

JOINT REVIEWS IN WALES

SUMMARY GUIDE FOR ELECTED MEMBERS

**Working Together
To Help Improve Social Services In Wales**

Preface

This summary guide is intended for elected members in local authorities. It should provide you with much of the information you will need to participate fully in:

- preparing for a joint review;
- engaging with the process;
- benefiting from the outcome.

More detailed information is contained in the general *Guide to Joint Reviews in Wales*, which sets out the rationale behind the review programme and the structure of the review process.

There is also a *Joint Review Handbook* that takes you chronologically through the different phases of the joint review process and the activities associated with them. It contains templates, forms, protocols, briefing materials, etc. The handbook is used especially for material that needs more regular updating in response to:

- feedback from local authorities, service users and carers and others;
- wider developments in social care and in government.

There are information leaflets about joint reviews for the general public (including service users and carers) and for other stakeholders (including staff in social services, partner agencies, voluntary organisations and other providers of social care).

All the guides are available in large print or in other formats. They can be found on the joint review web-site, the National Assembly for Wales web-site and the Wales Audit Office web-site.

Foreword

Local authorities have a key role in protecting the most vulnerable members of the community and in meeting their social care needs. This includes children and young people, older people, people who have a mental health problem, people who have a learning disability, people who have a physical disability or sensory impairment. Social services also help those who take on a caring role for others, including young carers.

The Social Services Inspectorate for Wales (SSIW) and the Wales Audit Office (WAO) are working together to help improve these vital public services and thereby the quality of life available to those who rely upon social services.

It is evident from the work done by SSIW and WAO in local authorities that elected members are very concerned to:

- fulfil their responsibilities for providing social services with direction and scrutiny;
- contribute to the programme for improvement

The programme of joint reviews in Wales provides one of the most important opportunities for us all to join forces in achieving our common goals. For SSIW and WAO, it is a crucial mechanism for ensuring public accountability and for helping the local authority to ensure that the forces for improvement are properly aligned. Elected members can anticipate a number of benefits from a successful and collaborative joint review exercise.

1. Each review compares an authority's policy objectives against the practical achievements. Account is also taken of the external pressures and the contribution of other agencies. Analysing these relationships helps members to judge whether key policies are working.

2. The joint review programme is designed to support delivery of the local authority's own improvement agenda for social services. The team works openly with members and officers to identify those changes that will have most impact upon key dimensions of performance such as improving the range and quality of service provision, the achievement of best value, etc.

3. Reviews do not interfere with local decisions about social services priorities but they take full account of the opinions and comments expressed by members and of wider council policies. The joint review process does not attempt to duplicate inspections of particular parts of the services provided. Rather, it is designed to deliver an overview of the organisation as a whole and to identify cross-cutting strengths and areas for development.

Elected members can expect:

- participation throughout the review, reflecting their crucial roles as policy makers and elected representatives of local people;
- direct information on whether there is coherence between their policy intentions, the management of resources, and the outcomes for the user and taxpayer;
- evidence about the extent to which value for money is achieved;
- a summary of the extent to which partnerships have been forged, both corporately and with other agencies;
- a presentation and report outlining the main issues and placing them in the context of the local values and priorities as expressed by members;
- clear judgements about how the authority is performing in key areas and how its performance compares with others;
- an indication of how good practice in the authority can be consolidated and where improvements might be considered;
- the opportunity, in responding to the review's conclusions, to examine their agenda for change.

Richard Tebboth, Chief Inspector of Social Services

Jeremy Colman, Auditor General, Wales Audit Office

SECTION 1 CONTEXT

1.1 Improving social services: key issues and challenges

As elected members, you have the primary responsibility for the performance of local authority social services in your area. Hence you have a key role in delivering:

- the considerable government agenda for reform in the way these services are delivered;
- increased public expectations about higher standards of care and support, with services that are more responsive to the needs and preferences of service users and carers.
- Political leadership, support and scrutiny for an area of the council's work which contains inherent risks and significant statutory responsibilities.

You are required to carry out these responsibilities and to meet the challenges involved within a context that is changing rapidly. Since the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970 (which gave local authorities responsibility for planning social services and making arrangements for their delivery), additional legislation has had a major impact on the way in which social care is provided.

