

FAQs - Supported Accommodation Regional Community of Practice Q&A

About this FAQ resource

In June and July 2023, the NCB held a series of regional Community of Practice for the Sector Awareness and Provider Preparedness programme for Supported Accommodation. These events included a Q&A session with Ofsted for supported accommodation providers.

This FAQ is based on the questions from these Q&A sessions, which we have collated to include the most frequently asked questions.

If you have a question about the registration process, or any other area related to the new regulations and quality standards that has not been answered here, please email Ofsted directly at eyregulatoryandsocialcare@ofsted.gov.uk

Q1: What will inspections look like?

Ofsted has worked with care-experienced young people and sector organisations to help develop their inspection proposals, which have been published for consultation since 10 July. The consultation provides the sector with the opportunity to share its views on how supported accommodation should be inspected.

Ofsted is proposing:

- to introduce a model of 3 possible inspection outcomes (for the first round of inspections)
- to give 2 working days' notice of inspection

Ofsted would also like to hear views on the main features of effective supported accommodation. Feedback will inform the detailed evaluation criteria that inspectors will use as a benchmark for effective practice.

The consultation runs from 10 July to 8 September 2023 and will inform the arrangements for inspections starting in April 2024. You can find the link to the consultation proposals [here](#).

Q2: When will pilot inspections take place?

Ofsted will undertake pilot inspections of a small number of registered providers across all categories of accommodation in the autumn before publishing the inspection guidance in the spring and start inspections from April 2024.

Q3: Do all directors of an organisation need to complete an SC2 form and have an enhanced with Barred List(s) DBS check?

Ofsted only need to know about directors who are directly involved in the provision of the supported accommodation service of the organisation.

Directors only need to complete an SC2 if they are directly involved in the running of the supported accommodation service and have oversight and management responsibility for it.

Directors of organisations who are involved in running the supported accommodation service must upload a valid Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certificate.

Ofsted considers them to be engaged in 'regulated activity' and they will therefore require an Enhanced with Barred List(s) DBS check. You can find the eligibility guidance for enhanced DBS checks [here](#).

Q4: Is it possible to upload organisation-wide financial documents, for example for the business plan and cashflow?

As long as you are able to show the relevance of these documents for the supported accommodation service, it is acceptable to upload organisation-wide documents.

These documents need to demonstrate that the supported accommodation service is sustainable and therefore likely to provide continuity for children.

Q5: What are the current timescales for applications?

Ofsted say in their guidance that they aim to assess SC1 and SC2 forms submitted during part 1 of the registration process within 5 working days. Once they have received all required references, checks and any other relevant information requested as part of stage 2 of the registration process, they aim to carry out a site visit to your office within 40 working days of your application moving to stage 3.

Delays can occur at stage 2 of the process as Ofsted are reliant on other individuals and organisations returning information to them. The timescale depends on the detail of each application and the time it takes to get checks back from local authorities and referees..

It is crucial that you submit an application as soon as possible to avoid the risk of operating illegally after the 27 October 2023. Ofsted has advised that they are currently returning many forms at Stage 1 due to errors, so completing Stage 1 of the process can take several weeks. The most common reason for returning an application is that a DBS check is invalid or is over 3 months old, so please ensure this is correct before you submit.

If a high number of applications are submitted from September onwards, Ofsted may not have the capacity to provide the level of support they can currently with applications and the risk of not submitting a 'complete' application at Stage 1 will be higher.

Q6: Who can provide me with a current employer reference if I am self-employed, or the director of an organisation?

The referees you nominate must meet the requirements listed in the Ofsted guidance, which you can find [here](#).

Ofsted has advised that if you are self-employed or are not able to nominate your most recent employer, you should nominate an individual who you have worked with in the past in a professional capacity.

For example, you could nominate a local authority commissioner who you work with. This reference would need to meet those listed relevant points.

Q7: Is it a requirement to implement physical restraint training?

There is no requirement in the Regulations to implement physical restraint training.

If your supported accommodation setting has a 'no-restraint policy' you should outline this in your Behaviour Management policy and Statement of Purpose.

The [Guide to the Supported Accommodation Regulations including Quality Standards](#) states:

It is expected that, given the assessed needs and level of independence, autonomy, and responsibility of young people in supported accommodation, restraint would not be necessary in this provision. Restraint includes physical restraint techniques that involve using force or restricting liberty of movement.

Even though the use of restraint in supported accommodation is expected to be extremely rare and exceptional in nature, training may, in some cases, also extend to the use of safe restraint practices.

Q8: Who should register with Ofsted as the supported accommodation provider if the accommodation and support are provided by separate organisations?

Typically, it is the organisation which is leading on the overall support package for the child, but ultimately it is for all the parties involved to come to an agreement about who is best placed to apply to be the registered provider. One organisation must take that responsibility.

Q9: How does Ofsted plan to inform local authorities about which supported accommodation providers have registered?

From August 2023, Ofsted will include supported accommodation providers in the data they share with local authorities. This will be available to the nominated people in local authorities who already receive the monthly data from Ofsted listing all registered children's social care providers, including children's homes.

The transitional provisions in the Supported Accommodation (England) Regulations 2023 allow local authorities to continue to place children aged 16 and 17 with existing providers if the provider is registered, or has completed the first stage of the application process by 28 October 2023. Completing the first stage of the application process means a provider has submitted a complete application to Ofsted and paid the registration fee. The data Ofsted shares with local authorities will therefore include registered providers as well as 'proposed' providers who have completed the first stage of the application process by 28 October 2023.

It is important to note that applicants showing as 'proposed' have only completed the first stage of the Ofsted registration process and they are not yet registered. Completing Stage 1 of the process is no guarantee that the provider will go on to become registered. Providers that appear on the list as 'proposed' may not be on the list in subsequent months if the application is withdrawn or refused.

Q10: Do you have to apply for planning permission or a lawful development certificate to register as a supported accommodation service?

It is for providers to determine whether planning permission is required for use.

Providers must declare at the point of registration that any required permissions are in place, and if not, what the action plan is to get them in place.

Q11: What are the requirements for location assessments?

The regulations require providers to confirm to Ofsted that they have carried out location assessments for each setting. If a provider has a cluster of premises in one area, then it is acceptable to write a location assessment for that cluster of premises.

You do not need to submit them with your application, but Ofsted may ask to see them if it is relevant to your application or inspection.

Location assessments need to provide reassurance that the accommodation is appropriately located, risks are mitigated, and that positive opportunities for young people are available.

Information about what location assessments needs to address is covered in [Guide to the Supported Accommodation Regulations including Quality Standards](#).

Q12: What is the difference between fostering and supported lodgings?

Ofsted would consider a service to be a fostering service if they were:

- operating as a fostering service
- complying with fostering regulations
- recruiting and assessing foster carers, who are approved as foster carers.

According to regulations, you are a supported accommodation provider if you accommodate

a child aged 16 or 17 years old who has been placed by a local authority under [section 22C\(6\)\(d\) or 23B\(8\)\(b\) of the Children Act 1989](#).

This means you need to register as a supported accommodation provider if a local authority has either:

- placed a looked after child in an 'other arrangements' placement, or
- placed a care leaver in 'suitable accommodation'