

HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

Response to:-

- (1) **Framework for Inspection of Children's Services**
- (2) **New Arrangements for Inspection, Review and Assessment of Children's Services**

- (1) The framework focuses on improvement and outcomes. This is welcomed as an approach which will enable an evaluation of the extent of improvement in the well-being of children and young people, locally.

It will be important to demonstrate in practice the "proportionate to risk" analysis and how this is translated into a clear focus for both specialist inspections and joint area reviews.

It would be in the spirit of the fair and consistent standard to include local authorities and their partners in the review of the application of the framework.

The responsiveness to local circumstances in the methodology needs to be carefully approached with the local authority, children's services authority and partners/stakeholders locally in the preparation for joint area reviews. This engagement would enable a joint ownership of the focus of the review and the improvement journey.

- (2) The key judgements are seen as relevant to the outcomes for children and young people.

It is not yet clear how the decisions will be made on the "new inspection enquiry". There will be new fieldwork and enquiry on safeguarding children and young people, so how will that factor in to the "no more than 10" most significant key judgements for the local area? Does this mean the safeguarding enquiry is above the figure of "up to 10"?

It would be helpful if the key judgements of local significance could be agreed in advance and, as much as is appropriate, have synergy with the local self-assessment.

The co-ordination of separate inspections does need to be further developed. Locally, inspections of Adult Learning, Youth Offending Teams, 14-19 provision and fostering have all come at the same time and possibly only 7/8 months before a joint area review. While this will form an evidence basis for proportionate fieldwork, it has had an impact on capacity locally and does create a challenge in delivering in timely fashion an improvement plan.

The "Choosing Health" White Paper does create key healthy targets for children and young people. The evidence basis in NSF performance would need to be connected to progress on delivering the White Paper locally.

The consultation indicates that there will be key thresholds for the social care judgement. It is of considerable importance to know how the "specified level of performance" is set if this is to be a threshold for performing well. Further dialogue on this would be essential for transparency.

It is anticipated that the pilot areas for joint area reviews will test the implications of the information from regulatory inspections in the geographical area of the joint area review. The educational/achievement outcomes of children living locally but placed by another authority will also need to be carefully considered.

The specified level of performance expected will need to be transparent, especially in the context of the framework being focused on improvement. The baseline benchmark, linked to local circumstances, needs to be understood and hopefully agreed. The Council will be keen to see how this can be achieved.

**SUE FIENNES
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**on behalf of
HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL**