Originally, local authorities provided most services directly. They organised, managed and staffed day centres, home care services, residential and other services. Now the emphasis is on local authorities working in partnership with other agencies (such as the NHS) to plan, arrange and deliver social care in their area. Some services continue to be delivered by in-house services but increasingly social services purchase services such as domiciliary and residential care from a range of providers in the voluntary and private sectors.

Changes are taking place at every level - not only at the point of service delivery but also in policy development, in inspection and regulation and within local authorities themselves - all with the clear aim of improving the quality of the experience of those who need and use public services.

This pressure for improvement has many strands.

a) Legislation such as the Children's Act 1989 and the NHS and Community Care Act 1990 has imposed significant duties and obligations upon local authorities, especially in terms of being responsive to the needs of service users.

b) There has been unprecedented investment in social care and central government expects this investment to be accompanied by reforms that will ensure service quality and value for money. Taxpayers want to know that their money is well spent. The current political and economic climate demands a combination of service improvements and efficiency savings. New monies invested in public services need to result in real benefits and better outcomes for service users and carers. Most councils are finding that the demands and pressures on social services budgets are especially volatile and difficult to control. There is a growing emphasis on priority budgeting, good financial management and understanding costs.

c) The National Assembly for Wales and the Welsh Assembly Government have sought to use the powers devolved to them in ways that will ensure high standards of social care provision.

In the context of the changed approach to governance in Wales, they are also evolving new policy directions across the range of devolved responsibilities, in areas such as community regeneration and community safety. These policies will have considerable influence upon all local authority functions and the way in which they are performed. There is a strong emphasis on

- partnership with local government, business and the voluntary sector;
- core values of equality and sustainability.

In the key policy document of the new administration, *Wales: A Better Country*, the Assembly set out its priorities around the themes of social justice, improving health, and spreading prosperity. These will be key themes for the Assembly, the public services generally and for you in providing stewardship for social services.

d) There is considerable evidence of mixed performance across Wales in the delivery of social services, as reflected in:

- the early findings from the SSIW annual performance evaluation and from other parts of its inspection and development programmes (including the work done to validate the audit of children in need in response to the practice recommendations of the Victoria Climbié Inquiry report).
- the work done by WAO, including its co-ordination work for the Wales Programme for Improvement ;
- the Wales Review of Health and Social Care overseen by Derek Wanless.

The National Assembly and the Welsh Assembly Government are committed to tackling the problems identified, in part by encouraging much greater integration across health and social services and by the use of national standards. Under the Care Standards Act, the National Assembly has set national minimum standards, covering matters such as:

- choice of service
- planning for individual needs and preferences
- quality of life
- quality of care and treatment
- staffing
- management
- concerns, complaints and protection
- the physical environment.

The Care Standards Inspectorate for Wales now regulates the organisations providing social care services, including private businesses and voluntary organisations.

e) Local government itself has been set a challenging agenda for modernisation and for ensuring the effective management of the services for which it is responsible. This is underpinned by the statutory requirements of the Local Government Act 1999 and the Wales Programme for Improvement. The quality of social care locally is one of the major benchmarks by which the performance of a local authority is measured. Consequently, improving social services has become a key corporate priority.

f) Improving partnership and collaborative working across the public sector is a clear policy priority in Wales. Services are increasingly delivered through partnerships that include the private and voluntary sectors. Partnerships need to work better to make a difference for people. New organisational arrangements are also emerging.

