

# Inspection of local authority children's services (ILACS)

15 and 19 January 2018 (Leeds)  
22 and 26 January 2018 (London)



# The ILACS focus

The ILACS will focus on the effectiveness of a local authority's (LA's) services and arrangements:

- to help and protect children
- to ensure positive experiences and progress of
  - children in care, wherever they live, including children who return home
  - care leavers
- to find permanence for children who are looked after, including through adoption.

In addition, we evaluate the effectiveness of leaders and managers and the impact they have on the lives of children and young people and the quality of professional practice.

# ILACS: An inspection system

ILACS is a system – responsible, intelligent and focused.

- Each feature informs how the other works
- Allows more frequent engagement between Ofsted inspectors and LAs (not always as part of an inspection) to make inspection more efficient and less burdensome
- Helps 'catch LAs before they fall'. We want to help LAs avoid becoming inadequate – we don't want to wait until inspection to find this has happened

It is a culture shift for Ofsted. We will need to 'hold our nerve', especially, in the first transitional year.

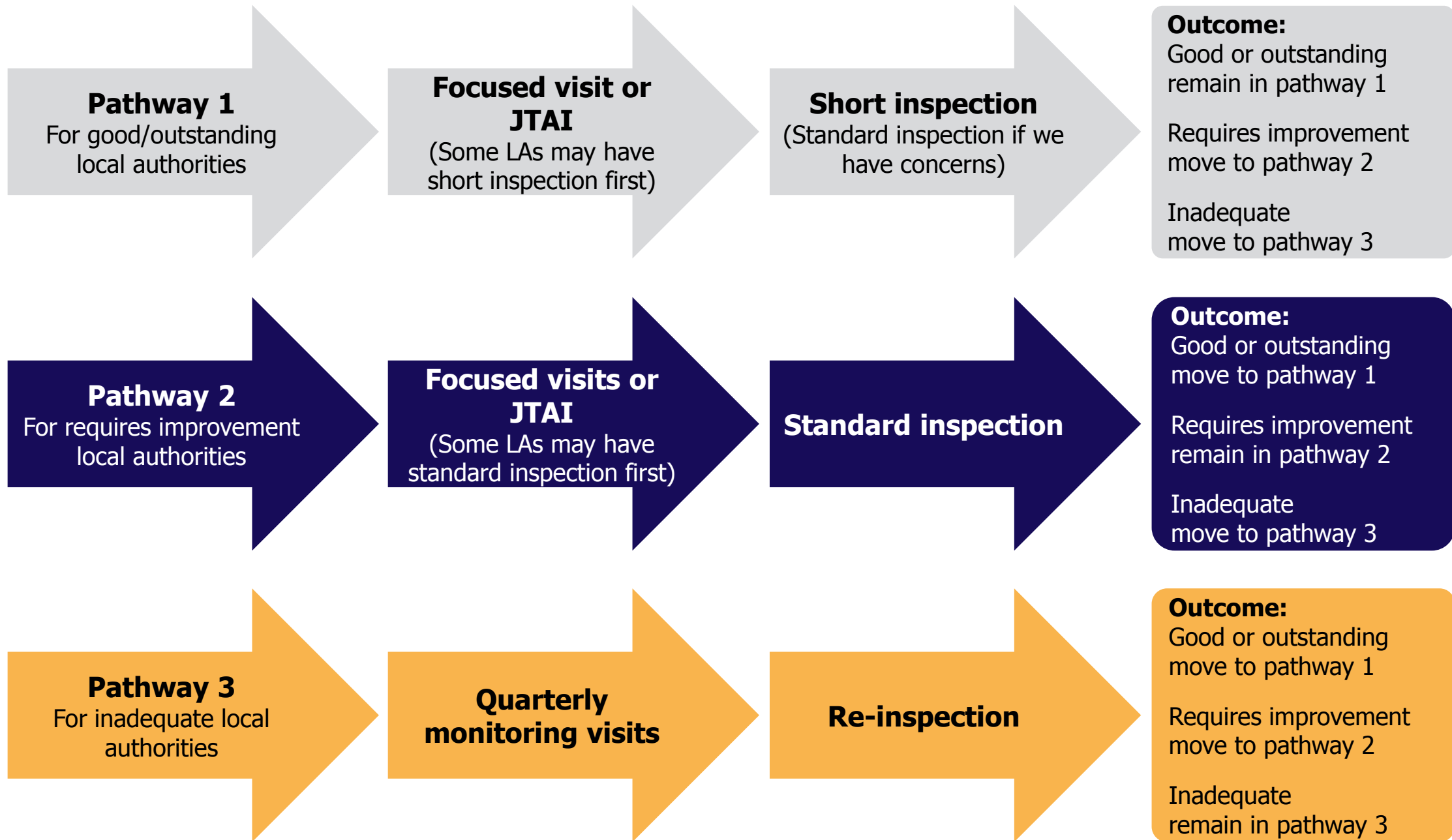
# What makes up the system?

The system includes:

- annual self-evaluation of social work practice
- annual engagement with each LA
- focused visits on a potential area of improvement or strength
- standard or short inspection of each LA, depending on what we know (once in a three-year period)
- inadequate LAs continue to receive quarterly monitoring and a re-inspection through the single inspection framework (SIF).

