

Interim assessment and risk analysis

The information from all aspects of the broad review is analysed. This includes further examination of the evidence gathered from the advance information, the surveys (service users and carers, staff, partners and stakeholders), the case file sample, meetings with key stakeholders and the programme of visits by the lay assessor.

The joint review team then meets to:

- establish the extent of reliable evidence already gathered;
- highlight any gaps in the evidence that need to be filled, by reference to the areas for examination set out in the judgement criteria (see Section 0.6 in the Handbook);
- make a provisional assessment of relative strengths and weaknesses;
- determine the areas of focus for the main fieldwork on the basis of a risk analysis.

The link inspector from SSIW, the relationship manager from WAO and the person providing the district audit service for the authority will contribute to this process.

The meeting is chaired by an external moderator and this is a key element in the quality assurance of joint reviews. The moderator will advise the lead reviewer and, as appropriate:

- challenge any interim findings or hypotheses, to ensure that sufficient evidence is available;
- clarify the additional information needed from the detailed review fieldwork.

At the conclusion of the interim assessment, there should be:

- an assessment of the data available and identification of items to be checked, of further information to be sought and of material likely to assist in compiling the final report;
- a set of questions or issues that need to be explored during the fieldwork stage;
- an appraisal of where the resources of the joint review team should be allocated, in order to focus on the key issues for that review and for the local authority.

In deciding the focus for the main fieldwork, the team will aim to present a balanced picture of the service. This means following up any areas of significant concern and also areas of good practice. The decision will also take into account any national priorities. The team may look for slices or cross-sections of service that are likely to be representative of broader issues.

Once the interim assessment and risk analysis has been completed, the lead reviewer will start planning the programme for the detailed review fieldwork with the local authority link officer.