

16/2/24 - ofsted / nafp joint forum - part 1

Week 1

- Gradings - requirements and recommendations - any updates
- Comparisons re size of agencies, what can offer etc (and inclusion eg children's voice) - impact on judgements
- Interpretations of regs in agencies but also by ofsted - writing the report
- Expectations in relation to finances in agencies
- Size and geographical spread of agency - when is an agency too big - RM
- Anonymous questionnaire to fostering agencies from ofsted in relation to ofsted (or doesn't need to be anonymous) they ask for post-inspection feedback now, so this is annual feedback from all IFAs
- RM process and application - sc2
- Contractors / self employed workers - checks and refs, what's proportionate

Gradings - requirements and recommendations - any updates

Members would like to have an update of whether the 3 judgement areas are under review, and also the sccif - also a little more info about the judgements made - discussion re some agencies having quite a few requirements but still achieving outstanding or others receiving none and a few recommendations but achieving good.

About the vast difference in what a "good" can look like - many requirements and recommendations or none and still the same judgement - almost like a "really good" and just missed an outstanding and "just about good" and just missed a requires improvement to be good.

Members talked about the impact - some LA's will not use agencies that slip to "requires improvement" - yet their own judgement is such or less.

Recruitment is a challenge - gradings impact on growth.

Members want to know about "limiting judgement" and thoughts in the safeguarding area - outcomes for children - that this would be the best it could be - eg if outstanding in leadership but good in safeguarding - would the outcome be "good"

Interpretations of regs in agencies but also by ofsted - writing the report

Moved this one up on the agenda, as think it follows on - about the feedback within inspection not being reflected in the report - discussions about practice that are not regulatory requirements, agencies discussing with ofsted about how things are "interpreted", and the reports being inconsistent - some inspectors attaching a piece of practice to a regulation, others not - again about the interpretation of the regulation or standard by an individual inspector and not consistent.

Although the report is then QA'd - how balanced can this be if the person QA only has the one report to consider based on the inspectors report.

If the agency sent in some feedback and comments - would this also be considered by the QA.

Any updates on the equality guidance that was out for consultation.

Comparisons re size of agencies, what can offer etc (and inclusion eg children's voice) - impact on judgements

Some agencies felt they could not "compete" with the larger agencies who can offer lots of additional resources due to funding - children's support workers, advocacy, workers who are engagement officers with children, therapists etc - how is this considered when inspecting - is this likely to impact on judgements - and the opposite, is there more of an expectation on larger organisations to provide many resources etc.

Might only have 1 consistent child - as opposed to 20 children that can offer a voice, successful groups etc.

Inspection - discussion re some agencies having 2 inspectors for an agency with 20 carers and others having 1 inspector for an agency with 50 carers - also some inspections 5 full days and others saying 4 days etc - can you discuss how this is considered - more inspectors and longer time will see more things etc.

Expectations in relation to finances in agencies

What do ofsted expect to see on inspection, it would help to know so that agencies can prepare - as this is a timely piece of work - how much detail and depth is required in relation to seeing finances within the agency - again seems some inconsistencies - some inspectors not undertaking this and others in much detail.

Size and geographical spread of agency - when is an agency too big - RM

Do ofsted have a view of what is manageable for one registered manager - is it acceptable for one RM to oversee many regions

Some agencies have carers that are spread out due to their geographical area - for example - Cornwall , London, Cumbria - so might mean only a couple of carers in a region and therefore many miles from the registered office.

Anonymous annual questionnaire to fostering agencies from ofsted in relation to ofsted in general , separate to the feedback in relation to their own inspection experience, capturing those that have not been inspected(or doesn't need to be anonymous)

Members felt this would be really positive, and that it was published each year - is this something that could be supported by ofsted.

RM process and application - sc2

Discussion re the process for experienced RM's who are leaving their current RM role and moving to another agency - appreciate the due diligence but they talked of the excessive and repetitive questions in the sc2 - and would like thoughts on how and if this process and the actual form could be considered - lots of questions of a similar nature.

Also thoughts on - smaller agencies that are undertaking various roles (members appreciate this is not ideal, but not much choice initially due to lack of carers, staff or funds) - eg RM undertaking ssw role or senior staff undertaking initial visits etc - some inspectors appear sympathetic to this and others not - any comments re consistency re this.

Would you ever delay an inspection if requested due to many staff being off at the same time.

Contractors / self employed workers - checks and refs, what's proportionate

This continues to be an ongoing discussion - the expectations re regular staff who have contact with children is not being questioned - but contractors, ind assessors, panel members etc - example given was about workers that have had many roles in social care for many years - and are self employed - impossible to seek all references for every contract they have undertaken - can members have more clarity around this.