# Local authority contact with Ofsted

Inadequate local authority	Requires improvement to be good local authority	Good or outstanding local authority
<p>Quarterly monitoring visits</p> <p>SIF or post-monitoring SIF inspection</p> <p>Annual engagement</p> <p>Shared self-evaluation</p>	<p>Standard inspection (once in a three-year period)</p> <p>Up to two focused visits in between inspections</p> <p>Possible JTAI (would replace a focused visit)</p> <p>Annual engagement</p> <p>Shared self-evaluation</p>	<p>Short inspection (once in a three year period)</p> <p>Up to two focused visits in between inspections</p> <p>Possible JTAI (would replace a focused visit)</p> <p>Annual engagement</p> <p>Shared self-evaluation</p>



# Activities outside of inspection

Self-evaluation and annual engagement



# Self-evaluation

We have worked with the ADCS, SOLACE and LGA to develop guidance on self-evaluation.

- No set format, but should be brief and answer three questions:
  - What do you know about the quality and impact of social work practice with children and families in your authority?
  - How do you know it?
  - What are your plans to maintain or improve practice?
- Should draw on existing documents and activities
- Should reflect business as usual, not created for inspection

# Annual engagement meeting

- An opportunity for an honest and open conversation about self-evaluation, data and intelligence
- It will help us consider any future focused visit and how this might support the LA's improvement plans
- It does not have to be same time each year, but ideally should be linked to the self-evaluation
- It may be as part of another meeting, with sufficient time to discuss children's social care
- There is no published 'outcome' – Ofsted will write to the DCS summarising the discussion

# Benefits

These activities:

- support a more proportionate approach to inspection:
  - help Ofsted to make sure that focused visits look at the things that are most useful, both for the LA and for us
  - help inspectors create relevant lines of enquiry for inspections
  - help Ofsted decide the best time for a visit/inspection
- provide Ofsted with evidence that leaders have a grip on social work practice.

If an LA identifies weaknesses and we can see credible, clear, appropriate plans for action, we will see this as a strength in leadership, not a weakness.

# Focused visits



# Focused visit: scope and arrangements

- Focused visits look at a particular area of service or a cohort of children
- The criteria and information requested by inspectors are a 'sub-set' of what appears in the framework
- We may adjust the criteria or information request to reflect local context and the specific scope
- We will:
  - usually discuss the scope and the information request at the annual engagement meeting
  - use focused visits to evaluate and highlight good practice and areas of concern
  - always give five days' notice.

# Potential areas of focus

- The front door – the service that receives contacts and referrals (single or multi-agency)
- Children in need and those subject to a child protection plan
- Protection of vulnerable adolescents (contextual safeguarding)
- Children in care
- Permanency planning and achieving permanence
- Care leavers

Each visit will also consider the impact of leadership.

# Judgements and report

- No graded judgments
- Narrative published letter, which will highlight:
  - strengths
  - areas for improvement.
- If we have serious concerns, we will give unequivocal areas for priority action
- Informs our decision about when to inspect and whether to use a standard or short inspection

# Standard and short inspections



# What is a short inspection?

- A short inspection is not a standard squeezed into less time
- Short inspections happen where an LA is good or outstanding
- There is an assumption that the LA remains at least good
- Inspectors will look at whether:
  - the quality of practice has improved, been maintained or deteriorated
  - the LA's self-evaluation is accurate and can be relied on.
- Five working days' notice, inspectors on site for one week
- In the off-site week we will ask for annex A and the LA's recent audits (no new audits requested for the inspection)
- We ask for the child-level data lists to be provided earlier

# What is a standard inspection?

- Five working days' notice, inspectors on site for two weeks
- Standard inspections happen if the LA has previously been requires improvement to be good (and, by exception, if they were previously good or better)
- In the off-site week we will ask for annex A and the LA's recent audits (no new audits requested for the inspection)

# Inspector deployment

- Small teams of inspectors working closely together inspect more efficiently:
  - they spend less time reporting their findings to one another
  - all inspectors know and understand findings from across the inspection
  - they can challenge one another more effectively, closing lines of enquiry and arriving at robust judgements quickly.
- The inspection team will be supported by an education specialist and a regulatory inspector

# Onsite activity

- Inspectors will spend most of their time looking at children's experiences with social workers
- They will talk to managers if their findings indicate a strength or concern that they need to triangulate further
- They will hold regular keep-in-touch (KIT) meetings with the DCS. However...
- ...they may ask the DCS to meet inspectors at the office where they are inspecting that day.

# Managing expectations: onsite activity

To make a proportionate programme work, inspectors must target their activity carefully. They:

- will focus on key lines of enquiry and where the emerging findings take them
- will not be able to speak with everyone
- when onsite, will not routinely include set-piece meetings with the same list of people that they meet during a SIF inspection
- will prioritise activities that tell them about the quality of social work practice with children and families.

# Inspection judgements

Overall judgement		
<p><b>Key judgement:</b> The impact of leadership on social work practice with children and families</p>	<p><b>Key judgement:</b> The experiences and progress of children in need of help and protection</p>	<p><b>Key judgement:</b> The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers</p>
<p><b>Narrative:</b> How good leaders are at creating an environment where social work can flourish</p>	<p><b>Narrative</b> Early help  Children in need  Children on a child protection plan</p>	<p><b>Narrative</b> How well permanence is achieved (including adoption)  Care leavers  Making good decisions</p>

- Overall and key judgements made on our four-point scale: outstanding, good, requires improvement to be good, inadequate

# Making judgements

- We have reduced and focused the evaluation criteria on what matters most
- Judgement on children in care and care leavers. Care leavers remain a priority
- We have re-focused the leadership criteria to be on the difference it makes to practice

# Summary



# The ILACS culture shift

Risk based  
and  
proportionate

Catch before  
they fall

Hold our nerve

A system not a  
programme

# Questions?



# Ofsted on the web and on social media

[www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

<http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk>

 [www.linkedin.com/company/ofsted](http://www.linkedin.com/company/ofsted)

 [www.youtube.com/ofstednews](http://www.youtube.com/ofstednews)

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