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Guidance

Thematic reviews of alternative provision in local areas

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Applies to England

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Introduction

Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) have jointly published a new framework and handbook for inspecting arrangements in the local area for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

As part of the new area SEND inspection arrangements, Ofsted and CQC will carry out a series of thematic visits each academic year. We will conduct visits to a small number of areas to investigate a particular aspect of the SEND system in depth.

Purpose of the 2023 thematic visits

The first theme we will investigate is alternative provision. The purpose of the 2023 thematic visits is to:

- find out the extent to which alternative provision is meeting the health, care and/or education needs of children and young people
- better understand the purposes for which alternative provision is used
- identify the enablers and barriers to local area partners working together to commission and oversee alternative provision placements [\[footnote 1\]](#)
- highlight good practice in commissioning and oversight arrangements for alternative provision

These visits will also provide insights for Ofsted, CQC, government, strategic leaders and practitioners into the relationship between SEND and alternative provision and how effectively arrangements for SEND and alternative provision are working together. We will share learning to promote improvement in the sector. We will use our findings to update our approach to inspection, as appropriate.

We will not be making judgements about individual areas during these visits, although we will share our findings in a national report to be published in autumn 2023. The national report will list the local areas visited, but will not attribute findings to individual areas unless those areas agree to be identified.

Focus of the 2023 thematic visits

We will work with a range of partners in local areas to understand how they work together to commission and deliver alternative provision.

Health and social care partners do not currently have statutory responsibilities for the strategic planning, commissioning, delivery and/or evaluation of arrangements for children and young people in alternative provision. However, we know that, in many areas, they participate in decisions about the health and care of children and young people in alternative provision. They may also have a formal statutory role to play in a future integrated SEND and alternative provision system. We want to report on their participation in the alternative provision system to support partners to work together more effectively by sharing good practice.

Inspectors will gather evidence from a range of stakeholders. They will seek to understand the experiences of:

- children and young people and their families, including:
 - children and young people attending alternative provision or receiving alternative provision outreach services
 - children and young people who have stopped receiving alternative provision in the last 6 months
 - children and young people who are on the roll of an alternative provider but not attending
- strategic partners, including:
 - those who commission, or support the commissioning of, alternative provision
 - those who are involved in area-wide strategic planning for alternative provision
- delivery partners, including
 - providers and practitioners who deliver alternative provision or services to children in alternative provision

Scope of the 2023 thematic visits

The scope of the thematic visits will be children and young people who:

- are between the ages of 5 and 18
- are in alternative provision, or have been in alternative provision in the last 6 months
- live in or are the responsibility of the area visited, including those who are educated out of area

All types of alternative provision, as defined in the [statutory guidance for alternative provision \(https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/alternative-provision\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/alternative-provision) and/or that appear to be operating as alternative provision, are within the scope of the visits. Inspectors will also seek to understand how local area

partners define alternative provision and will consider provision that is interpreted to be alternative provision by local area partners.

Outreach services, as defined by local area partners, are also in scope. This can include where local alternative providers or local authority teams support mainstream schools to improve behaviour or attendance, with the aim that pupils remain in mainstream schools and do not need alternative provision school placements.

Themes of the 2023 visits

To support our visits, we will request information from the local authority and other agencies, as set out in Annex A. We do not necessarily expect local authorities and other agencies to have all this information available. We expect them to provide only information that they already hold.

The themes that inspectors will explore are set out below.

The role of alternative provision

Inspectors will explore:

- how alternative provision is used to meet education, health and social care needs
- how alternative providers work with other agencies to identify and meet needs
- how the local authority, education and health partners differentiate between specialist and alternative provision
- alternative provision's outreach role in supporting children and young people to stay in mainstream provision
- alternative provision's role in supporting children and young people to return to mainstream provision where appropriate

Strategic planning

Inspectors will explore:

- the extent and content of strategic plans for alternative provision, including how partners ensure that they have the right type, quantity and range of

alternative provision to meet children and young people's needs

- different agencies' involvement in strategic planning
- how plans are communicated with local area partners, parents and carers and children and young people
- how local area partners check progress against strategic plans

Commissioning decisions

Inspectors will explore:

