

A GUIDE TO JOINT REVIEWS IN WALES

Working together to improve social services In Wales



PREFACE

We hope you will find this booklet a useful guide to joint reviews in Wales. It is intended to provide an accessible introduction to the overall framework for the second round of joint reviews, starting in 2004. Reviews require considerable effort and resources. This guide will make it easier for all stakeholders to prepare for a joint review, manage the process and benefit from the outcome. It sets out the rationale behind the review programme and the structure of the review process.

A summary guide has been produced for elected members.

For ease of reference, more detailed material is included in the Joint Review Handbook, the contents of which are set out in Appendix 1. The Handbook guides 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. The Handbook is available on the joint review web-site. The Handbook is used especially for material that needs more regular updating in response to:

- feedback from local authorities, service users and carers and others;
- wider developments in social care and in government.

There are information leaflets about joint reviews for the general public (including service users and carers) and for other stakeholders (including staff in social services, partner agencies, voluntary organisations and other providers of social care).

All the guides and leaflets are available in large print or in other formats. They can be found on the joint review web-site and the web-sites of the National Assembly for Wales and the Audit Commission in Wales.

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FOREWORD

Local authorities have a key role in protecting the most vulnerable members of the community and in helping to meet their social care needs. This involves providing services to children and young people, older people, people who have a mental health problem, people who have a learning disability and people who have a physical disability or sensory impairment. It means also making help available to those who take on a caring role for others, including young carers.

The Social Services Inspectorate for Wales (SSIW) and the Audit Commission in Wales (ACiW) are working together to help improve these vital public services and thereby the quality of life available to those who rely upon social services.

The programme of joint reviews in Wales provides a key opportunity for us to join with a wide range of other stakeholders in achieving these common goals. It is a crucial mechanism for:

- ensuring public accountability;
- assisting the Welsh Assembly Government and the National Assembly for Wales to drive up standards of social care provision;
- helping local authorities to deliver their statutory responsibilities and their own improvement agendas for social services;
- supporting service users and carers and the organisations that represent their interests in pressing for services that are more flexible and responsive to needs;
- achieving a better understanding of which services work best and how they can be provided most efficiently.

The first round of joint reviews played an important role in contributing to the improved performance of social services in Wales. It was very successful in

helping councils to identify areas of strength and areas for development. Joint reviews have become challenging events, generating considerable pressure for change.

In delivering the new programme, SSIW and ACiW will strive to achieve maximum impact upon the programmes for improvement that all local authorities need to pursue. We anticipate significant gains in the effectiveness of joint reviews from:

- greater integration within the Wales Programme for Improvement;
- efforts to incorporate in the programme new developments in regulatory and review practice;
- closer alignment with the distinctive Welsh agenda in areas such as social policy, local government and other public services.

This guide sets out the rationale behind the new joint review programme and how these themes have influenced the way in which it will be delivered.

We would like to thank all stakeholders, especially members of the reference group and the many people who took part in the process of consultation, for their contribution to the material contained in this guide.

Graham Williams, Chief Inspector of Social Services
Clive Grace, Director-General, Audit Commission in Wales

SUMMARY

This summary provides a brief description of the part played by joint reviews in the overall programme for improving social services in Wales. The other sections of the guide contain more detailed material in respect of all the matters outlined in the summary.

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).

These are vital services. It is important that they operate to the highest possible standards in being responsive to individual circumstances, meeting very diverse needs and helping people to achieve their full potential in respect of independence and social inclusion.

The government believes that external review, independent of the local authorities, has a part to play in:

- providing assurance to the public about the safe and proper delivery of social services;
- contributing to the improvement of those services.

The purpose of joint reviews, therefore, is to:

- provide an objective, evidence-based assessment of how well people are being served by their social services;
- make a constructive contribution towards the further improvement of the services provided;
- help safeguard the interests of service users and carers;
- secure better value for money in the provision of social services.

What is a joint review?

A joint review is a planned examination of all the local authority's social services functions. It takes place every five years. After analysing a wide selection of material about the local authority and the services it provides, the joint review team spends up to one month in the area to carry out further inquiries.

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.

At the end of each review, the joint review team publishes a report. This describes what is good about social services locally and where improvement is most needed to achieve good outcomes for service users and carers. In response to the report, the local authority produces an action plan, saying how it intends to make the necessary changes. There is an agreed programme for monitoring how this plan is put into effect.

Each local authority in Wales was the subject of a joint review in the first cycle (1998-2003). They will be reviewed in the same general order during the second round, which starts in 2004.

Who is responsible for joint reviews?

The name "joint review" comes from the fact that responsibility for managing the whole programme of reviews and for carrying out each individual review is shared by the Social Services Inspectorate for Wales (SSIW) and the Audit Commission in Wales (ACiW), on behalf of the National Assembly for Wales.

SSIW inspects local authority social services, promotes good practice and service development and provides professional advice to Ministers. ACiW promotes the best use of public money by ensuring that it is spent properly and that best value is achieved. It helps local authorities to improve the effectiveness of its arrangements for managing resources, performance and corporate governance.

Both organisations are committed to best practice based upon the principles set out by government. These state that public services inspection should:

- pursue the purpose of improvement;
- focus on outcomes;
- take a user perspective;
- be proportionate to risk;
- encourage self-assessment by managers;
- use impartial evidence, wherever possible;
- disclose the criteria used for judgement;
- be open about the processes involved;
- have regard to value for money, including that of the inspecting body;
- continually learn from experience.

The distinctive contribution of joint reviews is to bring together the professional and managerial expertise of SSIW and the value-for-money and corporate

governance focus of ACiW in conducting a comprehensive evaluation of local authority social services as a whole (in terms of quality, performance and cost).

The legislative basis for joint reviews

The statutory basis for the second round of joint reviews is derived from the Health and Social Care (Community Health and Standards) Act 2003.

Under Section 92 of the Act, the National Assembly for Wales has the general function of encouraging improvement in the provision of Welsh local authority social services. Section 94 allows it to conduct reviews of, and investigations into, the way in which local authorities in Wales discharge their social services functions. These tasks are carried out by SSIW on behalf of the National Assembly.

In doing so, SSIW will be concerned particularly with:

- the availability of, and access to, the services;
- the quality and effectiveness of the services;
- the management of the services;
- the economy and efficiency of their provision and their value for money;
- the availability and quality of information provided to the public about the services;
- the need to safeguard and promote the rights and welfare of children.

There is a right of entry and powers to require information or explanation attached to these functions.

Under the Local Government Act 1999, ACiW exercises important responsibilities for auditing and inspecting the duties of continuous improvement and best value placed upon local authorities and other public bodies. Specific legal provision for joint reviews is contained in the Audit Commission Act 1998, which enables it to assist the National Assembly for Wales in carrying out such reviews.

Joint reviews and the overall programme of inspection

Joint reviews are an integral part of the overall inspection programme undertaken by SSIW on a five-year cycle. They contribute to and benefit from the annual performance evaluation of local authority social services undertaken by SSIW, in consultation with other regulators. In turn, this has an important role in the comprehensive framework provided by the Wales Programme for Improvement. Joint reviews also inform a wider evaluation of social care performance and contribute to the development of social care policy.