For example, co-terminosity areas for Local Health Boards and local authorities provides real opportunities for partnership working in planning, commissioning and delivering the whole range of social care services. The importance of working together across agencies in order to develop good quality family support services and to protect children is a key feature of the proposed changes in children's services. Programmes such as Supporting People have encouraged partnerships involving local authorities and a wide range of service providers to promote more opportunities for service users to live independently. Similarly, those people who have disabilities need to benefit from the increased opportunities for employment made available through successful regeneration partnerships.

g) As part of their own improvement agenda, local authorities are seeking to develop an improved understanding of which services work, the costs involved, the best way to provide or commission the services and how they might be delivered and managed efficiently. Not only must local government deliver quality services and a shared national agenda, it must also identify and address specific local needs and respond in an innovative way. The community leadership role of local authorities presents new challenges in the

allocation of resources to priorities, promoting equality and social inclusion for the benefits of those who depend upon social services. In delivering these local strategies, there are inherent difficulties in dealing with competing claims and conflicting interests. Effective governance arrangements and the ability to make best use of the council's capacity are vital factors in managing such demands.

h) Service users and carers, the organisations that represent their interests, those who champion their cause within local government and elsewhere have used new mechanisms for participation (such as frameworks for planning services) to press for services that are more flexible and responsive to needs. Users of public services are less willing to accept post code variations of different standards in different areas. Their expectations are increasing, with advocacy groups properly taking an active role in promoting rights to quality care, choice, flexibility and respect.

Carers help some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged people in our society. They devote considerable time and energy, physical and emotional, to these tasks. As carers gain increased rights to an assessment of their needs, public services are starting to respond to the challenge of supporting carers in their own right and to find ways of meeting those needs.

Communities are becoming more diverse and public services need to respond better in providing services that are culturally sensitive. There is an increasing focus on equality of access and on the need to meet statutory requirements in respect of language, race, age, sexual orientation, gender, disability and religion.

1.2 The role of regulation, inspection and review

The government believes that external review, independent of local authorities, has an important part to play in:

- providing assurance to the public about the safe and proper delivery of social services;

- contributing to the improvement of those services.

The Health and Social Care (Community Health and Standards) Act 2003 gives to the National Assembly for Wales the general function of encouraging improvement in the provision of local authority social services. Section 94 of the Act allows it to conduct reviews of, and investigations into, the way in which local authorities in Wales discharge their social services functions. The Social Services Inspectorate for Wales (SSIW) carries out these duties on behalf of the Assembly. It also helps the Welsh Assembly Government to frame policy and contributes to the development of best practice in local authorities. In consultation with other inspectorates and improvement agencies, SSIW carries out an annual performance evaluation of each individual local social services authority. All local authorities have a link inspector, who helps to ensure an integrated approach to all the work undertaken by SSIW in that authority.

The Wales Audit Office (WAO) promotes the best use of public money by commissioning the appointed auditors to ensure that public money is properly spent and good value is achieved. In accordance with the Local Government Act 1999, it exercises important responsibilities for auditing the duty of continuous improvement placed upon local authorities and other public bodies. It helps local authorities to improve the effectiveness of their arrangements for managing resources, performance and corporate governance. WAO plays a key role in co-ordinating the regulatory framework introduced by the Wales Programme for Improvement (including the whole authority analysis, risk assessment, improvement and regulatory plans). A relationship manager is appointed to each local authority to help ensure that the programme of inspections relating to that authority is manageable, well co-ordinated and proportionate to risk.

This is the organisational and legislative context for joint reviews in Wales. SSIW and the Wales Audit Office commissioned the first round of joint reviews in Wales and they are working in partnership to deliver the second round.

Both organisations have sought to ensure that the framework for joint reviews reflects best practice and the principles set out by government that public services inspection should:

- pursue the purpose of improvement;
- focus on outcomes;
- take a user perspective;
- be proportionate to risk;
- encourage self-assessment by managers;
- use impartial evidence, wherever possible;
- disclose the criteria used for judgement;
- be open about the processes involved;
- have regard to value for money, including that of the inspecting body;
- continually learn from experience.

1.3. Responding to change

Both SSIW and WAO intend to ensure that joint reviews maintain a distinct identity but also that they are a well-integrated part of their overall programme and of their work under the Wales Programme for Improvement. This has meant incorporating new developments in regulatory and inspection practice:

- the requirements under the Wales Programme for Improvement that local authorities review their services as part of a whole authority analysis and improvement plan;
- under the same programme, the annual risk assessment process and agreement of regulatory plans;
- the new system for annual performance evaluation of local authority social services by SSIW;
- the work done to improve inspection and regulatory practice by all the bodies represented on the Wales Inspectorate Forum (to coordinate activity, reduce the burden of regulation where possible and devise more effective inspection methodologies);

- the emphasis (under the Wales Programme for Improvement and elsewhere) on using inspection, audit and review to drive improvement;
- the creation of the Care Standards Inspectorate for Wales (enabling an increased volume of independent regulation and scrutiny in respect of social care provision);
- the creation of a health care inspectorate for Wales;
- greater involvement by service users in planning services and in evaluating service quality.

