

Fieldwork visits - guidance for the local authority

Week 2: Assessment/care management teams

When visiting teams, the reviewers will wish to see:

- managers and members of frontline teams in their place of work;
- duty and reception activity (observation);
- practitioners and managers responsible for the selected cases;
- office managers, administrators and receptionists.

When visiting teams, a programme for the visit is often helpful. This might comprise:

- a short meeting with the manager and a tour of the premises *15 minutes*
- observation and examination of processes *1 hour*
- a meeting with staff (not including the manager) *45 minutes*
- interview with the case holder for any case in the study sample *45 minutes*
- a meeting with the manager *1 hour*.

It is helpful if teams and individuals can prepare some brief material in advance. This may contain the remit for the team, staffing establishment, workload information, current performance data and the team plan or objectives. A SWOT analysis can be used to help the reviewers understand the team's perspective on key issues. If the interview is related to the file sample, social workers and team managers should understand that they would be interviewed about:

- the particular case;
- supervision arrangements;
- their general awareness of other areas such as policy and procedures.

Where possible, files will be available for them to consult.

Information

Accurate and clear information about the review is essential, if unnecessary anxiety or uncertainties are to be avoided. Please pay particular attention to the following points.

- Make sure everybody understands the nature and focus of the review and why they are being seen.
- Everybody should be provided with a copy of the relevant joint review leaflets and information about the codes of conduct for reviewers and lay assessors;
- Make sure that everybody knows the name(s) of the reviewer(s) and lay assessor (where appropriate) undertaking the visit or conducting the interview.

- Fieldwork time scales are usually tight, so punctuality is important for all those involved, including the joint review team. Delays may well impact on numbers of people.

Areas for examination

The fieldwork visits are a crucial means of obtaining evidence regarding the areas for examination in which judgements are made. The Joint Review Handbook outlines these areas and, when asking questions, the reviewers will focus upon them. We will be looking in particular at two key issues:

- How well are needs currently being met by social services?
- How well equipped is the local authority to deliver improvements in the quality of those services?

We will have prepared some questions, in part to check out some of the information we have already received. As well as asking questions, we want to make sure that staff have the chance to talk about the issues that concern them and to tell us about their experiences. We are interested in what works well as much as what needs to improve.