1 INTRODUCING JOINT REVIEWS

1.1 Why social services matter

High quality social care is a necessary part of the fabric of our society and of the communities in which we all live. The range of responsibilities placed upon social services is considerable. They provide care and support for 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 other groups who are vulnerable or at risk. Social services also provide help to those who take on a caring role for others, including young carers. Every family is likely to have a member who will depend upon social services at some point in their lives.

Social services protect the most vulnerable members of society and enable people to live more independent lives. This gives them a key role in delivering aspirations for community regeneration and for a society that is as inclusive as possible.

1.2 Who runs social services?

The twenty-two local authorities in Wales are responsible for:

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

They do so within a framework provided by law, regulation and guidance.

These authorities manage a growing and complex business on behalf of local citizens. There are over 100,000 people at any one time receiving support from social services authorities. They do so in a wide variety of settings including their own homes, day settings and residential homes. Social service authorities in Wales spend around £850 million of taxpayers' money each year. About 70,000

people work in social care, 28,000 of them directly employed by local authorities. On average, each local council responsible for social services devotes 19% of its budget to social care. Most of this money comes directly from the National Assembly for Wales but individual councils determine their own priorities and spending, within the framework of national legislation and guidance (in order to secure best value for service users and the tax payers who fund the services).

Since the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970 (which gave local authorities responsibility for planning social services and making arrangements for their delivery), additional legislation has had a major impact on the way in which social care is provided.

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" providers but increasingly the local authority purchases services such as domiciliary and residential care from a range of providers in the voluntary and private sectors.

Changes are taking place at every level - not only at the point of service delivery but also in policy development, in inspection and regulation and within local authorities themselves - all with the clear aim of improving the quality of the experience of those who need and use public services.

1.3 Improving social services

There are rising expectations about how well these vital services should perform in providing the support needed by service users and carers. This pressure for improvement has many strands.

a) Legislation such as the Children's Act 1989 and the NHS and Community Care Act 1990 has imposed significant duties and obligations upon local authorities, especially in terms of being responsive to the needs of service users.

b) There has been unprecedented investment in social care and central government expects this investment to be accompanied by reforms that will ensure service quality and value for money. Taxpayers want to know that their money is well spent. The current political and economic climate demands a combination of service improvements and efficiency savings. New monies invested in public services need to result in real benefits and better outcomes for service users and carers. Most local authorities are finding that the demands and pressures on social services budgets are especially volatile and difficult to control. There is a growing emphasis on priority budgeting, good financial management and understanding costs.

c) The National Assembly for Wales and the Welsh Assembly Government have sought to use the powers devolved to them in ways that will ensure high standards of social care provision.

In the context of the changed approach to governance in Wales, they are also evolving new policy directions across the range of devolved responsibilities, in areas such as community regeneration and community safety. These policies will have considerable influence upon all local authority functions and the way in which they are performed. There is a strong emphasis on

- partnership with local government, business and the voluntary sector;
- core values of equality and sustainability.

In the key policy document of the new administration, *Wales: A Better Country*, the Assembly set out its priorities around the themes of social justice, improving health, and spreading prosperity. These will be key themes for the Assembly and for public services generally.

d) There is considerable evidence of mixed performance across Wales in the delivery of social services, as reflected in:

- the early findings from the SSIW annual performance evaluation and from other parts of its inspection and development programmes
- the work done by ACiW, including its role in co-ordinating regulatory activity under the Wales Programme for Improvement ;
- the Wales Review of Health and Social Care overseen by Derek Wanless.

The National Assembly and the Welsh Assembly Government are committed to tackling the problems identified, in part by encouraging much greater integration across health and social services and by the use of national standards. Under the Care Standards Act, the National Assembly for Wales has set national minimum standards, covering matters such as:

- choice of service
- planning for individual needs and preferences
- quality of life
- quality of care and treatment
- staffing
- management
- concerns, complaints and protection
- the physical environment.

The Care Standards Inspectorate for Wales now regulates the organisations providing social care services, including private businesses and voluntary organisations.

e) Local government itself has been set a challenging agenda for modernisation and for ensuring the effective management of the services for which it is

responsible. This is underpinned by the statutory requirements of the Local Government Act 1999 and the Wales Programme for Improvement. The quality of social care locally is one of the major benchmarks by which the performance of a local authority is measured. Consequently, improving social services has become a key corporate priority.

f) Improving partnership and collaborative working across the public sector is a clear policy priority in Wales. Services are increasingly delivered through partnerships that include the private and voluntary sectors. Partnerships need to work better to make a difference for people. New organisational arrangements are also emerging.

For example, coterminous 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 of the proposed changes 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.

g) As part of their own improvement agenda, local authorities are seeking to develop an improved understanding of which services work, the costs involved, the best way to provide or commission the services and how they might be delivered and managed efficiently. Not only must local government deliver quality services and a shared national agenda, it must also identify and address specific local needs and respond in an innovative way. The community leadership role of local authorities presents new challenges in the allocation of resources to priorities, promoting equality and social inclusion for the benefits of those who depend upon social services. In delivering these local strategies,

there are inherent difficulties in dealing with competing claims and conflicting interests. Effective governance arrangements and the ability to make best use of the council's management capacity are vital factors in managing such demands.

h) Service users and carers, the organisations that represent their interests, those who champion their cause within local government and elsewhere have used new mechanisms for participation (such as frameworks for planning services) to press for services that are more flexible and responsive to needs. Users of public services are less willing to accept post code variations of different standards in similar areas. Their expectations are increasing, with advocacy groups properly taking an active role in promoting rights to quality care, choice, flexibility and respect.

Carers help some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged people in our society. They devote considerable time and energy, physical and emotional, to these tasks. As carers gain increased rights to an assessment of their needs, public services are starting to respond to the challenge of supporting carers in their own right and to find ways of meeting those needs.

Communities are becoming more diverse and public services need to respond better in providing services that are culturally sensitive. There is an increasing focus on equality of access and on the need to meet statutory requirements in respect of language, race, age, sexual orientation, gender, disability and religion.

1.4 The role of regulation, inspection and review

The government believes that external review, independent of local authorities, has an important part to play in:

- providing assurance to the public about the safe and proper delivery of social services;
- contributing to the improvement of those services.

The Health and Social Care (Community Health and Standards) Act 2003 gives to the National Assembly for Wales the general function of encouraging improvement in the provision of local authority social services. Section 94 of the Act allows it to conduct reviews of, and investigations into, the way in which local authorities in Wales discharge their social services functions. The Social Services Inspectorate for Wales (SSIW) carries out these duties on behalf of the Assembly. It also helps the Welsh Assembly Government to frame policy and contributes to the development of best practice in local authorities. In consultation with other inspectorates and improvement agencies, SSIW carries out an annual performance evaluation of each individual local social services authority. All local authorities have a link inspector, who helps to ensure an integrated approach to all the work undertaken by SSIW in that authority.

The Audit Commission in Wales (ACiW) promotes the best use of public money by commissioning the appointed auditors to ensure that public money is properly spent and good value is achieved. In accordance with the Local Government Act 1999, the Commission exercises important responsibilities for auditing the duty of continuous improvement placed upon local authorities and other public bodies. It helps local authorities to improve the effectiveness of its arrangements for managing resources, performance and corporate governance. ACiW plays a key role in co-ordinating the regulatory framework introduced by the Wales Programme for Improvement (including the whole authority analysis, risk assessment, improvement and regulatory plans). A relationship manager is appointed to each local authority to help ensure that the programme of inspections relating to that authority is manageable, well co-ordinated and proportionate to risk.