- how placement decisions are made, including: the factors that influence commissioners to commission split placements or alternative provision that is unregistered or out of area; and decisions about which roll children and young people in alternative provision are on
- how commissioners assure the quality, safety and suitability of alternative provision placements
- the extent to which the local authority is aware of alternative provision commissioning happening outside its direct control, including commissioning by schools and multi-academy trusts, and sub-contracting by alternative providers
- the extent to which arrangements for alternative provision in practice reflect local strategies
- how widely unregistered alternative provision is used

Oversight arrangements

Inspectors will explore:

- monitoring and evaluation arrangements for children and young people receiving alternative provision, including unregistered alternative provision
- monitoring of arrangements when children and young people attend multiple settings
- accountability for completion of placements
- oversight of children and young people moving into and out of alternative provision regularly
- oversight arrangements for out-of-area and dual-registered placements

Transition arrangements

Inspectors will explore:

- support for children and young people when they transition into and out of alternative provision, mainstream and specialist provision
- support for children and young people when transitioning to adulthood, including support provided to transition to and sustain their post-16 placements
- transition arrangements for children and young people attending out-of-area placements and/or who are dual registered

Enabling factors and barriers

Inspectors will explore factors that enable and/or prevent partners from working together to plan, commission and oversee alternative provision effectively

Impact of arrangements on children and young people

Inspectors will explore:

- how local area partners know whether children and young people's needs are identified accurately and assessed in a timely and effective way in alternative provision
- how local area partners know whether children and young people are receiving the right help at the right time in alternative provision
- how local area partners enable children and young people in alternative provision to be well prepared for their next steps and achieve strong outcomes
- where alternative provision is effectively meeting or not meeting health, care and education needs
- how local area partners work together to use data to improve outcomes for children and young people

The legal context

Ofsted will carry out and lead these visits in response to a request from the Secretary of State for Education under [section 118\(2\) of the Education and](#)

[Inspections Act 2006 \(https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/40/section/118\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/40/section/118).

Sections 118(5) and (6) allow us to use powers of entry/powers to consider information contained in other statutes to fulfil any such request. This includes section 20 of the Children Act 2004 and the Joint Area Review (JAR) Regulations.

CQC will assist Ofsted under paragraph 9(1) of [schedule 4 to the Health and Social Care Act 2008 \(https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/14/schedule/4\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/14/schedule/4). If the visits involve examining the provision of NHS care or the carrying on of CQC regulated activities for children and young people with SEND, CQC will provide the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care with information and advice about this care, as required by their commission under [section 53\(1\) and \(4\) of the Health and Social Care Act 2008](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/14/section/53)

[\(https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/14/section/53\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/14/section/53). CQC will exercise powers of entry and inspect documents, as set out in [sections 62 to 64 of the Health and Social Care Act 2008 \(https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/14/section/62\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/14/section/62).

Composition of the team

The team will usually be made up of 3 inspectors: one inspector from education who will lead the visit, one inspector from social care and a CQC inspector.

Length and timing of thematic visits

Each visit will consist of up to 4 days of off-site activity and up to 4 days of on-site activity.

Inspectors will have the flexibility to reduce the number of off-site and/or on-site days when appropriate, such as when we are visiting a smaller local area with fewer children and young people.

How we will select local areas for thematic visits

Ofsted and CQC will select a varied sample of local areas to visit. We will be considerate of other inspection activity when selecting areas to visit.

Overview of visit activity

We are being commissioned by the Secretary of State for Education and the Secretary of State for Health to provide information and advice about the commissioning and use of alternative provision in local areas in England. In order to provide this information and advice, inspectors will draw together information from across education, health and care services, as well as from third-sector organisations and children and young people and their families. We have set out the legal powers to request and view this information above. We will share information about how we handle personal data when we contact participants, including in notification letters.

The thematic visits will usually follow the structure set out below. The exact timetable will be constructed jointly by the lead inspector and local area leaders in consultation with colleagues in health and care.

Adjustments to arrangements and timings, including the notification call, may need to be made if there is a public holiday during this time.

Adjustments to arrangements may also need to be made if Ofsted and CQC choose to reduce the number of off-site and/or on-site days, as explained above.

The survey referred to in the 'Activities in week 1' section will gather stakeholders' views about alternative provision in their area. The survey will go live on the day on which local leaders are notified of the visit (10 days before the on-site visit begins), and will remain live until the last on-site day of the visit.

