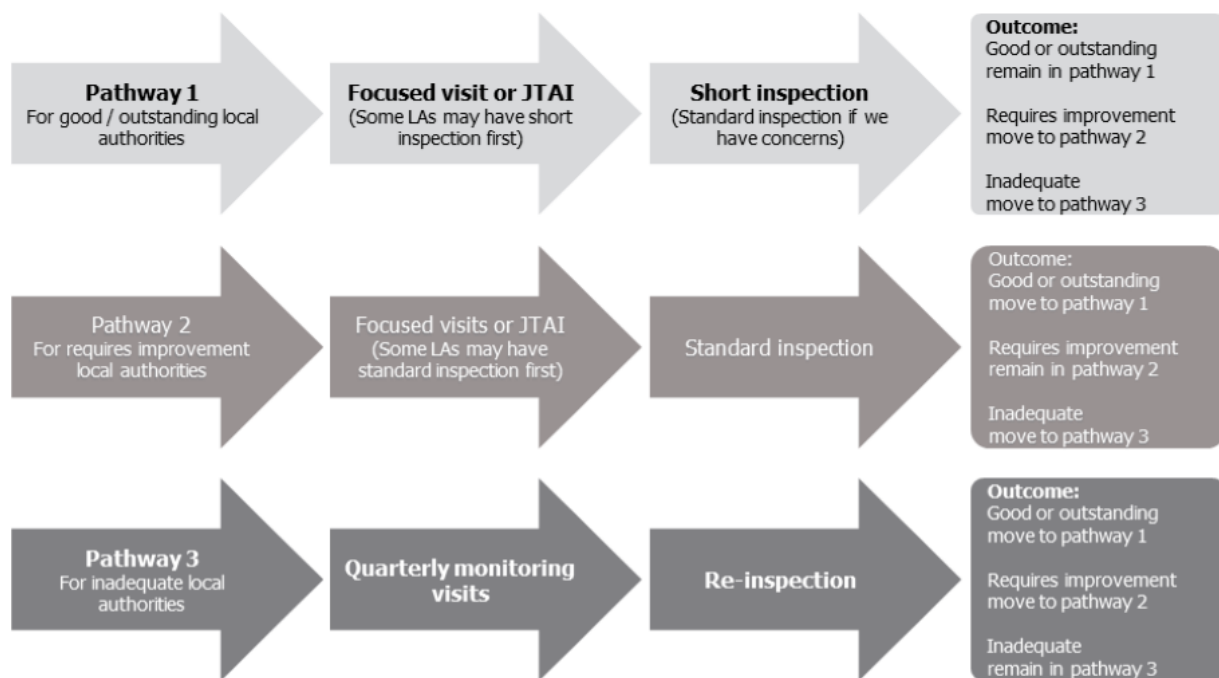
The framework focuses on the effectiveness of local authority services and arrangements for:

- the help and protection of children
- the experiences and progress of children in care
- the arrangements for permanence for children who are looked after, including adoption.
- the experiences and progress of care leavers
- There is also attention on assessing the effectiveness of leadership and management and the impact this has on the lives of children and the quality of practice.

'Ofsted aims to improve lives by raising standards in education and children's social care. We inspect and regulate thousands of organisations and individuals providing education, training, and care – from childminders to training providers, schools to local authorities – and we share what we find.'

The issues for Scrutiny working with the inspection regime.

Children's Scrutiny has a specific challenge when working with Ofsted, namely working to understand monitor and add value to the inspection regime without adding an unhelpful burden to the professional staff. The process is different depending upon how each Authority is judged, however there are key questions that Scrutiny needs ask themselves – including how to add value and not simply duplicate the process underway.



The inspection process itself will be looking for some key aspects that Scrutineers would expect, these are set out as follows to support the discussion:

Strategic Leadership

- The leadership of the council, including the chief executive, lead member (and other members) and the DCS recognise and prioritise the needs of children. This is reflected in corporate decision-making, action and active attendance at key committees and boards.
- The chief executive and lead member are well informed and hold the DCS and their leadership team to account for the quality of practice and the challenges in the local area. This is exemplified through accurate assessments of practice that drive improvement.
- The local authority is an active, strong, and committed corporate parent – in line with the corporate parenting principles. There is a corporate sense of responsibility for children in care and care leavers. The chief executive leads a local authority that recognises and prioritises the needs of children in all aspects, such as housing, career opportunities, education and learning.

Performance Management

- The local authority, through performance management and monitoring, has an accurate and systematically updated understanding of its effectiveness and uses this to drive improvement.
- Management oversight of practice, including practice scrutiny by senior managers, is established, systematic and used clearly to improve the quality of decisions and the provision of help to children and young people

A local authority is likely to be deemed outstanding if:

- There is evidence that leaders (both professional and political) and managers are confident, ambitious and influential in changing the lives of local children, young people and families, including children in care and those who have left or who are leaving care.
- Leaders inspire others to change the lives of these children and young people and their families.
- They innovate and generate creative ideas to sustain the highest-quality services, including early help services, for all children and young people.
- They know their strengths and weaknesses well and both respond to and are resilient to new challenges.
- Professional relationships between the local authority and partner organisations are mature and well developed.
- Accountabilities are embedded and result in confident, regular evaluation and improvement of the quality of help, care and protection that is provided.