This is the organisational and legislative context for joint reviews in Wales. SSIW and the Audit Commission commissioned the first round of joint reviews in Wales and they are working in partnership to deliver the second round.

Both organisations have sought to ensure that the framework for joint reviews reflects best practice and the principles set out by government that public services inspection should:

- pursue the purpose of improvement;
- focus on outcomes;
- take a user perspective;
- be proportionate to risk;
- encourage self-assessment by managers;
- use impartial evidence, wherever possible;
- disclose the criteria used for judgement;
- be open about the processes involved;
- have regard to value for money, including that of the inspecting body;
- continually learn from experience.

1.5 Responding to change

Both SSIW and ACiW intend to ensure that joint reviews maintain a distinct identity but also that they are a well-integrated part of their overall programme and of their work under the Wales Programme for Improvement. This has meant:

- a) taking into account changes in the overall context for local authority social services;
- b) incorporating new developments in regulatory and inspection practice;
- c) addressing more holistically the links between social care and health care.

a) The social policy agenda is moving at a considerable pace and it is essential that the arrangements for joint review take into account developments within the political and structural context, such as:

- changes in the administration of social care sponsored by the National Assembly for Wales and the Welsh Assembly Government;
- the modernising agenda in local government, including an increased emphasis on service scrutiny and performance management;

Increasingly, local social services authorities are characterised by whole council approaches to issues such as social inclusion, by a wide range of service providers and by flexible use of different funding streams. The impact of these changes varies in each authority. The joint review methodology must be flexible enough to accommodate such diversity while maintaining a common approach to gauging the impact upon service quality.

b) The framework for regulation and inspection is undergoing significant and rapid change, with developments such as:

- the requirements under the Wales Programme for Improvement that local authorities review their services as part of a whole authority analysis and improvement plan;
- under the same programme, the annual risk assessment process and agreement of regulatory plans;
- the new system for annual performance evaluation of local authority social services by SSIW;
- the work done to improve inspection and regulatory practice by all the bodies represented on the Wales Inspectorate Forum (to coordinate activity, reduce the burden of regulation where possible and devise more effective inspection methodologies);
- the emphasis (under the Wales Programme for Improvement and elsewhere) on using inspection, audit and review to drive improvement;
- the creation of the Care Standards Inspectorate for Wales (enabling an increased volume of independent regulation and scrutiny in respect of social care provision);
- the creation of a health care inspectorate for Wales;
- greater involvement by service users in planning services and in evaluating service quality.

Joint reviews should not duplicate work that is already undertaken by others. They should make effective use of this work to reduce the burden of regulation on local authorities, incorporating the information produced by other inspection or regulatory activity.

Crucially, joint reviews must be designed to provide added value and unique authority through an independent and comprehensive examination of social services, to validate once every five years the judgements arising from other processes.

The distinctive contribution of joint reviews is to bring together the professional and managerial expertise of SSIW and the value-for-money and corporate governance focus of ACiW in conducting a comprehensive evaluation of local authority social services as a whole in terms of quality, performance and cost.

c) The joint review programme must respond to new requirements for delivering social care through partnerships, multi-agency planning and joint commissioning by local authorities and NHS bodies. The extent of joint work between local authorities and local representatives of the NHS in commissioning and providing services at all levels - strategic, operational and individual service user - demands growing integration of the work undertaken by SSIW, ACiW and the health inspectorates. The joint review programme will benefit from this approach and from other developments such as the creation of coterminous areas for local health boards and local authorities, the work done in producing local Health, Social Care and Well Being Strategies and the creation of the Healthcare Inspectorate Wales (HIW). Although this body has been in existence for only a short period of time, close links have been established with SSIW and ACiW. There have been positive outcomes, such as moves to co-ordinate its inspection programme with the joint review programme.

1.6 The joint review programme

A joint review is a planned examination of all the local authority's social services functions. It takes place every five years. The purpose of the joint review programme is to:

- provide an objective, evidence-based assessment of how well people are being served by their social services authority;

- make a constructive contribution towards the further improvement of the services provided;
- help safeguard the interests of service users and carers;
- secure better value for money in the provision of social services.

After analysing a wide selection of material about the local authority and the services it provides, the joint review team spends up to one month in the area to carry out further inquiries.

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.

Each review results in a published report, which delivers the overall conclusions on how well local people are being served and 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 critique of each facet of 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 ACiW. There is an agreed programme for monitoring how the plan is put into effect.

Joint reviews start from the experience of people who use services. Reviewers consider this alongside the management practices in the local authorities that deliver those services, assessing whether they represent value for money.

The foundation of the review is the understanding that people will only get a good service when:

- local authorities fit services to people, rather than slot people into existing traditional services;
- local authorities learn what works well now and use these lessons to reshape their services, to deliver better outcomes for users and carers in the future;
- social services set and publicise clear standards and implement effective performance management systems to ensure that these standards are achieved;
- every pound that is spent is directed at a specific purpose, costs are kept under constant scrutiny and best value is achieved.

Each local authority in Wales was the subject of a joint review in the first cycle (1998-2003). They will be reviewed in the same general order during the second round, which starts in 2004. In consultation with key stakeholders, SSIW and ACiW will continue to keep under consideration the (potentially conflicting) principles that determine the pace at which the overall programme is delivered.

2 THE SECOND ROUND OF JOINT REVIEWS IN WALES

2.1 Learning from the experience of the first round¹

The first round of joint reviews played an important role in contributing to the improved performance of social services in Wales. It was very successful in helping councils to establish areas of strength and areas for development. The methodology had a sound basis. It stressed the need to gather sufficient, robust evidence as the basis for making judgements about performance and capacity to improve. The findings of joint reviews have been accorded significant credibility, in part because they were perceived as being comprehensive and independent. Joint reviews have become high profile and challenging events, generating considerable pressure for change. Authorities generally acknowledge the way in which joint reviews have acted as a catalyst, helping them to devise and deliver programmes for improvement

For these reasons, the first and second rounds of the joint review programme will have much in common. The elements of continuity include:

- the aims
- the underlying principles
- the cycle of reviews
- the overall shape of the process
- the evaluative methods used
- the two dimensions within the overall judgement
- clarity of reporting
- examining social services as a corporate responsibility of the local authority
- identification of good practice
- an emphasis on the value of self-assessment.

¹ The Joint Review Team published an annual report which brought together overarching messages drawn from reviews. Occasional reports on specific themes such as children's services (*Getting the Best from Children's Services* 1999) or human resources (*People Need People* 2000) have also been produced. The most recent report *Old Virtues, New Virtues* provides an overview of the changes in social services over the seven years of joint reviews in England 1996-2003.

Even during the first round, joint reviews evolved as the team responded to changes in the overall context of social services and to developments in the practice of evaluation. The new organisational framework for conducting joint reviews has provided opportunities to take forward the best of the former regime while making further adjustments to ensure that:

- the views and experiences of service users and carers are represented as well as possible;
- the best possible balance is achieved between the need for a comprehensive and uniform element in each review and the need to be flexible in deciding which specific areas require more detailed scrutiny (so that the overall burden on the local authority is reduced);
- there is a consistent approach to each review.

