

Ofsted and CQC Consultation Event – a summary of the main issues

Friday 11 December 2015, Manchester

This paper summarises the key points of discussion from the consultation event hosted by the Council for Disabled Children on behalf of Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission. This paper has been compiled by the Council for Disabled Children based on notes gathered during the day.

Background

The event was structured to ensure each discussion table had a broad range of perspectives, including professionals from the health, education, social care sectors, parent representatives and the voluntary and community sector. The tables were facilitated by staff from Ofsted, the Care Quality Commission, the Department for Education, the Department for Health, and the Council for Disabled Children.

Delegates were asked to reach consensus on their tables where possible.

Topic 1 - views on the new inspection process overall

Delegates were asked if they supported the creation of a new inspection framework and what the main aim of the inspection should be.

There was overwhelming support from delegates for the development of new local area inspection framework. Delegates believed the inspection should have two principle aims:

- Holding local areas to account; and
- Helping local areas to identify areas for improvement.

Additional points that arose in relation to the new inspection framework were:

- How should we define a local area? For example, a specialist college that take young people from a number of nearby local authorities might be considered to be part of multiple local areas.
- The size of the inspection teams should vary depending on the size or complexity of the area. For example, in some areas there may be six or seven Clinical Commissioning Groups each providing different levels of service.
- The proposed framework is quite operationally based. It should be developed to incorporate an assessment of how effective senior leadership in the area is.
- Further consideration should be made of how the inspection process itself could involve children, young people and parents, including taking the learning from CQC's Experts by Experience programme.

Topic 2 - Two day notice periods for inspections

Delegates were asked, given what they had said about the purpose of the inspection framework, whether a two day notice period for local areas was the right amount of notice.

There was not complete consensus on this issue with some tables agreeing that two days was about the right amount of time. However the majority of delegates believed the two day notice period was too short.

The primary reason for concerns about the short notice period was that it would hinder the ability of inspectors to effectively and meaningfully secure the engagement of children, young people and their families. There were also concerns about the short notice period reducing the ability of professionals to meet the inspection team, and allowing inspectors to arrange visits to individual settings.

Topic 3- Inspecting the contribution of health and social care

The consultation document states that the inspection of health and social care functions will be limited to how they are involved in Education, Health and Care (EHC) assessments and EHC plans. The evaluation will not extend to an inspection of these services' responsibilities for all disabled children and young people, and those with SEN. Delegates were asked if they agreed that the inspection of health and social care should be in respect of their contribution to EHC assessments and plans or if broader commissioning arrangements should be considered as well.

Delegates were unanimous in their agreement that the inspection of health and social care functions must extend beyond assessment and provision for children and young people with EHC plans. The primary reasons given were:

- The quality of provision for children and young people with health and/or social care needs, but with no significant special educational needs, would be left completely unaddressed if the existing proposals went ahead.
- There would be no inspection of joint commissioning arrangements, or the effectiveness of wider commissioning practices in health or social care for this group of children and young people. If one of the goals of the inspection was to facilitate inter-agency working and integration, working to this narrow approach was likely to reinforce silos rather than support cultural change.
- This would continue to place an undue focus on the statutory part of the system and recreate the problems where statements of SEN were seen as a 'golden ticket'.

To take an example we looked at the role of Speech and Language Therapy. This had in it a number of issues in terms of it being generally identified as an educational need within plans but affecting a much wider range of children than those just with plans and therefore needing to be underpinned by some clear protocols between health and the local authority. It also raised the issue as to how this approach supported positive practice in terms of early identification of need and targeted intervention at that stage. This principle underpinning good working in all three statutory agencies.

Topic 4 - Gathering the views of children, young people and families

Delegates were asked how inspectors ensure they gather the views of a representative cross section of children, young people and parents during the five day inspection period.

Delegates identified some key factors that would affect the ability of inspectors to get a representative view of the local area:

- The timing of the inspection and the length of the notice period;
- The skills and training of the inspection team to communicate with different children and young people
- The ability of the local area to support inspectors to engage 'harder-to-reach' groups – (for example young people with SEN in custody or those not in employment, education or training)
- The ability of inspectors to make difficult judgements about the groups they are talking to. For example, a group may have been put forward by a local area because of their positive experiences, or a group may have put themselves forward because of their poor experiences, but neither great may represent the experience of most people in the area.

Delegates identified some key factors that support inspectors to get a representative view of the local area:

- By working with all the local structures and ensuring they are all informed at the same time. This includes Information Advice and Support Services, the Parent Carer Forum, Independent Supporter agencies, as well as schools, colleges, community facilities etc.
- Setting an expectation that the local offer should be able to demonstrate the key routes of engagement with children, young people and Families;
- Making sure we use social media effectively and be creative in approaches.

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