



**CSCI – CI(2004) 6  
November 2004**

**To: Directors of Social Services in England  
Copy to Chief Executives of Local Councils**

Dear Director

**Children Act 2004 – Consultation on the Framework for  
Inspection of Children’s Services and new arrangements for  
inspection, review and assessment of children’s services**

Please find attached a copy of the Framework of the Inspection of Children’s Services, which is circulated for a twelve-week period of consultation starting on 6<sup>th</sup> December 2004. The covering letter attached to the Framework summarises the new arrangements for the inspection, review and assessment of children’s service which are explained in detail in the Framework and in three papers which are also circulated for consultation and available on OfSTED’s website ([www.everychildconsultation.gov.uk](http://www.everychildconsultation.gov.uk) ). This letter draws to your attention some specific implications of the new arrangements relating to children’s services for Directors of Social Services. The implications of the new Framework for councils with social services responsibilities are set out below.

**The Annual Performance Assessment**

From next year (2005) there will be a new annual performance assessment process for children’s social services in councils with social services responsibilities.

There will continue to be an adult services process as well and further detail will be circulated later if any changes are to be made to that process

For children’s services one overall judgement and two separate service judgements (one for education and one for children’s social services) will be made. This assessment will be based on the same standards and criteria set out for the Joint Area Review (JAR – see below) but using a more restricted evidence base focussing on social

services and education only. It is proposed that all local councils will have a performance assessment on this basis in 2005.

The assessment will take place in June or July 2005 and will be conducted jointly by CSCI (BRMs) and OFSTED. The results will provide the judgement for children's services for CPA. It will also provide evidence that will inform the Joint Area Review process.

A key part of the annual performance assessment will be the self-assessment. This will replace the children's elements of the delivery and improvement statement (DIS). It will be issued early in the New Year and is likely to have similar timescales to the Spring Delivery and Improvement Statement. It will be constructed around the five outcomes for children rather than the existing performance assessment framework. The self-assessment for the annual performance assessment and for the joint annual review will use the same structure in order to reduce any risk of duplication.

### **The Single Conversation.**

Business Relationship Managers will continue to support councils with their monitoring and improvement programme through their ongoing relationship and regular visits.

As part of the associated Change for Children Programme being led by the Department for Education and Skills, the ongoing monitoring and improvement processes that have been an integral part of that relationship will change as regards children's services.

Initial introductory conversations setting out how this will work are taking place currently with yourselves and the Regional DfES Change Advisors, with local Business Relationship Managers, and DfES Children's Services Improvement Advisers for Education.

As set out in the letter sent to you jointly by Sheila Scales of DfES and me on the 31<sup>st</sup> August 2004 the intention is to build on this conversation and to develop progressively a dialogue which will lead to an annual "single conversation" with local authorities about their services for children. The Annual Performance Assessment process and the integrated inspection framework and JAR process will support these annual "conversations" and will also inform and support the associated ongoing monitoring and improvement processes that underpin this.

### **The Joint Area Review**

The purpose of the Joint Area Review (JAR) is to evaluate the extent to which, taken together, local services contribute to improvement in the well being of children and young people in a children's services

authority area. This process will replace a range of current inspections including the current CSCI inspection of children's social services and OfSTED's inspection of LEA's. It will include contributions from the Health Care Commission and other Inspectorates.

JARs will replace the current children's services inspection methodology from September 2005, for a small group of councils and will begin in full in January 2006. The intention is that every local council area with responsibility for children's services will have a JAR within three years from that date. They will be wide ranging, considering the contribution of ALL local publicly funded services to improving outcomes for children, and addressing in particular how agencies work together to deliver improved outcomes.

They will include evaluation of aspects of the work of other partner agencies, (the police, NHS, Sure Start etc) and in particular child and adolescent mental health services, and local Safeguarding Children Boards.

At the same time, inspectorates are charged with reducing the burden of inspection on local councils, and to meet this requirement fieldwork for JARs will be proportionate to risk and based on self assessment and annual performance assessment. The exception to this is that, because of the high levels of concern, some fieldwork will always be conducted in relation to Staying Safe.

Where possible the programme of reviews will be co-ordinated with the Audit Commission's corporate assessment and HMI (probation) inspection of youth offending teams.

The criteria to be used for making judgements reflect the 25 "aims" in the National Accountability Framework for the Change for Children Programme and the National Service Framework for children, young people and maternity services. The JAR will judge the contribution made by the council's services overall to improved outcomes for children and young people and in addition will make specific judgements about the quality of its education and social care services. Judgements will be made on a four-point scale, and will take into account the outcomes being achieved for children and young people.

The indicative annual programme will be established using evidence about current performance and JARs will take place earlier in the cycle of reviews where the evidence gives rise to concerns about the effectiveness of services.

## **The inspection of regulated social care services**

The inspection of regulated children's social care services will continue to take place on a regular basis in accordance with the regulations governing those specific services. This will also include the regulatory inspection of adoption and fostering and efforts will be made to rationalise and co-ordinate these inspections with the JAR where possible.

Some changes to methodology for those inspections of children's regulated services will be made to ensure that the contribution made by the commissioner and placing local authority to the quality of care provided is assessed and judged as well as the quality of the actual provider.

Information about the outcome of these regulatory inspections (covering all regulated children's services provided locally by the voluntary and community sector, and the independent and private sector as well as by the local authority) will be used as contributory evidence for the JAR.

A detailed formal consultation on CSCI's proposed changes in relation to modernising regulation will begin in November 2004

### **Other associated inspections.**

Separate inspections of youth offending teams will continue to take place conducted by a multi-disciplinary inspection led by HMI Probation. Similarly inspections of multi-agency children's health care such as inspections of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services will take place led by the Health Care Commission as part of its programme of inspection against the NSF for children.

When possible, those inspections will be programmed to take place at the same time as the JAR. This will enable the areas of potential overlap and duplication to be reduced and rationalised and ensure that shared areas of inspection are only inspected once.

Yours sincerely,



David Behan  
Chief Inspector  
Commission for Social Care Inspection