Activities in week 1 (10 days before the on-site fieldwork)

Activities include:

- inspectors notify local leaders of the visit 10 working days before the on-site fieldwork begins
- inspectors share a link to the survey for local area leaders to distribute
- inspectors and local leaders hold a set-up discussion (this is carried out virtually)
- inspectors request information from the local authority and a sample of other partners to support the visit (this information is set out in Annex A of this guidance)
- local area leaders make reasonable efforts to distribute the survey to relevant stakeholders
- the local authority and other partners share information to support the visit
- inspectors carry out off-site planning and pre-visit analysis

- inspectors select individual children and young people for tracking meetings
- inspectors select providers to visit

Activities in week 2 (5 days before the on-site fieldwork)

Activities include:

- local area partners provide further information for tracking meetings
- inspectors work with local leaders to agree a timetable
- a nominated representative arranges the visits and meetings
- inspectors begin off-site evidence-gathering

Activities in week 3

1. Inspectors conduct on-site evidence-gathering.
2. Inspectors discuss visit observations with local area leaders.

Information about the processes before, during and after the visits

Pre-visit activity

Ofsted and CQC inspectors will review relevant information held by the inspectorates about the arrangements for alternative provision in the local area.

Week 1: notification, set-up discussion, information request and analysis

Notification

Ten working days before on-site evidence-gathering, inspectors will contact the relevant leaders in the local area to notify them of the visit:

- Ofsted will contact the director of children's services (DCS)
- CQC will notify the chief executive of the Integrated Care Board (ICB)

The lead inspector will work with the DCS to nominate a representative – a local area nominated officer (LANO) – who will act as a single point of contact throughout the visit. The LANO will act on behalf of those involved in the strategic planning, commissioning, delivery, oversight and evaluation of alternative provision arrangements for children and young people who live in the local area, linking with the ICB.

Their role will be to liaise with the lead inspector throughout the visit, so that activities can be coordinated effectively.

Ofsted and the CQC will only defer the visit to a local area in exceptional circumstances. If a local area has a concern about the timing of a visit, it may submit a deferral request in line with the principles set out in [Ofsted's deferral policy \(https://www.gov.uk/guidance/deferring-ofsted-inspections\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/deferring-ofsted-inspections).

Set-up discussion

Once the visit has been confirmed, the lead inspector and the CQC inspector will make an extended telephone call to the LANO and ICB representative. The purpose of this call is to:

- discuss the local area's context, including how local area partners define alternative provision
- discuss the arrangements for the visit, including a proposed timetable of activities, arrangements for talking to children and young people and families, the key officers and representatives to involve in specific meetings, and the purpose of proposed activities
- discuss arrangements for having regular discussions to confirm the main messages gathered in evidence and check arrangements for the day
- discuss the arrangements for distributing the survey (the lead inspector will agree with the LANO who to involve in this, to capture the experiences of as many children and young people as possible)
- discuss the information requested for the visit (Annex A)
- discuss alternative sources of information that can support inspectors to review arrangements of which the local authority may not be aware
- ask that the key stakeholders involved in the commissioning of alternative provision are made aware of the visit, including providers, services and parents and carers

Information request (Annex A)

Annex A sets out the information inspectors will request and the timeline for sharing information. The information includes:

- pseudonymised person-level data, which inspectors will use to select the children whose experiences they will evaluate
- information about alternative providers and services
- information about the local authority's area-wide strategic planning for alternative provision
- information about commissioning arrangements for alternative provision
- information about oversight arrangements for alternative provision placements
- information about transition arrangements for those moving into and out of alternative provision
- information about outcomes for children and young people in alternative provision

Inspectors will ask the local authority to provide the information set out in Annex A. Inspectors may also request information from other agencies that are involved in commissioning alternative provision placements – such as health and care services, schools or multi-academy trusts – to build a comprehensive understanding of alternative provision commissioning across the local area.

Inspectors may, at any time, ask for additional information not set out in Annex A and may agree to look at additional information that agencies provide. Any additional information must be:

- necessary for an accurate understanding of children and young people's experiences and outcomes in relation to the scope of the visit
- not already available through the request in Annex A

We do not necessarily expect local authorities and other partners to have all the information set out in Annex A available. If the local authority or any other partner does not hold the information listed in Annex A, they should not produce new documents solely to meet the request for information.