2.2 What will change?

More detail about these changes is given in other sections of the guide and in the Joint Review Handbook.

Review teams

SSIW and ACiW will carry out the second round of reviews as a direct partnership². Review teams will comprise staff from both organisations, supplemented by sessional staff with suitable experience and expertise. The first reviews will be led by people experienced in the first round of joint reviews.

Lay assessors

² A special team commissioned by the Social Services Inspectorate (England), SSIW and the Audit Commission carried out the first round of joint reviews, which ended in 2003-4.

Review teams will include lay assessors, recruited and assigned through the Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA). Lay assessors bring a different perspective and have a particular role in ensuring that the views and experience of service users and carers are properly represented. There is a systematic process for recruitment, on the basis of a clear specification that outlines the personal qualities, knowledge and skills required. Lay assessors receive induction training and ongoing advice from the WCVA. Their role is defined in detail in the Joint Review Handbook.

Structuring the evidence and the findings

The evidence of the review will be structured in line with the headings used in SSIW's performance evaluation of local authority social services. These in turn were designed to reflect the two dimensions of judgement in joint reviews.

How good are the services?

Access to services
Assessment
Care management and review
Range of services provided
Quality of services provided
Arrangements to protect vulnerable people
Success in promoting independence and social inclusion.

How well placed is the authority to sustain and improve performance?

Workforce
Performance management
Planning and partnerships
Commissioning and contracting
Resources
Leadership and culture
Corporate and political support and scrutiny.

SSIW and ACiW have introduced greater transparency to the process for reaching judgements. For each of these fourteen areas, the Joint Review Handbook defines what is being measured, provides relevant key concepts and outlines the basis for judgement.

The same structure will be used in reports. In addition to the overall judgement, reviewers will give an assessment under each of the headings, showing in more detail relative strengths and weaknesses.

The use of the structure throughout the review will make clearer the progression from gathering and analysing information, considering the evidence, presenting the findings and reaching a judgement.

The review process

The process has been more clearly differentiated into:

- a broad, comprehensive phase, in which the focus is on gathering intelligence from a wide variety of sources and using a range of methods (analysis of existing information about performance, surveys, file analysis, group interviews with stakeholders);
- interim assessment and risk analysis, in which the information from the first phase is analysed and the review team establishes the extent of reliable evidence already to hand, makes a provisional assessment of

relative strengths and weaknesses, and determines the areas of focus for the main fieldwork;

- the main fieldwork phase or detailed review, which will be structured in three blocks of time and in which reviewers will look in more depth at chosen areas (using techniques that take slices through the organisation and its activities and which triangulate other sources of evidence);
- following through, in which the report is produced and published, the local authority plans and delivers improvements in response to recommendations and there is an agreed monitoring programme to ensure positive outcomes.

The overall aim will remain the same: to produce a balanced picture of performance, highlighting good practice as well as any areas of concern. However, the changes to the process will allow interim findings to be shared with the local authority at an earlier stage.

Advance information

The advance information for reviews will draw heavily on existing sources of information, including material from the Wales Programme for Improvement and SSIW's performance evaluation, previous inspections and reviews. Local authorities will no longer be required to prepare a lengthy and time-consuming position statement. They will be asked to:

- update information submitted as part of the annual performance evaluation;
- provide practical information necessary to carry out the review.

Increased engagement with service users and carers

The review process has been amended to provide more opportunities for service users and carers to express their views and to describe their experiences.

Examples of changes include:

- redesigning the survey questionnaire;

- introducing the lay assessor role, with a specific brief to ensure that the views and experiences of service users and carers are properly represented;
- establishing a user-carer reference group for the duration of the joint review, enabling regular dialogue throughout.

Increased recognition of the role played by joint working and partnerships in delivering social care

Joint reviews will place more emphasis on evaluating the interface between social care and other services such as health, education, and housing in terms of joint working and integrated provision. The methodology has been changed to enable the joint review team to examine both the experience of service users and carers as they move along care pathways and also the links between key agencies and organisations.

For example, these issues are now an integral and explicit part of the framework used for gathering evidence, reaching judgements and presenting the findings. There will be a survey of partners and stakeholders, using a written questionnaire. The survey of social services staff specifically seeks their views about partnership working. Case file analysis and the interviews with individual service users and carers will be used to explore care pathways in all relevant sectors of service provision.

The contribution to the joint review from SSIW, ACiW and colleagues from other inspectorates and improvement agencies will be increased at all stages. This may include formal participation in elements of the fieldwork programme. It is likely that the second round of joint reviews will see even greater co-ordination and unification of the work undertaken by these organisations in local authorities.

Better integration with wider performance frameworks

The staffing of the teams, the greater use of information from existing sources and the structure for the evidence and findings will provide better integration with the wider frameworks of the Wales Programme for Improvement and SSIW's performance evaluation. The findings of reviews will feed directly into these frameworks.

The Handbook describes in more detail how each stage of the joint review process (the broad review, the detailed review and follow through) connects with other elements of the Wales Programme for Improvement - such as the local authority's risk assessment and improvement plan, the regulatory plan and other scrutiny arrangements. In each local authority, the link inspector from SSIW and the relationship manager from ACiW will play an important role throughout the review process in helping to achieve the integrated approach. Again, these roles are defined in the Handbook.

Equality issues

Joint reviews will be conducted in compliance with the standards adopted by SSIW and ACiW for using Welsh. Other languages and formats will be used when appropriate. Reviews will be sensitive to the needs of minority and hard-to-reach groups. There will be greater emphasis on publicising the fact that a joint review is being conducted within the local authority and on providing opportunities to make direct representations to the joint review team through the use of e-mail, web-site and postal facilities. SSIW and ACiW will consult with the equality commissions, voluntary bodies and others to make reviews as inclusive as possible.

Conclusion

Many of these changes will contribute to the overall aims of:

- reducing the burden of inspection, wherever possible;

- achieving the best possible balance between the need for a comprehensive and uniform approach and the need for a proportionate and flexible response on the basis of a well evidenced assessment and risk analysis.

2.3 Further development

The overall framework for joint reviews is intended to provide a stable basis for the duration of the second round in Wales. However, the process and the methodology will evolve in the light of experience and practice.

Change will be prompted by many factors, including:

- feedback from local authorities, service users and carers, the advisory board and others;
- wider developments in social care and in government;
- the expectations of more flexible planning, commissioning and service delivery arrangements across social care, health and education;
- closer integration with other inspectorates, performance improvement agencies and regulators;
- work within SSIW and ACiW to improve review processes;
- the creation of better frameworks for performance management, including more robust performance indicators;
- new opportunities arising from the creation of the Wales Audit Office in 2005.

Stakeholders will be kept informed of these changes through periodic revisions of the joint review guide and handbook.

