

18. Arrangements for giving feedback to the local authority during fieldwork and for dealing with concerns

Ongoing dialogue

Formal feedback and presentation of the headline findings to the local authority takes place in a meeting about one week after the fieldwork has been completed (see Section 19). However, the performance inspection process is underpinned throughout by considerable dialogue between the inspectors and the authority. The relationship between the lead inspector and the local authority lead manager and inspection co-ordinator is especially important in managing the inspection as a joint enterprise.

It is anticipated that the lead inspector will meet regularly with the local authority lead manager and inspection co-ordinator during the fieldwork to discuss:

- emerging themes;
- the authority's perception of the way in which the inspection is being conducted;
- how best to approach particular areas of investigation
- any concerns that need to be brought to the attention of the Director of Social Work Services.

This approach is consistent with the need to ensure that the inspection process is delivered in a spirit of partnership and that the final outcome of the inspection is anticipated as far as possible. Comments made at any interim stage can be subject to change in the light of further evidence. The authority may wish to provide more information to corroborate or challenge the initial perception that has been created.

Dealing with concerns

From time to time inspectors will identify important concerns, issues or individual cases that need to be taken up speedily with the local authority. These may range from small-scale but important matters such as individual poor practice or a failure to deliver a service through to high risk situations in which the authority will need to ensure that there is immediate intervention.

All concerns should be reported by inspectors to the lead inspector who will always decide what action is to be taken.

The lead inspector may decide that a particular concern can be resolved in immediate discussion with the relevant manager and then obtain subsequent confirmation that the matter has been rectified. The lead inspector should approach the relevant manager, not the individual member of staff. More serious concerns may need to be referred to more senior managers for resolution. The lead inspector will always notify the Director of Social Work Services about any serious concerns.

The lead inspector will report and refer in writing to the Director of Social Work Services specific concerns about individual cases that cannot be resolved immediately, with the expectation that the matter will be investigated and resolved. The Director will provide the lead inspector with a report to this effect.