Survey arrangements

We will distribute a survey to gather stakeholders' views about alternative provision in their area. The survey will go live on the day that local leaders are notified of the visit and will remain live until the last on-site day of the visit.

During the visits, the lead inspector will work with the LANO to ensure that – as far as possible – the survey is made available to:

- all children and young people in alternative provision or who have been in alternative provision in the last 6 months
- their parents and carers

- all settings and services that deliver alternative provision and are involved in alternative provision commissioning in the area

Inspectors will work with those distributing the surveys to consider accessibility issues.

We will use the evidence we collect through surveys primarily to inform our final national report. Findings will not be attributed to any specific area. We will also review survey responses periodically. If we identify any significant concerns through this, we will respond as set out in the [significant concerns section](#).

Off-site analysis

Inspectors will review the information requested from the local authority and other partners listed in Annex A.

Preparing for evidence-gathering activity

Inspectors will arrange with the LANO to meet with those involved in area-wide strategic planning (if this exists) and the local safeguarding board. This meeting will take place at the start of week 2.

Selecting children and young people for tracking meetings

During week 1, inspectors will select approximately 3 children and young people to be involved in tracking meetings. These are meetings with children and young people in alternative provision, or who have been in alternative provision in the last 6 months, their parents or carers (if appropriate), the practitioners directly involved with them and those who commissioned their alternative provision placement. The meetings are for inspectors to hear directly about children and young people's experiences and outcomes, particularly those of vulnerable groups of children working with multiple agencies, such as children in care and/or those with health needs.

When selecting the children and young people to track, inspectors will take into account information shared by local area leaders, the demographic make-up of the local area, including protected characteristics defined by the Equality Act 2010, and any contextual issues specific to the local area.

Once children and young people have been selected, the LANO will:

- arrange for a practitioner who knows the child or young person well to approach them, and their parents or carers, to discuss their involvement in tracking meetings
- share any further information about the child or young person that may be relevant
- arrange tracking meetings with children and young people, and their parents and carers

- arrange a multi-disciplinary tracking meeting with the practitioners who are/have been directly involved with the child or young person and those who commissioned their alternative provision placement – this can include practitioners across education, health and care and any third-sector involvement

Selecting providers for sampling visits

During week 1, inspectors will select a number of providers that offer alternative provision to visit, to review the experiences of a wider group of children and young people. When choosing providers to visit, inspectors will seek to consider a range of services that offer alternative provision to children and young people with a range of needs and to a range of age groups.

These sampling visits enable inspectors to gather information about the impact of the local area's arrangements on a wider group of children and young people who receive alternative provision. Inspectors will seek to understand children and young people's experiences and outcomes by reviewing documents and talking to practitioners. While we may include our observations from the visit in the national report to be published at the end of the thematic visits, we will not use the information gathered to make judgements about individual local areas.

The lead HMI will provide the LANO with notification letters to send to the chosen providers. The LANO will set up the visits.

Week 2: off-site analysis, creating an on-site timetable, evidence-gathering begins

Creating the timetable

The Ofsted lead inspector will coordinate the creation of a timetable for gathering evidence off site in week 2, and on site in week 3. They will work jointly with the CQC inspector and social care HMI to help create the timetable, in collaboration with the LANO and ICB representative. This will include arrangements for meeting with practitioners and leaders to discuss their work, and children and young people and their parents/carers to discuss their experiences and involvement in strategic planning and placement decisions. Inspectors will also make arrangements for keep-in-touch meetings and a debrief at the end of the week, to reflect on observations from the visit.

When creating the timetable, the Ofsted lead inspector and CQC lead inspector will:

- consider which activities should be carried out in person, and which should be carried out by phone or video call

- include enough time for inspectors to travel between appointments
- include time for inspectors to review and analyse the information gathered, individually and together
- ensure that the timetable is flexible enough to be changed in response to emerging observations
- work with the LANO to ensure that local leaders and practitioners are aware of the timetable and any changes to it

Inspectors will meet during week 2 to confirm the plan for the visit and discuss any final arrangements with the LANO.

Meetings to discuss the local strategic planning

Inspectors will have discussions with those involved in area-wide strategic planning for alternative provision, including those who have been involved in developing plans, those responsible for overseeing plans, those responsible for communicating strategic plans with the local area and those involved in incorporating strategic planning into performance measures.