3.1 Principles, values and code of conduct

In addition to the general principles of public service inspection set out by the government (see page 10), the joint review programme is underpinned by a number of core values:

- *keeping a service user focus in all we do* – making the primary focus of the review how well individuals are served by their authority, collecting evidence directly from service users and carers, using this evidence to inform the management and stakeholder interviews;
- *working in partnership* – between the sponsoring organisations, with authorities individually and collectively, with service users and carers, and with people who work in social care;
- *inclusion of all stakeholders in social services* – involving them in reviews and sharing the learning at various points during the review;
- *being evidence based* – grounding all findings and judgements in evidence about authorities' activities, distinguishing clearly between reporting facts and making judgements, identifying and sharing good practice;
- *applying a consistent approach* – defining common standards for all our joint review work, seeking to apply the principles of best practice in the joint review programme itself;
- *looking at corporate responsibilities* – examining the performance of the whole local authority, including other functions that contribute to social care, as well as the work of those specially charged with social services responsibilities;
- *encouraging development* – judging current performance in a proper historical context, weighing future potential so as to leave every authority with a clear agenda to improve performance and an appreciation of their

capacity to deliver improvement, highlighting good practice, validating self assessment, promoting innovation;

- *being open about our work* – publishing our methodology and reports on individual authorities, contributing to public accountability;
- *challenging, where necessary* – impartially dealing with all local authorities and not compromising with failing services when making judgements.

These principles are the basis for the joint review code of conduct, which sets out how members of the joint review team should approach their work. The code of conduct also provides a framework within which an individual's behaviour can be fairly and explicitly evaluated. The code is included in the Joint Review Handbook.

The joint review team places special emphasis upon the need to treat everyone with respect and consideration, regardless of language, religion, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation or gender.

3.2 Accountability, management and governance arrangements

Joint reviews of local authority social services in Wales are a joint enterprise between SSIW and ACiW. A special team commissioned by the Social Services Inspectorate (England), SSIW and the Audit Commission carried out the first round of joint reviews, which ended in 2003-4. The Welsh Assembly Government Minister for Health and Social Services determined that there should be a second round of reviews in Wales, carried out directly by SSIW working in co-operation with ACiW.

To carry out the programme, SSIW and ACiW have developed an equal partnership. In pursuing the principle of true joint working, it is essential that both organisations play an equivalent part, although for practical purposes some tasks are likely to be undertaken most effectively solely by one of the constituent

bodies. Joint reviews need to maintain a distinct identity while fitting into an increasingly integrated regime of inspection, audit and performance evaluation. The overall framework for joint reviews is designed to ensure that they benefit fully from the specialist resources and skills available to both organisations while providing transparency and clarity in terms of accountability, governance and management arrangements.

Advisory Board

Ministers will be asked to agree the creation of an advisory board (probably constituted as an Assembly-sponsored public body), with a membership which includes stakeholders who have strong emphasis on user-carer interests. The Board will be independently chaired, with senior officers from SSIW and ACiW in attendance. The Board will advise SSIW and ACiW on joint reviews and other social services reviews.

Management meetings

The Chief Social Services inspector and the Director-General of ACiW will meet annually to monitor delivery of the joint review programme, to consider feedback from key stakeholders and to consider what changes may be needed to ensure that the overall aims are achieved.

Executive management

A nominated manager from each organisation will take executive responsibility for joint reviews. They will agree:

- arrangements for the continuing development and operational oversight of joint reviews (through the steering group for at least the first year);
- the scheduling of reviews within the nationally agreed programme;
- the allocation of staff and other resources;
- arrangements for quality assurance, moderation, dispute resolution and dealing with complaints;
- arrangements for formal approval and publication of reports.

Lead reviewers

The nominated lead reviewer for each review will take primary responsibility for the conduct of the review (within the agreed methodology) and for writing the review report, subject to the quality assurance, moderation and formal approval arrangements.

Political reporting

SSIW, in consultation with ACiW, will draft a briefing for the Minister for Health and Social Services on each joint review report and its handling. This will include any Assembly press notice and any letter the Minister may choose to send to the local authority.

If a joint review raises serious concern about social services in a local authority, SSIW will report this to the Minister and deal with it in accordance with the protocol agreed between the Welsh Assembly Government and the Welsh Local Government Association.

SSIW, in consultation with ACiW, will report as appropriate to the Minister and to the Assembly Health and Social Services Committee on general matters concerning joint reviews in Wales.

3.3 Quality assurance arrangements

There are established systems and processes designed to ensure fairness and consistency in the delivery of the joint review programme and in the conduct of individual reviews.

Roles and responsibilities

The lead managers in SSIW and ACiW are responsible for the executive management of the joint review programme and for formal approval of reports on behalf of their respective organisations.

The lead reviewer has primary responsibility for the conduct of the review and for the writing of the report. The lead reviewer exercises that responsibility on behalf of SSIW and ACiW, in accordance with agreed guidance and subject to agreed arrangements for quality assurance, moderation and formal approval.

Other members of the review team share responsibility for the conduct of the review and its findings. They work under the day-to-day direction of the lead reviewer. They have a responsibility to raise with the lead reviewer any matters of concern or disagreement and to raise with the lead managers any matters which they believe have not been properly resolved.

Lay assessors share the responsibility of the review team. They also have a responsibility to raise with the lead managers or with the WCVA any matters which they believe may not have been properly resolved.

External moderators advise on quality assurance, in particular on the judgements of the review team. They are responsible for raising with the lead reviewer any questions they may have about the review findings, judgements and report and for reporting to the lead managers any disagreements that cannot be resolved.

Integrity of the process and methodology

Reviewers must abide by the agreed process and methodology. They may not depart from this in any significant way without the express permission of the lead managers.

Code of conduct

All reviewers, lay assessors, managers and support staff must abide by the agreed codes of conduct and by the codes of conduct of their respective organisations and professions.

Team approach

All reviewers (including those who are not employed directly by SSIW or ACiW) are appointed through open recruitment processes, on the basis of a relevant person specification. They will have extensive experience derived from working at a high level of responsibility in the field of social care, local government, management, audit or inspection. All reviewers undergo a common process of induction and they are supported by regular supervision. Any person appointed as a lead reviewer will have previous experience of joint reviews.

The lead reviewer should ensure that decisions about the conduct of the review and the review findings and judgements reflect the considered view of the whole review team. When agreement cannot be reached, the lead reviewer should decide what best represents the considered view of the team.

Moderation

The lead managers will appoint moderators to certain stages of the review, namely:

- the review planning meeting
- the interim analysis / risk assessment meeting
- the final analysis meeting.

The moderator will chair the meetings. The moderator will advise the lead reviewer and, as appropriate, challenge findings and judgements. In particular, the moderator should seek to ensure that:

- the decisions and judgements of the review team accord with the agreed guidance and published criteria and are based on the evidence available;
- the views of the whole team are properly taken into account;
- the decisions and judgements of the team can be reasonably explained to those who may question them and properly defended against those who may contest them.

At the end of these moderated meetings, the lead reviewer and moderator will complete and sign a form indicating decisions reached and any areas of unresolved disagreement. The lead reviewer and moderator must report to the lead managers any unresolved disagreement.

Resolving disagreement

The lead managers will meet to discuss and resolve any outstanding disagreement. They will take into account the views of the lead reviewer and the moderator, whom they may choose to meet in person.

Report production

The lead reviewer drafts the report. The draft report will be sub-edited to check for errors and to ensure reasonable consistency of style. The lead managers will formally approve the reports before publication.

