



Sir Martyn Oliver
His Majesty's Chief Inspector
Ofsted

25th September 2026

Dear Sir Martyn,

Parent Carer Forum involvement in ILACS inspections

We are writing on behalf of the National Network of Parent Carer Forums (NNPCF) in relation to Ofsted's current consultation on proposed changes to the Inspecting Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) framework.

The NNPCF welcomes the proposed move towards a more consistent and inclusive approach to engaging with children, young people, parents, carers and families during ILACS inspections. We particularly welcome the ambition for their voices to be at the heart of inspection and see the renewed framework as an important opportunity to strengthen how lived experience contributes to both accountability and improvement.

As Ofsted develops the detailed methodology that will sit behind the renewed framework, we would welcome consideration of a clear and consistent role for Parent Carer Forums (PCFs) within relevant ILACS inspection activity.

PCFs provide a well-established mechanism for bringing the collective experiences of families with disabled children and children and young people with special educational needs (SEND) into strategic discussions with local systems. Their role is different from, and complementary to, hearing directly from individual children and families. Direct lived experience helps inspectors understand what services feel like for individual families; PCFs can help identify recurring themes, patterns and systemic issues across a local area.

There is already a useful precedent within Area SEND inspections, where PCFs have a recognised role in the inspection process. We believe there is an opportunity to build on the learning from this approach within ILACS where inspection activity relates to disabled children and children and young people with SEND.

The NNPCF would particularly welcome consideration of a consistent expectation that, where relevant:

- the local PCF is notified directly when relevant ILACS inspection activity begins;
- PCFs are provided with a clear and proportionate route to submit concise evidence about recurring parent carer experiences, including both strengths and areas for improvement;
- inspectors meet directly with PCF representatives as part of their evidence gathering;
- PCF evidence can inform lines of enquiry relating to leadership, commissioning, sufficiency, multi-agency working and the experiences of disabled children and children with SEND;
- inspectors consider the quality and impact of the local authority's co-production with families, rather than simply whether engagement activity has taken place; and
- PCF evidence is appropriately triangulated with evidence gathered directly from children and families, case sampling, data and other representative organisations.

PCFs bring a distinct and complementary perspective to inspections. Alongside direct engagement with children, young people and individual families, PCFs can provide collective strategic evidence drawn from

the experiences of parent carers across the local area, together with an understanding of the local services and support available and how these are experienced by and impact on families. Bringing these different sources of evidence together would give inspectors a richer understanding of how the local system is working in practice, while helping to identify recurring themes, areas of effective practice, gaps in provision and wider systemic challenges.

The NNPCF would also encourage Ofsted to consider how ILACS can evaluate co-production itself. Local authorities should be able to demonstrate not only that they ask families for their views, but that families are involved early enough to influence decisions; that a diverse range of voices is sought; that challenge is welcomed; that feedback loops are closed; and, importantly, that leaders can demonstrate what has changed as a result of what children and families have told them.

This feels particularly timely as Ofsted proposes to make engagement with children and families a cross-cutting feature of ILACS and with the SEND Reforms. Establishing clear expectations within the inspection methodology would help create greater consistency between inspections while supporting local authorities to understand what meaningful engagement and co-production look like in practice.

The NNPCF would also welcome a conversation about the relationship between ILACS and Area SEND inspections. We recognise that the frameworks have different purposes and that their outcomes should not automatically mirror one another. However, there is significant overlap for disabled children and children with SEND, particularly in children's social care.

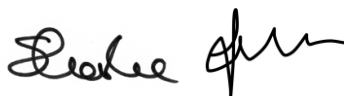
It can be difficult for families to understand how a local authority can receive a strong ILACS judgement while its Area SEND inspection identifies significant or systemic weaknesses that include aspects of social care. We believe there is an opportunity to strengthen the sharing of intelligence between the frameworks and to ensure that evidence about disabled children and children with SEND gathered through one inspection meaningfully informs the other. Consistent PCF involvement could support this by providing longitudinal, strategic evidence about families' experiences across the local system.

The NNPCF will reflect these points within our formal response to the consultation. We also wanted to write separately because we believe there is a positive opportunity to establish greater consistency in PCF involvement across Ofsted's inspection frameworks and to build on the learning from Area SEND inspections.

The NNPCF would very much welcome the opportunity to discuss this further with you and your colleagues and would be pleased to work with Ofsted on the development or testing of the detailed ILACS approach to parent carer engagement, PCF involvement and co-production.

Thank you for considering this. We look forward to continuing to work constructively with Ofsted to strengthen the role of children, young people and families within inspection.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sarah Clarke and Jo Harrison', written in a cursive style.

Sarah Clarke and Jo Harrison

Co-Chairs

National Network of Parent Carer Forums (NNPCF)