These discussions may include any of the following who have been involved in the strategic development of alternative provision for children and young people:

- representatives from the local authority, education and social care
- representatives from health
- representatives from the third sector
- parents/carers
- the virtual school headteacher

Meetings to discuss alternative provision commissioning practices

Inspectors will have discussions with a range of stakeholders involved in commissioning alternative provision placements and will discuss a variety of placement arrangements. These discussions may include:

- representatives from the local authority who have statutory responsibility for commissioning alternative provision
- representatives from social care and health partners that contribute to the development of commissioning arrangements
- representatives from education settings that have commissioned alternative provision, such as multi-academy trusts or schools

Meeting with representatives of the local safeguarding partnership

Inspectors will meet with the relevant subgroup or representatives of the local safeguarding partnership to discuss children attending alternative provision and

those transitioning into and out of alternative provision (including those moving between placements).

Discussions with parents and carers

Inspectors will meet remotely with groups of parents and carers who have agreed to participate, to:

- understand their experiences
- understand the impact of the local arrangements for alternative provision on their child
- understand how services in the local area engage with parents and carers, and the impact this engagement has
- identify any common themes that inspectors may wish to explore further during visits

Inspectors will meet with parents and carers as part of the tracking meetings in week 3. They may also arrange to meet with or talk to other parents and carers, to discuss relevant themes and their individual experiences, or to seek their views on a specific aspect of the local arrangements for alternative provision.

Week 3: tracking meetings, sampling visits and discussions

Discussions with children and young people

Inspectors will meet with children and young people in alternative provision or who have been in alternative provision in the last 6 months, to:

- understand their experiences and outcomes
- understand how services in the local area engage with children and young people, and the impact of this engagement
- identify any common themes to explore further during sampling visits

Inspectors will meet with children and young people as part of the tracking meetings in week 3. They may arrange to meet with other children and young people to explore relevant themes, discuss their individual experiences or seek their views on a specific aspect of local arrangements for alternative provision. Children and young people and their parents and carers can opt out of meetings at any time.

Inspectors will not keep a written record of the identity of the children and young people they speak to.

Tracking meetings with children, young people, parents and carers

Inspectors will use tracking meetings to gather information about the impact of the local strategy and commissioning on the experiences and outcomes of individual children and young people in alternative provision. Tracking meetings enable inspectors to understand specific children and young people's experiences and journeys through the alternative provision system. Inspectors will consider how decisions have been made, how children, young people and their families have been involved, and the extent to which the needs of children and young people have been met.

Tracking meetings will help inspectors to establish themes they wish to explore through further on-site activity. The information provided by the local authority and other partners, and from meetings with leaders, practitioners, parents and carers, and groups of children and young people, will also feed into the themes that inspectors choose to explore further during on-site activity. This further on-site activity may include meetings with stakeholders and sampling the experiences of more children and young people with a range of education, health and care needs and across a range of ages.

Inspectors will discuss the child or young person's experiences of alternative provision with them. They will ask the LANO to work with practitioners and families to understand how inspectors can best support the child or young person to share their experiences. Inspectors may also discuss children and young people's experiences of alternative provision with their parents and/or carers, either together with or separately from their child, depending on the age of the child or young person and the family's preferences.

Multi-agency tracking meetings with practitioners

Inspectors will have a multi-agency discussion with education, health and care professionals who work with the child or young person and those who were involved in commissioning their placement. The lead inspector will ask the LANO to ensure that the professionals involved in the discussion include staff who have the greatest awareness of the child or young person's support plan.

Inspectors may discuss children and young people's records with practitioners, using their knowledge of the child or young person, file structure and recording systems. They may also consider any case supervision notes. Where case records are held wholly or partly electronically, the service should arrange for identified inspectors to have secure access to the electronic system.

Inspectors will base their findings on recent information that has an impact on the child or young person's current situation. However, inspectors may ask for historical information to understand children and young people's pathways into and out of alternative provision.

Sampling visits to providers and services

During sampling visits, inspectors will visit a specific provider or service and ask for information about children and young people's experiences.

The settings inspectors choose to visit may include, but are not limited to, hospital schools, pupil referral units and unregistered settings that offer alternative provision.

Inspectors will choose the children and young people to speak to during sampling visits, where this is possible. These may include children and young people who have a specific need, who are receiving a specific service and/or who are at a particular point in their care or education.