Feedback from local authorities

Both SSIW and ACiW place a strong emphasis on seeking feedback and comment. The review process has a number of formal and informal opportunities for feedback and discussion about the conduct and the content of the review with managers, staff and elected members. Feedback on each completed review is invited at the end of the process. In addition to the Advisory Board (described in Section 3.2 of this guide), SSIW and ACiW regularly engage with a wide network of stakeholders. There are established links with representative bodies, including the Association of Directors of Social Services and the Welsh Local Government Association.

3.4 Judging performance

Each joint review should provide clear, well evidenced and well considered judgements about performance that can be understood and acted upon by a wide range of stakeholders, locally and nationally.

All these stakeholders have proper expectations that the final judgements are consistent, rigorously tested and demonstrated conclusively in the report made to the local authority.

How judgements are made

The joint review is not an inspection of specific services, nor an examination of individual practice. It is designed to provide an overview of the whole social services authority's performance, by exposing a diagonal 'slice' across and through the organisation, connecting the experience of users and carers with the policies and decision-making of councillors and senior managers. It examines the self-assessment of the authority and compares it with actual experience at the frontline. Reviewers talk with staff at all levels and with the key staff from the council's main partner organisations.

The review draws on a range of qualitative and quantitative evidence and seeks to explain the differences and gaps in the story they tell. This 'diagonal slice' is complementary to the evaluation and scrutiny of others, such as SSIW and ACiW, and to the internal processes of the organisation in managing its performance. The process culminates in the production of an overall judgement that is informative, can be understood by the public and will allow comparison between authorities.

At each stage of the review, the team will form provisional judgements on the authority's performance. These develop and evolve as more evidence is gathered and analysed. Some of them are shared at key points in the process, to focus the work of the team and to allow the local authority opportunities to engage in dialogue about the issues and to provide additional evidence.

Once all the evidence has been gathered and assessed, there follows a rigorous process of challenge both within the joint review team and by experienced moderators before the final conclusions are shared with the local authority and other key stakeholders. This is intended to ensure that any judgements:

- draw on the whole range of qualitative and quantitative evidence;
- derive from correct application of the joint review methodology;
- are rigorously tested against known criteria;
- are deliberate, fair, consistent, informed and free from bias.

Judgements and quality assurance

The review process as a whole is designed to ensure that the judgements reached by the team achieve these standards but there are also specific safeguards of quality:

- management of the process by two properly appointed and accountable organisations, SSIW and ACiW;
- consistent moderation of judgements by senior managers within these organisations;
- transparent criteria for reaching judgements;
- judgements exercised by reviewers who are accountable, have relevant experience and meet the competence standards required by SSIW and ACiW;
- use of teams that contain reviewers and lay assessors with complementary skills and perspectives;
- use of a comprehensive and uniformly applied methodology that is based upon best practice;
- triangulation of evidence obtained from a wide range of sources and using a variety of approaches;
- an appeals process that is fair and authoritative.

The overall judgement

The overall judgement involves reaching conclusions in respect of two key performance dimensions:

- *How good are the services?*
- *How well placed is the authority to sustain and improve services?*

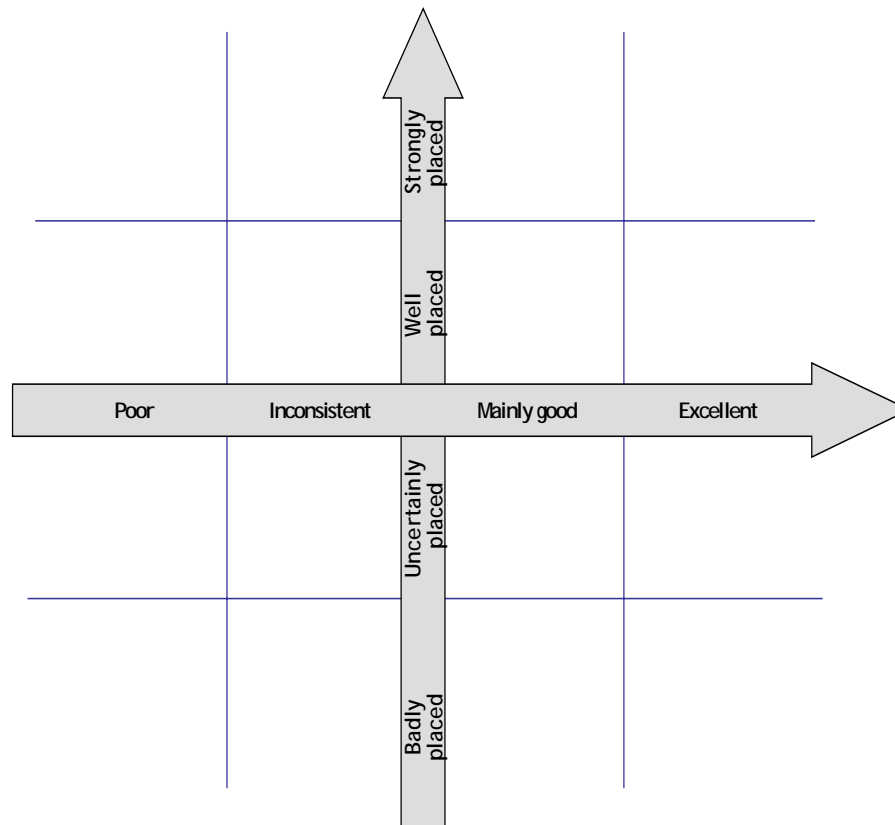
Each of the two dimensions has a four-point rating scale.

<i>How good are the services?</i>	<i>How well placed is the authority to sustain and improve services?</i>
Poor	Badly placed
Inconsistent	Uncertainly placed
Mainly good	Well placed

Excellent	Strongly placed
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The judgement is presented by showing the authority's position on a performance matrix.

Exhibit 1 The Joint Review Performance Matrix



The matrix presents these overall conclusions consistently and clearly. It enables citizens to compare their council with others and contributes to political accountability.

The basis for judgements

Each dimension incorporates seven domains.

How good are the services?

Access to services
Assessment
Care management and review

Range of services provided
Quality of services provided
Arrangements to protect vulnerable people
Success in promoting independence and social inclusion.

How well placed is the authority to sustain and improve performance?

Workforce
Performance management
Planning and partnerships
Commissioning and contracting
Resources
Leadership and culture
Corporate and political support and scrutiny.

These areas are reflected throughout all the stages of a review and provide a common structure for collecting evidence, making judgements and writing reports.

There is a document in the Joint Review Handbook (Section 1.8) that sets out, for each of the 14 domains:

- a definition of what is being measured;
- indicative areas for examination;
- the basis for judgement.

Reaching a judgement

The joint review team will reach a judgement in respect of all the domains, using the rating scale for each dimension and applying the relevant basis for judgement. For example, access will be rated as poor, inconsistent, mainly good or excellent. Workforce will be rated as badly placed (to sustain and improve services), uncertainly placed, well placed or strongly placed. These individual judgements are included in the final report.

The overall judgement in each dimension (and so the matrix position) is determined initially by collating the individual judgements in all the seven relevant domains for that dimension.

