

MEETING WITH THE JOINT REVIEW TEAM

Thank you for agreeing to meet with the joint review team while it is in your area, looking at the way in which the local authority provides social services.

By social services, we mean all the services that the council provides itself or arranges for others to provide to a range of people who need care and support. This includes children and young people (and their families), 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.

By now, we hope that you will have received your copy of the leaflet that describes what happens in a joint review. This note is to provide more information for those people who will be meeting in groups with members of the joint review team.

The meetings

It is our job to find out how well social services in your area meet the needs of users and carers. This means providing you with the chance to tell us about:

- what has happened to you;
- what works well;
- what needs to change,

Meetings with different groups of service users and carers are one way of doing this.

We think that these meetings are a very important part of the review, especially if people feel able to talk openly and honestly. It helps if everybody involved:

- knows what to expect;
- is well-prepared;
- is made to feel comfortable and included;
- has any special needs met.

We work closely with staff in social services in trying to make sure that this is what happens. They make the arrangements for the meetings, sometimes with help from voluntary organisations. However, you are welcome to contact us if you want to talk about the arrangements,

Preparing for the meeting

We will come to the meeting with some general questions about social services. We will want to check out some of the information we've already received. A list of the areas that we may want to discuss and some possible questions that may be asked is at the end of this note. This list is only a guide. You are not expected to have answers to all these questions (or even most of them!).

Talking about your experiences

As well as asking questions, we want to make sure that you have the chance to:

- talk about the issues that concern you;
- tell us about your experiences.

You should feel confident enough to talk openly and honestly. However, it is important for you to understand that what you say is not confidential. What is said in the meeting may be used in our discussions with the local authority or quoted in the final report. However, we will not name any person who gives

us information (unless it makes us concerned about risks to somebody who is vulnerable).

We are interested in things that are working well as much as those things that need to improve.

Please note that we cannot take up individual complaints on your behalf, although we will raise matters of concern with social services managers.

We hope that you have found this information useful. We look forward to meeting you.

Code of conduct and complaints

The joint review team is required to meet very high standards of behaviour in carrying out their work. You are welcome to see the code of conduct which describes these rules.

If you are not happy about the way in which you have been treated during the visit, the joint review leaflet says how you can get the matter sorted out or make a complaint.

Key Issues

We will be looking at two key issues:

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

This involves finding out about a wide range of areas.

1. Meeting individual needs

Getting a service – How easy was it for you to know about what services are available and to ask for those services?

Assessment – What do you think about the assessment that you received? – Were you involved in the assessment and were your views taken account of? – Did you have to give information to lots of different people?

The social worker or care manager – Do you have a care plan? – Has it been reviewed and changed as your needs have changed?

Range of services – Do you think that there is a good range of services available? – Have you had a choice about how your needs are met?

Quality of services – Have the services you receive been of a good standard? – Have you been treated with respect when receiving social services?

Protection from harm – Do you think that people who are most at risk receive a good response?

Independence and social inclusion – Do you think that services are helping people to remain independent? – Are services provided in ways that that encourage people to take advantage of opportunities to lead fuller lives?

2. Ability to deliver improvements to services

Staffing – Do you think that the people who provide social services are well trained? – Have you been impressed by the people who work with you? – Has your social worker changed frequently?

Getting the best from services currently provided – Do you think that there are clear standards to help guarantee good quality services? – Have you been asked your opinion about the services provided or arranged?

Planning and partnerships – Are you aware of any plans for changes in the services that you receive? – Have you been asked about how you think the service could be changed for the better? – If changes are underway, have you been involved in the process? – Do social services work well with others (including the health service, other departments in the local authority, voluntary organisations and the private sector)?

Providing services – Are you aware of who provides the services in your care plan? – Have you been asked about how well independent providers of services are meeting the terms of their contracts? – Did you have any choice about what services were available to help you?

Use of resources (staff, money, premises, etc.) – Are resources used well? – Do you have experience of duplication, waste or poor use of resources?

Leadership and culture in social services – Are you satisfied that this is a 'can do' department that puts service users and carers first?

The role of the council – Do elected members take a proper interest in the way in which the local authority provides social services? – Is there a good working relationship between social services and other departments in the local authority (such as education and housing)?

Overall

What are the things about social services that have really impressed you? – What are the highlights that we need to know about? – In what ways have you been disappointed by social services? – How could they improve things for service users and carers?