They may choose the children and young people before the visit, using the information provided by local area partners. Alternatively, they may ask practitioners to show them records based on certain criteria established from emerging themes and will choose the children to speak to in that way. Inspectors may or may not invite the child or young person to meet with them.

Inspectors will gather evidence of the assessment, diagnostic and support pathways for the children and young people in alternative provision. They may also look at the transition support in place for children and young people moving into and out of alternative provision, where relevant.

Inspectors will look at any other relevant documents relating to the children and young people. They will discuss their experiences and outcomes with the practitioners in that provision or service and those who are directly involved in the decision-making and oversight of their support. Inspectors may also look at case supervision notes. Where case records are held wholly or partly electronically, the provider should arrange for the inspectors to have secure access to the electronic system.

Findings will be based on contemporary practice and on practice that has an impact on the child or young person's current situation. However, inspectors may ask for historical information to understand children and young people's pathways into and out of alternative provision.

Discussions with leaders of alternative providers and practitioners that support children and young people in alternative provision

Inspectors will hold meetings with leaders of alternative providers and frontline practitioners working with children and young people in alternative provision to understand the different purposes that alternative provision serves, its different uses, and the impact of local arrangements for alternative provision on children and young people from the leaders and frontline practitioners' perspective.

Visit team meetings

The team will meet at different points during the visit, either remotely or in person. In particular, the team should, as far as is practicable, meet each day to

discuss and record observations and ensure that the lead inspector has the most recent information to reflect on with the LANO and ICB representative.

During the final team meeting, inspectors will summarise what they observed and what they were told in preparation for a reflective conversation with local area leaders.

Regular discussions

The lead inspector will establish arrangements for regular discussions at key points during the visit. This will enable the inspection team to share their observations with the DCS, the ICB representative and the LANO, identify any additional information required, answer any questions and make changes to the timetable if necessary.

Inspectors may work with the LANO and ICB representative to arrange additional meetings with leaders and/or practitioners throughout the on-site visit. This will enable inspectors to further explore emerging themes identified through tracking meetings or sampling visits.

After the visit

We will not make or report judgements about local areas based on evidence gathered during the visit.

Debrief with local area leaders

We will share our observations with local area leaders verbally during the visit, at appropriate points, and at the end of a visit during a debrief meeting.

The debrief meeting with local area leaders will include a summary of observations and reflective discussion.

The lead inspector will liaise with the DCS and the ICB representative, through the LANO, to agree who attends this meeting. This may include local area leaders involved in the commissioning, oversight and/or delivery of alternative provision.

Summary note

Following the debrief with local area leaders, the local authority will receive a summary note with a record of the activities carried out ([see example](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/thematic-reviews-of-alternative-provision-in-local-areas)) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/thematic-reviews-of-alternative-provision-in-local-areas>). The note will not be evaluative, and there will be no judgements or recommendations.

Reporting

Ofsted and CQC will share the observations from these visits in a single national report. The national report will list the local areas visited. Findings will not be attributed to individual areas unless the areas agree to be identified. No report will include any personal information about an individual child, young person, parent or carer.

Significant concerns

Inspectors should follow the principles set out in [Safeguarding concerns: guidance for inspectors \(https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted-safeguarding-policy/safeguarding-concerns-guidance-for-inspectors\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted-safeguarding-policy/safeguarding-concerns-guidance-for-inspectors). If they are concerned about a child or young person, they should follow [existing procedures \(https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted-safeguarding-policy/ofsted-safeguarding-policy\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted-safeguarding-policy/ofsted-safeguarding-policy).

If inspectors remain concerned, Ofsted and/or CQC will consider whether it is appropriate to take further action. This could include, if appropriate, inspectors referring individual children's or young people's cases to the local authority or requesting an inspection of the individual service or provider in line with Ofsted's or CQC's statutory and regulatory duties and powers.

If inspectors identify other serious concerns, they will also notify a senior officer from the local authority as soon as possible. Ofsted and CQC will consider this information, and it may lead to further activity, including inspection.

Conduct and complaints

Inspectors must uphold the highest professional standards in their work and treat everyone they encounter during visits fairly and with respect and sensitivity. The lead inspector must ensure that visits are carried out in accordance with Ofsted's [code of conduct \(https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/conduct-of-inspectors-during-ofsted-inspections\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/conduct-of-inspectors-during-ofsted-inspections).