However, application of the rating system to achieve the overall judgement may be moderated by a range of factors. For example, some of the fourteen domains may be given greater weighting, to ensure that the judgements for each of the two dimensions properly reflect either critical success factors (such as effective systems to protect vulnerable people) or serious concerns (such as systemic and entrenched weaknesses in one or more major service areas that are not being tackled).

3.5 Dispute resolution

Scope

This section sets out a procedure for dealing with cases in which a local authority challenges one or more findings or judgements of the review.

A separate paper sets out a procedure for dealing with complaints about the conduct of a review or reviewer. There may be occasions on which a challenge to a finding or judgement is based in whole or in part on a complaint about conduct. In such a case, the two procedures must operate in parallel.

Normal process

The lead reviewer drafts the report, based on the findings of the review subject to internal and external moderation and sub-editing. The review support co-ordinator sends the draft report to the local authority (chief executive and director of social services) for comment on matters of accuracy and clarification. The local authority is asked to submit written comment within an agreed period.

The lead reviewer will consider any comments and:

- correct any factual inaccuracies;
- provide any necessary clarification;
- attempt to resolve any other matters that do not alter the agreed and moderated findings of the team.

The lead reviewer may, as appropriate, request further evidence from the local authority or discuss further with the local authority the substance of the points raised. The lead reviewer may also, as appropriate, discuss with the review team and moderator and lead managers any point raised by the local authority which may justify a change in the findings.

The lead reviewer may not make any significant change to the findings or judgements without the agreement of the moderator or lead managers.

The lead reviewer will inform the local authority of changes made to the report in the light of the local authority's comments.

Challenges to judgements

If the local authority challenges any of the formal judgements of the review (under each domain or the overall judgement grid), the lead reviewer will explain to the local authority the basis for the judgement and consider the grounds given by the local authority for a change. If the lead reviewer considers the judgement should stand, s/he should inform the local authority accordingly.

If the lead reviewer considers that there may be justification for a change, s/he should discuss this with the moderator. If the lead reviewer and moderator (after any appropriate discussion with other members of the review team) agree the change is justified, the lead reviewer will inform the local authority.

Further challenge

If the local authority still does not accept the findings or judgements of the review, it should be invited to state its grounds for disagreement in writing. The lead managers will consider these grounds and make a final decision. The lead managers will inform the authority of the decision and the reasons for it.

3.6 Roles and responsibilities in the joint review team

The joint review team consists of a lead reviewer, a second reviewer and a lay assessor. At various stages in the process, the team will also include other members to undertake specific tasks. The objective is to ensure a balance of social services, inspection, resource management and corporate governance expertise.

All reviewers are accountable for the work they do. They are expected to abide by:

- the code of conduct;
- the agreed process and methodology laid down for joint reviews.

The composition of the joint review team for a specific local authority is agreed between the lead managers from SSIW and ACiW. They will take into account:

- the need to ensure a balance of experience, skills and knowledge;
- language requirements;
- gender considerations;
- team effectiveness.

Teams for Anglesey, Gwynedd, Conwy, Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire will contain a Welsh-speaking reviewer and preferably a Welsh-speaking lay assessor. If possible, at least one member of the team will be Welsh-speaking in other local authorities where a significant proportion of the population speaks Welsh.

The prime contact for the local authority is the lead reviewer. This person will oversee the detailed planning of the review and conduct the review through to follow-up stage. The lead reviewer is responsible for agreeing the detailed timetable with the authority, raising any matters of concern and drafting the report.

The second reviewer assists the lead reviewer and undertakes a similar workload within the authority, including interviews and visits. They have an equal share in the testing of evidence and in forming the overall judgement.

The joint review team will be supplemented by colleagues from SSIW, ACiW or other regulatory/improvement bodies for particular aspects of the review. Such arrangements will be discussed in advance with the authority and agreed at the introductory meeting with social services managers or in planning meetings for the main fieldwork programme.

The inclusion of lay assessors helps to bring a different perspective to the work of review teams by representing the views of people who use services and the wider public. They bring additional independence to the reviewing activities of SSIW and ACiW, acting as one of the safeguards that help to ensure public accountability and fair play in the course of these activities. Lay assessors complement the work done by professional inspectors, in part by focusing on the experiences and interests of service users and carers in their relations with social services and partner organisations.

The designated lead managers from SSIW or ACiW have responsibility for overseeing reviews and supervising individual reviewers. They ensure that the joint review team delivers tasks to time and agreed standards, monitor the quality of the team's work, and formally approve the report.

External moderators advise on quality assurance, in particular on the judgements of the review team. They are responsible for raising with the lead reviewer any

questions they may have about the review findings, judgements and report and for reporting to the lead managers any disagreements that cannot be resolved.

Review support co-ordinators are responsible for scheduling the review, handling communication with the authority, arranging the key milestone meetings and general progress chasing. They manage the editing and production of the report. They will organise the sending of draft and proof copies to the authority and will co-ordinate arrangements for the presentation of the final report. They will also arrange handover and follow up meetings.

The information officer in SSIW is responsible for collating the various data sources available for each review, processing questionnaire returns, and compiling those sections of the report that depend upon statistical information. The information officer deals with queries about the questionnaires, agrees performance information data with the local authority (including finance and activity data) and ensures the validity of data included in final reports.

Contact details for the joint review team are given in the Joint Review Handbook (Section 0.1).

3.7 Involvement of service users and carers

Rationale

Engaging with service users and carers is a fundamental part of joint reviews. They have unique knowledge and understanding to contribute, about what is happening and the best way of making improvements.

Joint reviews are especially effective at promoting positive change when describing grassroots realities, thereby empowering some of the least powerful stakeholders in the community and enlightening some of the most powerful stakeholders in the local authority area.

As citizens, service users and carers have a right to participate in significant events such as joint review that will have an impact upon the quality of the services they receive and upon key aspects of their lives. This can also help to reduce feelings of powerlessness and alienation.

The review process itself is more effective when service users and carers experience it as a collaborative exercise in which their part is a primary one. Co-operation is more likely to be achieved if they are encouraged to take as active a role as possible from the outset.

They are more likely to share information with those who:

- keep them fully informed at all stages;
- find sensitive ways of seeking their views;
- pay attention to what they say when reaching conclusions.

Statement of intent

Joint reviews should be delivered with a clear focus on the experience of those for whom the service is provided. This principle is central to the whole joint review process.

Both the local authority and the joint review team have a common responsibility for empowering service users and carers, encouraging and enabling them to express their views openly. The actual experiences of users and carers, whether positive or negative, should be reflected accurately.

Joint reviews will use a wide range of methods to encourage involvement by service users and carers, in order to keep the whole process well grounded. Joint review teams will adopt a reflective approach to these aspects of their work, seek to learn from best practice and make continuous improvements.

In reporting on findings and making judgements, the joint review team will consider issues of access to services and service quality alongside those of efficiency, to reach balanced conclusions.

Barriers to involvement

Engaging service users and carers in the process of joint review is crucial to its effectiveness but there are considerable challenges involved in tackling the intrinsic barriers to real involvement. Vulnerable service users may be anxious about the possible consequences of speaking out. Some of them will be frustrated and angry because of their experiences. Others may have doubts about whether the exercise will have a meaningful outcome, especially if their previous experience of consultation has been a negative one. Service users and carers are diverse and their interests can conflict. Those who are most vocal may not be the most representative. All the methods available to encourage involvement have limitations, especially when they are used to establish the viewpoint of groups that experience profound social exclusion. Methods of participation that help one group of service users to engage will not suit other groups. Advocacy and support is more developed for some groups than for others.

