

By email: EYRegulatoryandSocialCare@ofsted.gov.uk

Friday 29 July 2022

ADCS response to the Ofsted consultation on updates to the ILACS framework

1. The Association of Directors of Children's Services Ltd (ADCS) is the national leadership organisation in England for directors of children's services (DCSs) under the provisions of *the Children Act (2004)*. The DCS acts as a single point of leadership and accountability for services for children and young people in a local area, including children's social care and education. ADCS welcomes the opportunity to respond to Ofsted's consultation on the introduction of a distinct judgement on the experiences and progress of care leavers within the current framework for assuring children's social care services.
2. ADCS recently welcomed Ofsted to a meeting of our national Standards, Performance and Inspection Policy committee to discuss these plans ahead of the consultation going live. At the time, the group was broadly supportive of this move and wider feedback from the ADCS membership continues to support this position. Overall, having a separate judgement for care leavers is felt to be helpful in terms of shining a light on the experiences and outcomes of this important cohort and continuing to drive forward improvements.
3. As noted in the consultation, the cohort of care leavers up to age 25 years is approximately the same size as the cohort of children in care but there is greater complexity here in terms of how local authorities evidence impact and how individuals define what success and positive outcomes means to them; educational attainment and exam performance cannot be used as a proxy measure for success. A lack of preparedness and personal readiness for the realities of a move to independence were strong themes in recent Ofsted research with care leavers, the importance of relationships were also underlined and could usefully be considered in the updated evaluation criteria used by inspectors. Consideration may also be given to understanding and meeting the particular needs of care leavers who arrived alone in this country as children seeking asylum; this group represents a growing proportion of the care leaver cohort in most, if not all, local areas.
4. As the consultation recognises, there have been updates and changes in entitlements for care leavers since the ILACS launched in 2018, such as the extension of the offer of support from a personal advisor up to age 25 years. There has also been a gradual expansion of Staying Put and Staying Close over time. It is important to look to the future too; we are entering an active phase of policy development, with several significant reviews, reports and papers publishing this year.
5. Most relevant here is the *Independent review of children's social care*, which put forward dozens of recommendations for change, a number of which

directly related to care leaver entitlements and support, including the broadening of corporate parenting responsibilities, tackling stigma and discrimination and priority access to public services, such as housing. The resulting reforms are likely to be significant – the government will publish a full response to the review later this year – which may necessitate a further stocktake or review to ensure inspection activity reflects current laws, standards and guidance, particularly where the timelines for such reforms do not align with inspection cycles.

6. The timeline for introducing this framework change, in January 2023 after the first cycle of the ILACS is complete, seems sensible. It would be helpful for the updated framework and handbook to be published as soon as possible, to allow local authorities to read, digest and prepare for a future visit. ADCS notes the proximity of the outcome of this consultation exercise being made public and the implementation of changes to the holiday period.
7. Should any questions or queries arise about this submission, please contact the relevant policy officer via Katy.block@adcs.org.uk.