Annex A: information requested to support the visits

We are being commissioned by the Secretary of State for Education and the Secretary of State for Health to provide information and advice about the commissioning and use of alternative provision in local areas in England. In order to provide this information and advice, inspectors will request the information set out in this annex when they notify the local authority of an area SEND thematic visit. Our legal powers to request this information are set out in the [legal context section](#). We will share information about how we handle personal data when we contact participants, including in notification letters.

The information that inspectors will request includes information to assist them in selecting children and young people's cases for tracking, and the further information they will request about those selected.

Inspectors will request the information set out below from the local authority. They may also choose a sample of partners involved in alternative provision commissioning from which to request information, based on information the local authority provides and other information available to Ofsted. This may include health and care services that have informed commissioning decisions, school and multi-academy trust commissioners, independent advice and support services, virtual school headteachers, pupil placement panels and alternative providers.

Partners should share all the information they have that is relevant to this request. If partners do not have all the information set out in this annex, we do not expect them to produce it solely for the purposes of the visit. We expect local areas to provide only information that they already hold.

If information is shared that is relevant to more than one of the requests, it does not need to be replicated in each section, but the lead inspector should be made aware of it.

Inspectors may not be able to review all the information provided by the local area. If this is the case, inspectors will select the information they judge to be most relevant to the purposes of the visit.

The list below sets out the high-level timeline for sharing this information.

Week 1, Monday

Inspectors request the information set out in Annex A.

Week 1, Thursday, by 5pm

- local authority provides pseudonymised person-level data to assist inspectors in selecting children and young people to track
- local authority provides a list of providers and settings to assist inspectors in selecting the providers that will have sampling visits

- local authority provides requested information about alternative provision arrangements

Week 1, Friday, by 5pm

Inspectors select children and young people's cases to be tracked.

Week 2, Monday, by 5pm

Local area partnership provides additional information about the children and young people selected for tracking.

Inspectors will provide details on accessing an online system that local area leaders can use to share the information.

Inspectors will gather personal information, including some sensitive personal data, that is necessary to help them evaluate local arrangements for:

- children and young people receiving alternative provision
- children and young people who have received alternative provision in the last 6 months

Week 1: person-level data

When the lead inspector contacts the local authority (and other partners, if necessary), they will ask for lists containing person-level data to assist inspectors in selecting children and young people to track.

They will ask for this data to be pseudonymised, so that children and young people are not identifiable at this stage.

Local area partners should provide the person-level data lists by 5pm on the Thursday following the notification call. The person-level data lists should be as up to date as possible. However, if the most recent available data is a historical snapshot, such as from the school/alternative provision census, this will be acceptable. These lists should be provided in Excel, if possible.

When local area partners share the lists, they should indicate what date(s) the data in each list represents as far as possible.

The person-level information inspectors will request includes the items set out in the list below.

Children and young people in or accessing alternative provision, including outreach services

List of children and young people currently attending alternative provision, specifying (where possible):

- their age
- their gender
- their ethnicity
- any special educational and/or health needs they have
- whether they have or have had an education, health and care (EHC) plan, or are in the process of assessment
- whether they are a child looked after
- all setting(s) they are attending and have attended previously
- whether these settings are state maintained, independent and registered, or independent and unregistered
- whether these settings are in/out of area (include journey times in case of the latter)
- whether the placements are/were full/part time
- whether they are/were single/dual registrations
- who commissioned the placement(s)
- the reason for the alternative provision placement
- their attendance percentage for all placements
- whether the placement is residential

If a child or young person is accessing outreach services, the outreach provider should also be specified.

Children and young people who have been in alternative provision in the last 6 months

List of children and young people who have been attending alternative provision in the last 6 months, specifying the information set out in [the section above](#) and the child or young person's destination after leaving alternative provision.

Children and young people on the dynamic support register and/or who have had a care, education and treatment review (CETR)

List of all children and young people who are on the dynamic support register and/or have had a CETR in the last 6 months, and their current

education provision and health needs, including whether they have an EHC plan.

If certain data is unavailable, the lead inspector may wish to discuss how the local area monitors those areas.

Queries about the person-level data should be sent to data.AreaSEND@ofsted.gov.uk. However, if you have any queries after you have been notified that a visit is to take place, please contact the lead inspector.

