

THE LOCAL AUTHORITY ACTION PLAN

The primary purpose of the joint review is to improve local services for users and carers. Production of an ambitious but realistic action plan in response to the review is one of the key tasks in achieving this aim. The process for developing this plan should ensure that:

- it demonstrates an appropriate response to the recommendations and priorities for action in the review report;
- the local authority can implement it vigorously and to good effect;
- CSSIW and WAO can use it for monitoring effectively the progress made by the local authority.

The review team will engage in discussion with the authority about its arrangements for producing the action plan from the outset of the review. The local authority is encouraged to adopt an inclusive approach to the task. Any plan is likely to be more robust if the work is undertaken in consultation with key partners and stakeholders, including service users and carers.

The action plan will need to work on two levels.

Stage 1

The overarching plan shows how the authority intends to deal in a strategic way with the main improvement themes in the report.

1. The overarching plan is not published as part of the joint review report but should be available in draft form at the time of publication and in a final version at the handover point. The draft plan should be presented to a session of the Council at the same time as the joint review report. A copy of the draft plan is normally sent to the lead reviewer at least four weeks before the date when the report is formally presented.
2. During the follow up period and beyond, CSSIW and WAO will have considerable responsibilities for evaluating, monitoring and providing feedback on how effectively the plan is implemented. Their contribution to producing the action plan is organised initially through the programme manager, who should be involved appropriately by the local authority up to the point of handover.
3. In consultation with the lead reviewer, the programme manager reviewer will respond in writing to the draft plan, giving advice about the way in which the plan deals with the main improvement themes from the joint review. The final overarching plan should be formally agreed by the authority within eight weeks of the report's publication and shared with the programme manager before the handover meeting.

EXHIBIT 1 Model timetable for producing the overarching action plan

Task	Week number
The lead reviewer sends the draft report to the local authority.	1
The local authority and the lead reviewer agree the report and begin discussions about the draft action plan.	3
The local authority prepares a draft action plan and sends it to the programme manager.	12
After consulting within CSSIW and WAO, the programme manager responds in writing.	14
When the review report is presented, the Council approves the draft action plan and continues to consult with key stakeholders.	16
The final plan is discussed at the handover meeting.	24

Stage 2

The detailed plan should build upon this work. It will describe the changes planned by the authority, how the changes will contribute to delivering all the recommendations and priorities for action, and how these actions will be incorporated over time within the authority's usual processes for planning, performance management and scrutiny.

1. The aim is not to devise a plan that stands alone but to demonstrate an integrated approach that ensures actions arising from the joint review are embedded within the overall improvement framework used by the local authority, to which CSSIW and WAO routinely contribute. The plan will continue to be developed and to be assimilated over time within this overall framework.
2. The authority is encouraged to share the findings of the review widely and to consult on its action plan, using established consultative bodies or special meetings. Particular attention should be paid to involving key stakeholders (including service users and carers) in the monitoring processes used to ensure implementation is scrutinised effectively.
3. By the time the local authority, CSSIW and WAO begin working together to deliver the monitoring programme, the action plan should contain sufficient information or links to other documents (such as corporate, service, operational or business plans, medium term financial strategies, etc.) to establish that the authority has determined:
 - outcomes and indicators that can be monitored and which are explicit enough to demonstrate progress;
 - quantifiable targets for improvement;
 - time scales by which the improvement will be achieved;
 - clearly delineated arrangements for the local authority to monitor progress;
 - the finances that are necessary to achieve improvements;
 - who will take responsibility for key actions and be accountable for progress.

4. It is especially helpful if this detailed action plan is provided in a format that allows straightforward progress reports and monitoring, perhaps on a CD with hyperlinks to other key documents. One possible format is outlined in Exhibit 2.

EXHIBIT 2 Possible action plan format

Action	Quantifiable outcome targets in place	Time scales and milestones agreed	Budget/ Resources agreed	Accountability allocated	Monitoring	Link to relevant plan or document
1. Increase the range of services available to children and families, especially in respect of family support and placement options for children who are looked after	Yes	Yes	Yes	Head of Service	Scrutiny Committee - quarterly	Children's Services Plan 2005-6, page 26