

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

**INFORMATION ABOUT JOINT REVIEWS**

**We hope that you will find this leaflet  
a helpful guide to joint reviews in Wales.**

**The leaflet is available in other formats and it can be found on  
the joint review web-site.**

## **Improving social services in Wales**

By law, the twenty-two local authorities (or *councils*) in Wales are responsible for:

- planning social services for people who live in their area
- making arrangements for the delivery of social services.

This means that local authorities have a key part in protecting the most vulnerable people in the community. They provide care and support to 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.

These are vital services. Every family is likely to have a member who will depend upon social services at some point in their lives. The local authority provides some of the services itself, directly to those in need of care and support. Other services it arranges through voluntary organisations or the private sector. It is important that all these services are delivered to high standards.

## **What is the purpose of joint reviews?**

The purpose of joint reviews is to:

- tell the public how well people are being served by their local social services
- help these services to improve
- help safeguard the interests of service users and carers
- get better value for money in the provision of social services.

## **What is a joint review?**

A joint review is an examination of all areas of the social services work done by the local authority. It takes place every five years.

The review is carried out jointly by the Social Services Inspectorate for Wales (SSIW) and the Wales Audit Office (WAO) - hence the name *joint review*.

A team of two or three reviewers spends about one month in the area to examine the services. The reviewers are people who have wide experience of social services across Wales. The team also includes a lay assessor - a member of the public with an interest in social services.

## **How do we carry out a joint review?**

Various ways are used to make judgements about social services in the area. These include:

- interviews with service users and carers
- interviews with people who are responsible for arranging or providing services
- questionnaires for people who use services
- looking at case files
- meetings with people from a range of organisations and groups
- visiting places where social services are provided.

At the end of each review, the reviewers publish a report. This describes what is good about social services locally and where improvement is most needed.

The local authority then produces a plan, saying how it intends to make the changes needed.

## **What powers do we have?**

By law, reviewers can:

- enter and inspect certain premises (such as Council offices, children's homes, care homes for the elderly)
- inspect certain records (such as case files and records kept in homes)
- require information and explanation from the local authority.

Inspectors do not have legal powers to:

- enter your own home
- make you talk to them.

We invite you to meet us and talk to us but you have the power to refuse.

## **How can service users and carers become involved?**

Service users and carers have a right to tell the reviewers about what has happened to them, what works well and what needs to change.

There are many ways for them to become involved.

### Open access

The reviewers encourage people to give their views and tell of their experiences in writing, by telephone, by e-mail or access to the web-site.

### Surveys

Questionnaires are sent to a large number of service users and carers from all groups of service users.

### Case file analysis

The reviewers look at a sample of case files from each of the major service areas. They learn how the needs of service users and carers are assessed and met.

### Visits

The reviewers visits place where services are provided (such as reception, residential or day care facilities). They talk with service users and carers, checking out the way in which their needs are being met.

### Meetings with groups

The reviewers spend a lot of their time meeting different groups of service users and carers.

### Service user and carer reference group

The local authority sets up a representative group of service users and carers. This group meets regularly with the reviewers to talk about their work. The group is involved when the team tells the local authority what they have found out.

### Follow up of individual cases

Some service users and carers are invited to meet with the reviewers on their own. These meetings happen in a place of their choice and with support if necessary. The interviews allow service users and carers to describe in their own way how they have experienced services and staff.

## **Code of conduct**

Reviewers and lay assessors should:

- show you official identification
- treat you with courtesy and respect
- take an interest in what you say
- keep individual details confidential.

Reviewers and lay assessors cannot:

- pursue individual complaints or problems on your behalf  
(although they will raise matters of concern with managers of the service)
- arrange to contact you privately outside the inspection
- tell you details of other service users.

## **Questions, comments and complaints**

If you are not sure about anything or have any queries, contact the Information Unit on:

Telephone number: 029 2080 1463

Email: [JointReview@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:JointReview@wales.gsi.gov.uk)

Or write to:

Information Unit

Social Services Inspectorate for Wales

The National Assembly for Wales

Cathays Park

Cardiff

CF10 3NQ

If you are not happy at the way you have been treated, you can:

- ask to see the reviewer in charge;
- write, phone, or e-mail to:

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