It is crucial that joint reviews are located properly within this evolving framework and complement the way local authorities are tackling the improvement agenda by means of better corporate governance (both executive and scrutiny functions), performance management, risk assessment, planning and partnerships. This includes the need to address more holistically the links between social care and health care.

Joint reviews should not duplicate work that is already undertaken by others. They should make effective use of this work to reduce the burden of regulation on local authorities, incorporating the information produced by other inspection or regulatory activity.

Crucially, joint reviews must be designed to provide added value and unique authority through an independent and comprehensive examination of social services, to validate once every five years the judgements arising from other processes such as the annual evaluation.

The distinctive contribution of joint reviews is to bring together the professional and managerial expertise of SSIW and the value-for-money and corporate governance focus of WAO in conducting a comprehensive evaluation of local authority social services as a whole in terms of quality, performance and cost.

SECTION 2 THE INVOLVEMENT OF ELECTED MEMBERS

2.1. What part is played by elected members?

Elected members will want to play a part in the review process that is commensurate with their considerable and diverse responsibilities. The review process has been designed to reflect this principle but also the fact that the pattern of governance arrangements varies from one authority to another. The political make-up and culture may influence the ways and degree to which different groups are involved. The joint review methodology enables sufficient scope for these matters of detail to be negotiated between the lead reviewer and the local authority.

The joint review represents a significant opportunity for elected members to contribute to a comprehensive evaluation of social services in their authority. It is an exercise of considerable scope and scale, as demonstrated by the nature of the judgements reached by the joint review team.

2.2. The judgements made in joint reviews

The overall judgement involves reaching conclusions in respect of two key performance dimensions:

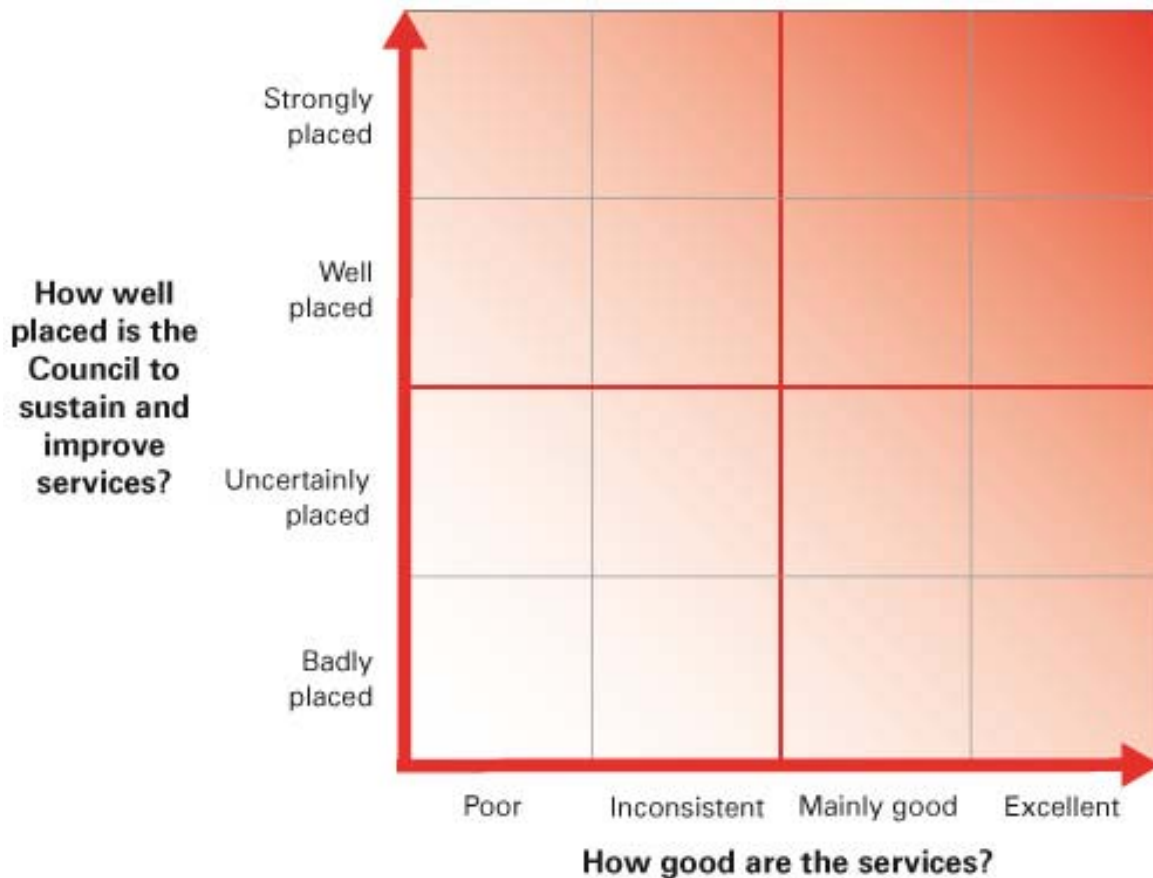
- *How good are the services?*
- *How well placed is the authority to sustain and improve services?*

