



One minute guide

Joint Targeted Area Inspections (JTAI) — children who are victims of domestic abuse

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What are JTAIs focused on children who are victims of domestic abuse?

As part of the current [Ofsted inspection framework](#) 'Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services' ([ILACS](#)), all local areas may be subject to a Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI).

JTAIs are unannounced joint inspections carried out by Ofsted, the Care Quality Commission (CQC), His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP). JTAI inspections look at multi-agency arrangements, including identification of risk, the quality and timeliness of assessments, and carry out a 'deep dive' investigation of the response to specific children and young people.

JTAI themes change annually, with previous themes including neglect and exploitation. Leeds was subject to a JTAI on serious youth violence in March 2024 (inspection report available [here](#)). Inspections taking place September 2024 to May 2025 cover the theme of children who are victims of domestic abuse, carried out in line with the [published inspection framework](#).

These themed inspections take place alongside an ongoing programme of JTAI inspections into the effectiveness of the [multi-agency response to identification of initial need and risk](#); this is often referred to as the 'front door' for concerns about children to be responded to.

What is the scope of these inspections?

The inspection framework notes the definition of domestic abuse set out in the [Domestic Abuse Act 2021](#), citing the following key points within this definition as relevant to the scope:

- Abusive behaviour is considered domestic abuse where the people involved are aged 16 or over and are personally connected to each other. 'Personally connected' includes when they have, or have previously had, a parental relationship with the same child.
- Abusive behaviour directed at a person under 16 should be dealt with as child abuse, not domestic abuse. However, children are considered victims of domestic abuse in their own right if they have seen, heard or experienced the effects of abuse between relatives or persons with parental responsibility for them.
- Domestic abuse includes physical or sexual abuse, violent or threatening behaviour, controlling or coercive behaviour, economic abuse, and emotional or other abuse.

Domestic abuse has been the subject of themed JTAIs previously, with a [report](#) outlining the findings. However, the framework notes a number of developments since those inspections - including changes introduced through the Domestic Abuse Act (2021), updated guidance for local safeguarding partners, and the [publication of a thematic analysis of reviews](#) where domestic abuse featured, carried out by the [Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel](#). The pandemic and cost of living crisis are also cited as resulting in societal changes that have increased pressures on families. The inspectorates note that, based on these developments, it is timely to revisit the domestic abuse theme for the 2024-25 JTAIs.

Inspections carried out under the 2024-25 JTAI theme will focus on children aged 0-7 years (including unborn children), whilst also considering the support for victims and older children in the household. Child to parent abuse and teenage relationship abuse (between those aged 16 and under) are not covered by the definition of domestic abuse in the 2021 Act, so will not be in scope for the domestic abuse JTAIs.

Focus of the JTAI domestic abuse inspections

Domestic abuse JTAIs will evaluate multi-agency arrangements for:

- Responding to children who are victims of domestic abuse, at the point of identification;
- Assessment, planning and decision-making in response to notifications and referrals of children who are victims of domestic abuse;
- Protecting, supporting and caring for children who are at risk of, or who have been victims of, domestic abuse; and
- Preventing children from becoming victims of domestic abuse.

In addition to these broad themes, the framework sets out specific evaluation criteria inspectors will use to evaluate the effectiveness of local areas. These include:

- Practitioners and support staff see the impact of domestic abuse through the eyes of the child. They respond to children as victims of domestic abuse in their own right.
- Practitioners are well-trained, confident and knowledgeable. They show professional curiosity; e.g. health practitioners make routine enquiries into domestic abuse.
- Practice is based on a good understanding of children's needs, the risks to them and strengths within their immediate and wider family networks.
- Effective multi-agency working prevents children from becoming victims of domestic abuse. The needs of children, adult victims and perpetrators are met at an early stage.
- Children who are victims of domestic abuse receive the right help and protection due to effective information sharing, effective recording and timely intervention.
- Children and their families are listened to. Multi-agency practice focuses on children's needs and experiences and is influenced by their wishes and feelings.
- Leaders and managers understand the experiences of children who are victims of domestic abuse and the prevalence of this issue in their area. This leads to effective multi-agency strategies, planning and action to meet children's needs.

What do JTAI inspections look like?

A JTAI inspection takes place over three weeks, though inspectors will only be onsite during week three. Agencies are usually notified of the inspection on a Monday.

Based on lists of children provided by the local authority, inspectors select a number of children to evaluate, asking the agencies to jointly audit the experiences of these children and provide relevant documents. Inspectors speak to the children, their families and practitioners working with them. In addition, partner agencies must provide a range of strategic documents.

Inspectors carry out case tracking and sampling of individual children's experiences. They may observe planned multi-agency meetings, examine key documents, interview staff and senior leaders and may speak to children and parents. Inspectors review evidence against the evaluation criteria to identify the partnership's strengths and areas for development, which are outlined in the inspection report, published on the Ofsted website. There are no graded judgements (i.e. outstanding, good, requires improvement, inadequate) for JTAI inspections.

Key contacts and further information

For further information about JTAI inspections, please contact CSImprovement@leeds.gov.uk.

The full inspection framework for the domestic abuse theme is available [here](#).

There is a government factsheet covering the statutory definition of domestic abuse, as set out in the 2021 Domestic Abuse Act, available [here](#).

The Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel report on domestic abuse is available [here](#).