

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

REVIEWING YOUR SERVICE

**INFORMATION ABOUT JOINT REVIEWS
FOR
STAFF IN SOCIAL SERVICES**

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

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 the local authority's social services functions. 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*.

After analysing a wide selection of material about the local authority and the services it provides, 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.

Each review results in a published report, which delivers the overall conclusions on:

- how well local people are being served
- 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 evaluation of every aspect of the 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 WAO. There is an agreed programme for monitoring how the plan is put into effect

How do we carry out a joint review?

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.

We want to achieve a true picture, finding out about those areas where services work well and not only areas in need of improvement.

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.

How can staff become involved?

Staff have a crucial role in providing reviewers with information about what works well and what needs to change. There are a number of ways in which you may become involved.

Open access

The reviewers encourage staff to provide information and to give their views in writing, by telephone or by access to the web-site. The local authority is asked to provide the reviewers with a secure e-mail address while they are on site or you can use the SSIW mailbox.

Surveys

Questionnaires are sent to a representative, randomly selected cross-section of staff. If you are not included, you are welcome to use the questionnaire for responding through the open access channels.

Visits

The reviewers visits place where services are provided (such as reception, residential or day care facilities) and team offices. They talk with staff, asking questions but also checking out their perceptions and providing opportunities for staff to talk about the issues that concern them.

Meetings with groups

The reviewers spend a lot of their time meeting different groups of staff on a divisional, team or unit basis.

Follow up of individual cases

The reviewers look at a sample of case files from each of the major service areas. Some of these cases are selected for follow up. Reviewers meet the service users (if possible) and staff who are involved. This is not an inspection of individual practice. The

interviews allow staff to describe in their own way how they have carried out their responsibilities, what has gone well or not so well, and how improvements could be made.

What can we expect of each other?

We expect you to:

- co-operate in the arrangements made for the review
- prepare for any involvement you may have
- talk openly about your work
- take responsibility for your contribution to the process.

Reviewers have a code of conduct, which is available on the web-site. You can expect us to:

- carry official identification
- treat you with courtesy and respect
- take an interest in what you have to say
- respect individual confidentiality.

The joint review team will not identify the source of any comments, either in discussions (unless this is agreed with the person providing the information) or in the published report.

Problems, concerns, complaints

The review is of social services as a whole, not of individual practice. If reviewers find cases or conduct which cause particular concern,

they will raise this formally with the senior manager (normally the Director of Social Services). It is then for the senior manager to see that appropriate action (including any necessary investigation) is carried out.

If you have concerns about the way the review team is carrying out its work, you should raise these through your managers, who can refer them to the lead reviewer. If problems cannot be resolved, they should be referred to:

Pat Vogt

Deputy Chief Inspector

Social Services Inspectorate for Wales

The National Assembly for Wales

Cathays Park

Cardiff

CF10 3NQ

Tel: 029 2082 5342

Fax: 029 2082 3417

E-mail: pat.vogt@wales.gsi.gov.uk

Or

Paul Dimblebee
Partner
Wales Audit Office
2 – 4 Park Grove
Cardiff
CF10 3PA

Tel: 029 2026 2550

Fax: 029 2034 4938

Email: paul.dimblebee@wao.gov.uk

Any complaints will be dealt with in accordance with either the National Assembly's or the Wales Audit Office's codes of practice on Complaints, copies of which are available on request.

Further information

If you are not sure about anything or have any queries, ask the reviewer who sees you.

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.