Each of the two dimensions has a four-point rating scale.

<i>How good are the services?</i>	<i>How well placed is the authority to sustain and improve services?</i>
Poor	Not well placed
Inconsistent	Uncertainly placed
Mainly good	Reasonably placed
Well established and effective	Well placed

The judgement is presented by showing the authority's position on a performance matrix.

Exhibit 1 The Joint Review Performance Matrix



The matrix presents these overall conclusions consistently and clearly. It enables citizens to compare their council with others and contributes to political accountability.

Each dimension incorporates seven domains.

The basis for judgements

Each dimension incorporates seven domains.

How good are the services?

<i>Getting help</i>
Access to services
Assessment
Care management and review
<i>The services provided</i>
Range of services provided
Quality of services provided
<i>The effect on people's lives</i>
Arrangement to protect vulnerable people
Success in promoting independence and social inclusion.

How well placed is the authority to sustain and improve performance?

<i>Shaping services</i>
Resources
Planning and partnerships
Commissioning and contracting
<i>Delivering social services</i>
Workforce
Performance management
<i>Providing direction</i>
Leadership and culture
Corporate and political support and scrutiny.

These areas are reflected throughout all the stages of a review and provide a common structure for collecting evidence, making judgements and writing reports. There is a document in the Joint Review Handbook (Section 1.8) that sets out, for each of the 14 domains:

- a definition of what is being measured;
- indicative areas for examination;
- key concepts
- the basis for judgement.

It is this document which provides the basis for the dialogue between members and the joint review team, prompting some of the characteristic questions you may be asked.

2.3. Some questions you may be asked

The joint review team will seek to establish with elected members the extent to which they have, with the advice of officers:

- considered the needs of their population and decided on the priorities which their services should follow;
- set out the overall policies for social services ;
- made the decisions about how resources are allocated and ensured that resources and policies are consistent;
- taken a corporate view of their overall aims and the contribution of other public services, for example education and housing, to their policies in respect of social services;
- acted as corporate parents of children looked after by the authority, and exercised their general responsibilities for the care of certain adults;
- ensured that their policies are effective and resources are put to best use.

Members are closely associated with each review since the report and their authority's response are made public.

2.4. Key stages when members are involved

1. At the start of the review, the authority will be asked to update the self-assessment that it completed as part of the annual SSIW performance evaluation and to submit evidence in support of it. In producing this advance information, officers draw upon members' policy decisions and plans. The reviewers will meet with members to discuss these topics during the detailed fieldwork phase.

2. The reviewers share their initial findings with the authority, and members are given the opportunity to comment at this stage.