Week 1: selecting providers and settings for sampling visits

The lead inspector will ask the LANO and ICB representative for a list of alternative providers and services in the area and other information set out in the list below. Inspectors may also seek information from other partners, so that the list is as comprehensive as possible and does not exclude providers that the LANO and ICB representative may not be aware of. Inspectors will then select a sample to visit, review the records of children and young people, and ask the LANO to inform the providers and services.

Alternative providers

List of all settings offering alternative provision, including virtual alternative providers and any specific health services, specifying (where possible):

- whether the provision is state maintained or independent
- whether they offer alternative provision as outreach
- basic details of their offer

Week 1: information about alternative provision arrangements in the local area

In the first week of the visit, inspectors will request information about the arrangements for alternative provision in the local area, including the items set out below, from the local authority (and other partners, if necessary).

Local area partners should not provide all the information that they hold about each subject. Inspectors will want only the most recent information that relates to the scope of the visit. Inspectors will not review information that they deem to fall outside the scope of the visit.

If local area partners do not hold the information set out below, they should not produce new documents solely to meet the request for information.

Local areas may hold information that is relevant to 2 or more items listed below in the same document. In this case, they should provide the document once and clearly flag the items to which it relates.

Information to be provided by the local area about strategic planning for alternative provision

Strategic planning

Information about area-wide strategic planning for alternative provision, or any strategic planning document that includes alternative provision strategic planning within it, for example information about:

- workforce planning, sufficiency planning, area partners' roles in strategic planning and information on how planning is driven by need
- planning for the implementation stage and any monitoring arrangements

Information to be provided by the local area about commissioning arrangements

Commissioning arrangements

Information about commissioning arrangements for all alternative provision placements, for example information about:

- decision-making processes
- checks on the safety, suitability and quality of commissioned placements

Evidence of pathways

Information about assessment, diagnostic and support pathways for children in alternative provision, including referrals to health services for assessment.

Information exchange between commissioners and providers

Evidence of information sought by commissioners or sent to commissioners by alternative providers to support placement decisions, and for the ongoing review of placements.

Health system overview and commissioning arrangements

Information about the structure of the local health services, including who commissions them and who provides them (the CQC will provide a template at notification), and any health services that are commissioned specifically for children in alternative provision.

Information to be provided about oversight arrangements

Monitoring and evaluation

Information about monitoring and evaluation arrangements for alternative provision, for example information about:

- oversight of children and young people who attend multiple settings and pupils who move into and out of alternative provision regularly
- the role of the virtual school headteacher for looked after children

Information to be provided about transition support arrangements

Transition support practices

Document(s) that set out transition support practices, including transition into and out of alternative provision, between mainstream and specialist education provision, or into adulthood, including into work/training, not into work/training or into adult health services.

Accountability arrangements for the provision of transition support

Document(s) that set out accountability arrangements for the provision of transition support.

Information to be provided about the impact of the local area's alternative provision arrangements on the outcomes of children and young people in alternative provision

Impact

Document(s) that set out the data and any other information the local area is using to assess the effectiveness of alternative provision placements.

This may include information on outcomes following referrals to health services, including children and young people's mental health services, therapies and child development centres.

Additional information to be provided to provide context to the area's alternative provision arrangements

Involvement in the Department for Education's alternative provision specialist taskforce programme

Alternative provision taskforce initiatives and evaluations, where applicable.

Alternative provision within or overseen by state-funded schools

A list of any alternative provision situated within or overseen by state-funded schools that is not included in the state-funded school's URN on the government's Get Information about Schools website.

Week 1: additional information about children and young people selected for tracking

The lead inspector will ask the LANO to coordinate the sharing of information with the inspection team about the children and young people who are being tracked. This information will include:

- a chronology of significant events related to the education, health and care of the child or young person in the 2 years before the visit

- a pen portrait of the child or young person, including information about their needs, aspirations and support

Inspectors will also ask for further information, including:

- the most recent assessments, including an early help assessment, if applicable
- the most recent plans, including an EHC plan, personal education plan or care plan, where relevant
- the current alternative provision commissioning agreement

Inspectors will not keep a written record of the identity of the children and young people they speak to.

1. For the purposes of these visits, 'local area partners' refer to those in education, health and care who are involved in the strategic planning, commissioning, delivery and/or evaluation of arrangements for children and young people receiving alternative provision who live in a local area. A local area is the geographic footprint of a local authority.

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