

The Joint Review Team for each Local Authority

A team approach

The lead reviewer has primary responsibility for the conduct of the review (within the agreed methodology) and for writing the report. These responsibilities are exercised, on behalf of SSIW and WAO, in accordance with the guidance and subject to agreed arrangements for quality assurance, moderation and formal approval.

Other members of the review team share responsibility for the conduct of the review and its findings. They work under the day-to-day direction of the lead reviewer. They have a responsibility to raise:

- with the lead reviewer any matters of concern or disagreement;
- with the lead managers in SSIW and WAO any matters which they believe have not been properly resolved.

All reviewers (including those who are not employed directly by SSIW or WAO) are appointed through open recruitment processes, on the basis of a relevant person specification. They will have extensive experience derived from working at a high level of responsibility in the field of social care, local government, management, audit or inspection. Any person appointed as a lead reviewer will have previous experience of joint reviews.

All reviewers are accountable for the work they do. They are expected to abide by:

- the code of conduct;
- the agreed process and methodology laid down for joint reviews.

Lay assessors share the responsibility of the review team. They also have a responsibility to raise with the lead managers or with their sponsoring organisation, the Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA), any matters which they believe may not have been properly resolved. The role of the lay assessor is set out in the joint review handbook (Section 3.2).

The composition of the joint review team for a specific local authority is agreed between the lead managers from SSIW and WAO. They will take into account:

- the need to ensure a balance of experience, skills and knowledge;
- language requirements;
- gender considerations;
- team effectiveness.

Teams for Anglesey, Gwynedd, Conwy, Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire will contain a Welsh-speaking reviewer and preferably a Welsh-speaking lay assessor. If possible, at least one member of the team will be Welsh-speaking in other local authorities where a significant proportion of the population speaks Welsh.

Roles and responsibilities

The joint review team for each local authority comprises:

- a lead reviewer;
- a nominated reviewer or reviewers from SSIW;
- a nominated reviewer or reviewers from WAO;
- a consultant reviewer;
- lay assessors.

At various stages in the process, the SSIW link inspector, the WAO relationship manager and the local audit team may be involved formally in the team. Their role and responsibilities are set out in the joint review handbook (Sections 3.3 and 3.4).

The objective is to ensure that the team:

- contains the best possible balance of social services, inspection, resource management and corporate governance expertise;
- works with maximum efficiency in getting the evidence required.

The prime contact for the local authority is the lead reviewer. This person oversees the detailed planning of the review and conducts the review through to the follow-up stage. The lead reviewer is responsible for agreeing the detailed timetable with the authority, managing the work of the team, raising any matters of concern and drafting the report.

Reviewers from SSIW and WAO assist the lead reviewer and undertake a similar workload within the authority, including interviews and visits. They have an equal share in the testing of evidence and in forming the overall judgement. The work allocated to them by the lead reviewer reflects their particular areas of expertise.

The consultant reviewer is not employed directly by either SSIW or WAO. Their role is to:

- provide specific expertise in looking at particular areas within the evaluative framework;
- complement the skills and knowledge available within the team, with a particular focus on assessing the way in which the local authority provides overall direction for social services;
- provide an element of challenge to the review team, acting as one of the safeguards that help to ensure fair play and a focus on key issues.

In some circumstances, the operations manager for joint review in either SSIW or WAO may fulfil this role.

The work of the joint review team will be supplemented by colleagues from SSIW and WAO for particular aspects of the review. Such arrangements will be discussed in advance with the authority and agreed at the introductory meeting with social services managers or in planning meetings for the detailed fieldwork programme.

The inclusion of lay assessors helps to bring a different perspective to the work of review teams. Their role is not to act as professional inspectors but to carry out specific work that enables them to represent the views of people who use services and of the wider public. They concentrate on tasks that involve understanding the experiences and interests of service users and carers in their relations with social services and partner organisations.