3. The final conclusions are discussed with members when the report is in draft form. While the report is the independent view of the review team, the reviewers want to hear members' views and be constructive in facilitating the response of the authority.

4. It is expected that the final report, together with the local authority's response, will be presented at a meeting for elected members that is open to the public. The report is likely to have implications for policy and the strategic management of resources, as well as for performance monitoring and scrutiny. It is anticipated, therefore, that elected members involved in both executive and scrutiny functions will need to consider the joint review report, the authority's action plan and the implementation of the report's findings.

5. The local authority produces an action plan and there is a monitoring framework within which the local authority, SSIW and the WAO work together to ensure positive outcomes for service users and carers. Wherever possible, any follow up exercise will precede the annual performance evaluation undertaken by SSIW and the work will be an agreed part of the annual regulatory plan. During this period of follow-up by SSIW and the WAO, members will have a key role in:

- endorsing the action plan;
- helping to ensure that it is delivered (through collective responsibility, leadership, the portfolio role and effective scrutiny).

6. An especially poor judgement in either of the two main dimensions used for judging performance in joint reviews will trigger consideration of:

- whether there are grounds for serious concerns
and, therefore,
- a need to put into effect the agreed intervention protocol.

SECTION 3 THE JOINT REVIEW PROGRAMME

3.1. What is a joint review?

A joint review is a planned examination of all the local authority's social services functions. It takes place every five years. The purpose of the joint review programme is to:

- provide an objective, evidence-based assessment of how well people are being served by their social services authority;
- make a constructive contribution towards the further improvement of the services provided;
- help safeguard the interests of service users and carers;
- secure better value for money in the provision of social services.

After analysing a wide selection of material about the local authority and the services it provides, the joint review team spends up to one month in the area to carry out further inquiries.

A variety of methods is used to judge how well people are served by social services and how well the local authority has organised itself to maintain and improve services. These include:

- interviews with service users and carers;
- interviews with people who are responsible for arranging or delivering services;
- questionnaire surveys of service users, carers and staff in social services;
- analysis of case files;
- meetings with representatives from a range of organisations and groups;
- visits to places where social services are provided.

Each review results in a published report, which delivers the overall conclusions on how well local people are being served and how well placed the authority is to sustain and improve performance.

The report sets out the key evidence gathered during the review and identifies strengths and good practice as well as areas for development. It will seek to give an overview of social services as an organisation but not to deliver a detailed critique of each facet of work. The review and the report will identify key issues and explore or comment upon these in some detail.

In response to the report, the local authority produces an action plan setting out how it will make the changes that are needed. This must be agreed with SSIW and the WAO. There is an agreed programme for monitoring how the plan is put into effect.

Joint reviews start from the experience of people who use services. Reviewers consider this alongside the management practices in the local authorities that deliver those services, assessing whether they represent value for money.

Each local authority in Wales was the subject of a joint review in the first cycle (1998-2003). They will be reviewed in the same general order during the second round, which starts in 2004.

3.2. Learning from the experience of the first round

The first round of joint reviews played an important role in contributing to the improved performance of social services in Wales. It was very successful in helping councils to establish areas of strength and areas for development. The methodology had a sound basis. It stressed the need to gather sufficient, robust evidence as the basis for making judgements about performance and capacity to improve. The findings of joint reviews have been accorded significant credibility, in part because they were perceived as being comprehensive and independent. Joint reviews have become high profile and challenging events, generating considerable pressure for change. Authorities

generally acknowledge the way in which joint reviews have acted as a catalyst, helping them to devise and deliver programmes for improvement.

For these reasons, the first and second rounds of the joint review programme will have much in common. However, even during the first round, joint reviews evolved as the team responded to changes in the overall context of social services and to developments in the practice of evaluation. The new organisational framework for conducting joint reviews has provided opportunities to take forward the best of the former regime while making further adjustments to ensure that:

- the views and experiences of service users and carers are represented as well as possible;
- the best possible balance is achieved between the need for a comprehensive and uniform element in each review and the need to be flexible in deciding which specific areas require more detailed scrutiny (so that the overall burden on the local authority is reduced);
- there is a consistent approach to each review.

