What is the Joint Targeted Area Inspection—Children living with neglect?

In January 2016, the government published guidance on a new inspection framework, with inspections to take place alongside the existing Single Inspection Framework (SIF) under which Leeds was inspected in January 2015 (guide). This new framework is the Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI).

The JTAIs are joint inspections carried out by Ofsted, the Care Quality Commission (CQC), Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of the Constabulary (HMIC) and Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Probation. The scope of the inspection is to look at multi-agency arrangements, including the quality and timeliness of assessments, and to carry out a ‘deep dive’ investigation of the response to specific children and young people.

The theme of the JTAIs between May and December 2017 is ‘children living with neglect.’ The guidance is available from here. An evaluation of the ‘front door’ (guide) will focus on children of all ages who are being or have been neglected and a ‘deep dive’ investigation will focus on children aged between seven and 15 years who have been neglected.

For JTAIs carried out between February and August 2016, the focus was on children and young people at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) (guide) and missing children (guide). The CSE and missing children inspection guidance is here and a report has been published based on the five inspections carried out, called 'Time to listen' - a joined up response to child sexual exploitation and missing children. JTAIs carried out between September 2016 and March 2017 focused on domestic violence and abuse (guide). The guidance and the published reports are available from here. The JTAIs are unannounced and Leeds should expect (alongside any other local authority in England) that we may be chosen for inspection.

How does the inspection work?

There will usually be three inspectors from each of: Ofsted, HMIC and the CQC; and two from HMI Probation; with a lead inspector from Ofsted. For the Neglect JTAI, there will also be an education inspector. Time spent in Leeds would be over a three week period. Subsequent weeks would be concerned with writing the ‘letter of findings’ and quality assurance processes. Notification of inspection takes place on a Tuesday before 9:30am by the Lead Inspector contacting the relevant local authority Director of Children’s Services (DCS). The other inspectorates contact their relevant agencies. A detailed ‘set up’ meeting will take place.

Based on lists of children provided by the local authority, Inspectors will select 20 children, ask for further information about them to be provided and then refine their selection for between five and seven children. The local partnership will then be asked to jointly evaluate the experiences of these children and to share the outcomes in the second week.

Each partner agency must provide a range of strategic documents. Inspectors will review effectiveness by case tracking and sampling individual children’s experiences and through interviews. Inspectors will observe planned multi-agency meetings, examine key documents, interview staff, review the partnership evaluations, and meet senior officers and relevant staff involved in services related to neglect and children and parents.

Inspectors will review evidence against the evaluation criteria, and identify areas of good practice, development and priority action for the partnership and present their findings.
What are the evaluation criteria?
The full evaluation criteria can be found at point 12 of the guidance document. Here is a summary of the criteria:

- Risks to children living with neglect are prevented and reduced and needs are met at an early stage through timely access to effective help (guide);
- Children living with neglect receive the right help and protection because of effective information sharing and timely intervention;
- Agencies work together to identify children who are neglected, intervene to reduce risk and monitor effectively the impact of interventions;
- The impact of neglect on children is reduced because they and their families can access a sufficient range of local services, including therapeutic help that improves children’s emotional well-being and safety;
- Professionals and support staff are well trained, confident and knowledgeable. They understand the impact of neglect on children’s daily lives and the long-term and cumulative impact;
- Children who are neglected experience a child-centred approach from all professionals. The views of the child are clearly recorded and central to the work with the family;
- Professionals have a clear understanding of how the behaviour of parents and carers affects children. They assess any strengths and risks in parenting and the extended family. Where changes in parents’ and/or carers’ behaviour are required, clear timescales for change are agreed. Professionals challenge each other appropriately to ensure good practice, and they challenge and support parents/carers;
- Children living with neglect benefit from evidence-based approaches, tools and services that reduce risks and meet their needs;
- Children and their families feel that their views have been heard and understood. This leads to improvements in the help and support that they receive;
- The police work in partnership with other agencies to appropriately identify and address the needs of children who have been or are neglected. They investigate effectively cases of neglect in families with children;
- Schools have effective systems to identify children at risk of or subject to neglect. They make timely referrals to early help or children’s social care and contribute to a coordinated offer of early help or plans for children in need of help and protection;
- Leaders and managers understand the experiences of children living with neglect that live locally and recognise the challenges involved in responding to neglect and provide effective support, training and challenge to practitioners; and
- The LSCB (guide) actively monitors, promotes, coordinates and evaluates the work of statutory partners that help and protect children at risk of neglect, including working effectively with multi-agency groups that have responsibility for responding to neglect.

Key contacts and for more information?
If you want to know more about the JTAI Neglect, you can email: CSimprovement@leeds.gov.uk

Leeds’ early help approach and practice guidance can be accessed from the LSCB website.

And in 2014, Ofsted carried out a thematic review of neglect, and you can read the report, ‘In the child’s time: professional responses to neglect’

One minute guides homepage