

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

REVIEWING SOCIAL SERVICES

**INFORMATION ABOUT JOINT REVIEWS
FOR
PARTNERS AND STAKEHOLDERS**

**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?

By law, the twenty-two local authorities in Wales have considerable responsibilities for:

- planning social services;
- making arrangements for the delivery of social services.

Local authorities thus have a key role in protecting the most vulnerable members of the community. 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, and carers (including young carers).

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 other partners become involved?

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.

Services are increasingly delivered through partnerships that include the private and voluntary sectors. New organisational arrangements are also emerging across the whole range of the local authority's social services responsibilities. Coterminal areas for local health boards and local authorities provide 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 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.

This means that partners and other stakeholders 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 all those with an interest in social services 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

At an early stage of the review, questionnaires are sent to a range of partner agencies and organisations. The survey provides an opportunity for you to provide your perspective about the quality of social services and the way in which the local authority is managing the social care agenda. 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 residential or day care facilities. 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 people, including representatives from other departments, agencies and organisations.

Meeting with individuals

Reviewers will ask to interview some key stakeholders individually, to follow up on particular issues (such as planning, commissioning, joint arrangements for service provision, developing the social care workforce, etc.).

What can we expect of each other?

The joint review is most effective if all those involved:

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

Reviewers have a code of conduct, which is available on the website. 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

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:

Richard Tebboth

Deputy Chief Inspector, Social Services
Inspectorate for Wales, The National Assembly
for Wales, Cathays Park, Cardiff, CF10 3NQ

Tel: 029 2082 3197

Fax: 029 2082 6912

E-mail: richard.tebboth@wales.gsi.gov.uk

or

Jeremy Colman

Etc.

Any complaints will be dealt with in accordance with either the National Assembly's or the Audit Commission'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.