3.3. Further development

The overall framework, process and methodology for joint reviews are set out in the guide. It is intended to provide a stable basis for the duration of the second round in Wales. However, the process and the methodology will evolve in the light of experience and practice.

Change will be prompted by many factors, including:

- feedback from local authorities, service users and carers, the advisory board and others;
- wider developments in social care and in government;
- the expectations of more flexible planning, commissioning and service delivery arrangements across social care, health and education;

- closer integration with other inspectorates, performance improvement agencies and regulators;
- work within SSIW and the WAO to improve review processes;
- the creation of better frameworks for performance management, including more robust performance indicators
- new opportunities arising from the creation of the Wales Audit Office in 2005.

Stakeholders will be kept informed of these changes through periodic revisions of the joint review guide and handbook.

3.4. The joint review process

The process consists of three phases.

PHASE 1 - THE BROAD REVIEW

The first phase of the joint review is a broad and comprehensive evaluation in which the focus is on gathering intelligence from a wide variety of sources and using a range of methods (analysis of existing information about performance, surveys, file analysis, group interviews with stakeholders). This is followed by the interim assessment in which the information from the first phase is analysed. The review team establishes the extent of reliable evidence already to hand, makes a provisional assessment of relative strengths and weaknesses, and determines the areas of focus for the Phase 2 fieldwork.

Milestones:

- Notification
- Review planning meeting
- Set-up meeting
- Surveys
- Phase 1 fieldwork
- Interim assessment
- Introductory meetings for Phase 2

PHASE 2 - THE DETAILED REVIEW

The main fieldwork programme takes place in Phase 2 and it provides a more detailed examination of specific areas and issues. Again, a range of methods is used (such as case studies, interviews and meetings, value for money exercises). Some of these methods are standard and others are customised to enable chosen areas to be explored in depth. This phase ends when the joint review team presents the initial headline findings to the local authority.

Milestones:

- Fieldwork (case studies service users/carers and service providers)
- Fieldwork (assessment/care management teams)
- Fieldwork (management and partners)
- Feedback meetings

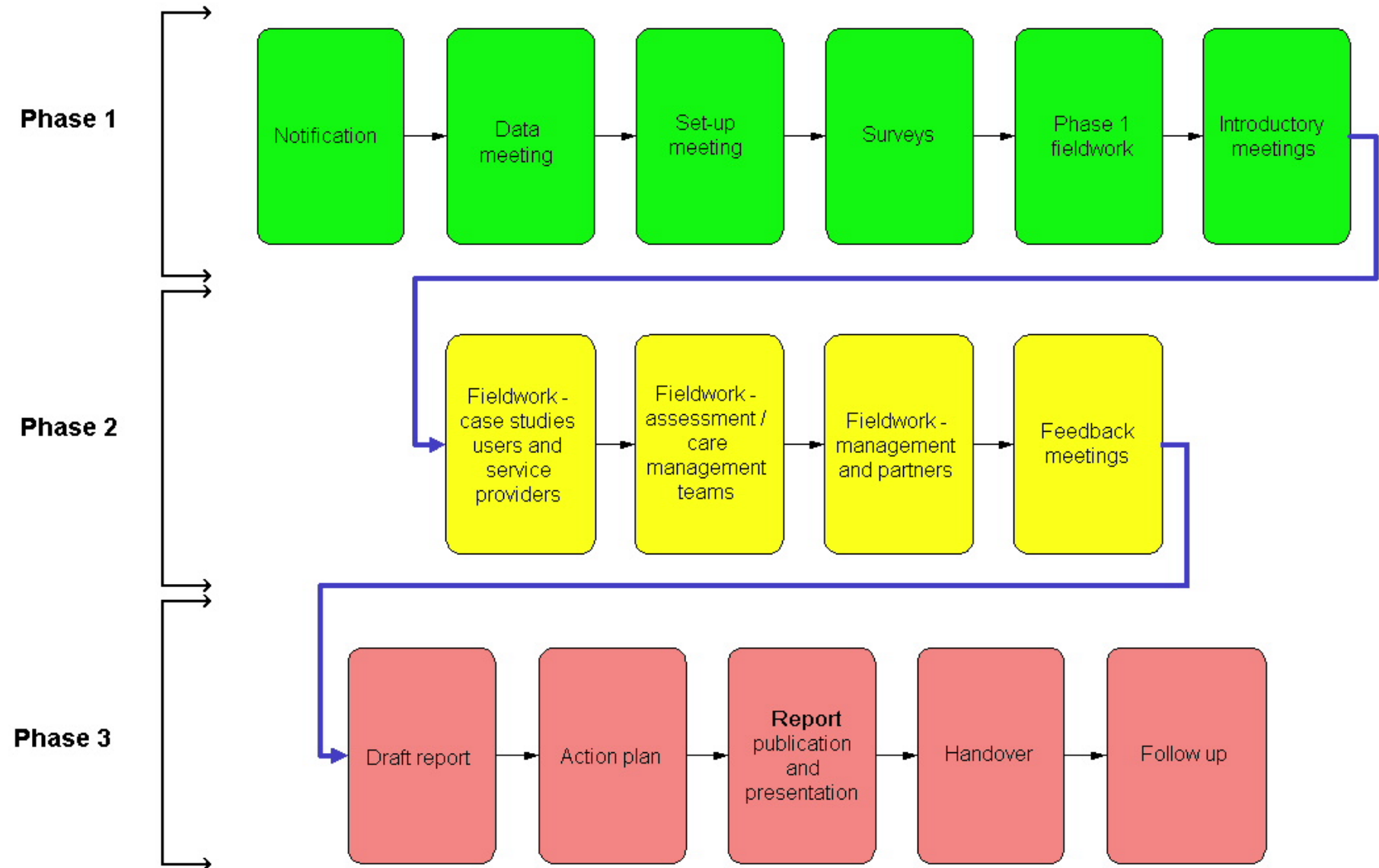
PHASE 3 - FOLLOWING THROUGH

The next phase of the joint review focuses on public accountability, achieving improvement and monitoring the progress made in response to the review. It involves presentation of the report to elected members in a meeting open to the public. The local authority produces an action plan and there is a monitoring framework within which the local authority, SSIW and the WAO work together to ensure positive outcomes for service users and carers.

Milestones:

- Draft plan
- Action plan
- Report publication and presentation
- Handover
- Follow up

EXHIBIT 1 illustrates the three phases and the significant milestones associated with them.



3.5. Review resources

The period from the set-up meeting with the local authority to the presentation of a draft report is expected to span six months and to require about 150 reviewer days. On an annual basis, SSIW will make public the annual cost of each review.

The local authority's contribution is the time and effort required from elected members and staff in contributing to and benefiting from the review. SSIW and the WAO acknowledge the considerable efforts made by authorities to prepare for reviews and to assist review team members. They have made significant changes to the methodology used for reviews in order to reduce this burden, wherever possible. For example, local authorities will no longer be required to prepare lengthy and time-consuming position statements before the review starts and the time spent by the team on site has been reduced from six to four weeks.

3.6. Timing the review

Starting in 2004, local authorities will be reviewed in the same general order as in the first round.

<u>Group 1</u>	Powys Torfaen Carmarthenshire Rhondda Cynon Taff
<u>Group 2</u>	Isle of Anglesey Vale of Glamorgan Ceredigion Merthyr Tydfil

<u>Group 3</u>	Gwynedd Neath Port Talbot Newport Caerphilly
<u>Group 4</u>	Cardiff Conwy Pembrokeshire Blaenau Gwent
<u>Group 5</u>	Bridgend Denbighshire Flintshire Monmouthshire
<u>Group 6</u>	Wrexham Swansea

More specific information about timing is included in the annual Regulatory Plan for the local authority, which is used to ensure that the work of all the statutory inspectorates and performance evaluation agencies is properly co-ordinated and manageable.

The overall SSIW programme of work provides a clear gap between joint reviews and other major service reviews. There is usually three months between the time when the local authority receives formal notification that the joint review process has started and the beginning of the fieldwork programme. This may vary to accommodate factors such as major holiday periods and the availability of reviewers or key personnel in the local authority.