Methods of involvement

In these circumstances, there is an obligation on SSIW and ACiW to be imaginative and innovative in their efforts to engage with service users and carers. They will need to depend upon a range of techniques that (accumulatively) can provide a true representation of the way in which service users and carers experience their local social services authority.

Consulting with service users and carers for a one-off exercise such as joint review is more productive in local authorities which already encourage involvement. These authorities will welcome the opportunity to demonstrate their democratic credentials, the ways in which participation has been endorsed and resourced.

The joint review process relies upon a range of methods designed to ensure that the review team obtains a good understanding of service users' and carers' experiences, opinions and perceptions. This is the core of the review fieldwork and the methods are described in more detail in the Joint Review Handbook.

Information SSIW and ACiW provides leaflets, posters, model press releases and other material to help the local authority inform people about joint review and explain how they can become involved.

Open access In this publicity material, the joint review team encourages people to express their views and tell of their experiences through diverse means - in writing, by telephone, by e-mail or access to a web-site.

Questionnaire survey This is sent to a large, representative cross-section of service users and carers, with the sample chosen at random. It is in two parts. The first part sets out a series of straightforward statements, with a tick-box rating scale to ascertain the extent to which the person who completes the questionnaire agrees with the statement. Part 2 provides space for additional comments and its use is optional. The scale of the exercise allows information to be gathered from a large number of people. Some of the evidence can be shown in a quantified way that enables comparisons to be made between local authorities.

Case file analysis The joint review team analyses a sample of case files from each of the major service areas. They look at key aspects of social services provision (such as access to services, assessment, the range and quality of the services provided) to learn about how the needs of service users and carers are assessed and met. The case file analysis provides strong evidence about the way in which the local authority's policies and systems are experienced at the level of service users and carers

Follow up of individual cases From the case file sample, a proportion of service users and carers are invited to meet individually with members of the joint review

team, in a setting that they choose and with support if necessary³. These interviews are often the most powerful and salutary form of reality-checking. They allow service users and carers to describe in their own way how they have experienced services and staff.

Observation Reviewers undertake some direct observation in settings such as reception, residential or day care facilities. They use these opportunities to talk with service users and carers, checking out their perceptions of what they have seen or heard.

Meetings with groups A substantial part of the time spent by the joint review team on site is used for a programme of meetings with different groups of service users and carers. These meetings enable the joint review team to:

- listen with respect to the concerns of service users and carers;
- gather information;
- obtain an understanding of the context;
- check out issues identified in the case file analysis and interviews with individual users and carers.

Service user and carer reference group The local authority is asked to establish a reference group, with broad representation, for the duration of the joint review. This is used for a series of meetings, at key milestones in the joint review process, where service users and carers can help to inform the work of the joint review team and act as a sounding board for emerging themes and findings. The group is involved in the process of feeding back the findings of the joint review to the local authority.

Making it work

These methods will be applied rigorously, within the resources available for each review. They all have intrinsic limitations. For example, the response rate to

³ These interviews may be supplemented by enquiries made of the social worker or other case manager, their supervisor, the referrer and other service providers or professionals involved.

surveys can be low and the respondents are self-selecting. It is important, therefore, to treat each method as supplying only a partial picture in itself. The nature of the joint review process is to pull together information from a variety of sources. The evidence from one method is considered against the evidence from others, so that balanced and valid conclusions can be reached.

Each method for consulting and involving service users and carers needs to be applied in a skilful way and in keeping with the principles set out in the joint review code of conduct (set out in the Joint Review Handbook). Service users have a right to respect, courtesy, and professional competence. It is acknowledged that time and effort is needed throughout the process to ensure that service users and carers properly understand what is happening and give informed consent to participation. Care must be taken not to infringe their privacy. Although the contributions from service users and carers cannot be treated as entirely confidential and may be used in some detail within the report, all case examples will be anonymous, to protect the individuals involved.

The views of users and carers will be used as part of the jigsaw of evidence that contributes to the analysis of strengths and areas for development. They will also alert reviewers to important lines of investigation and prompt additional questions that may shape the fieldwork programme or lead to further requests for information. The views of service users and carers will be set alongside other sources of information, seeking corroboration or highlighting discrepancies in the search for triangulated evidence.

Everybody must be clear that the joint review cannot provide an individual complaints or problem resolution service. Any views expressed are a contribution to the evidence to be considered in the review. Accordingly, reviewers cannot undertake to report back to users and carers in relation to specific incidents. They will bring to the attention of senior managers in social services any major causes for concern that arise through individual contacts with service users and carers.

3.8 The role of elected members

Elected members (councillors) have the primary responsibility for the performance of local authority social services in their capacity as representatives of local citizens. Joint reviews involve members during the evidence-gathering and feedback stages. Reports comment on how effectively political leadership drives management action and improves services.

A joint review is likely to have implications for policy and the strategic management of resources, as well as for performance monitoring and scrutiny. It is anticipated, therefore, that elected members involved in both executive and scrutiny functions will need to consider the joint review report, the authority's action plan and the implementation of the report's findings. However, it is normal for the report to be formally presented at a single public meeting.

3.9 Review resources

The period from the set-up meeting with the local authority to the presentation of a draft report is expected to span six months and to require about 150 reviewer days. On an annual basis, SSIW will make public the average cost of each review.

The local authority's contribution is the time and effort required from elected members and staff in contributing to and benefiting from the review. SSIW and ACiW acknowledge the considerable efforts made by authorities to prepare for reviews and to assist review team members. They have made significant changes to the methodology used for reviews in order to reduce this burden, wherever possible. For example, local authorities will no longer be required to prepare lengthy and time-consuming position statements before the review starts and the time spent by the team on site has been reduced from six to four weeks.

3.10 Timing the review

Starting in 2004, local authorities will be reviewed in the same general order as in the first round.

<u>Group 1</u>	Powys Torfaen Carmarthenshire Rhondda Cynon Taff
<u>Group 2</u>	Isle of Anglesey Vale of Glamorgan Ceredigion Merthyr Tydfil
<u>Group 3</u>	Gwynedd Neath Port Talbot Newport Caerphilly
<u>Group 4</u>	Cardiff Conwy Pembrokeshire Blaenau Gwent
<u>Group 5</u>	Bridgend Denbighshire Flintshire Monmouthshire
<u>Group 6</u>	Wrexham Swansea

More specific information about timing is included in the annual Regulatory Plan for the local authority, which is used to ensure that the work of all the statutory inspectorates and performance evaluation agencies is properly co-ordinated and manageable.

The overall SSIW programme of work provides a clear gap between joint reviews and other major service reviews. There are usually four months between the time when the local authority receives formal notification that the joint review process has started and the beginning of the fieldwork programme. This may vary to accommodate factors such as major holiday periods and the availability of reviewers or key personnel in the local authority.

4 THE REVIEW PROCESS

This section guides you chronologically through the three phases of the joint review and the activities associated with each of them.

4.1 The review phases

PHASE 1 - THE BROAD REVIEW

The first phase of the joint review is a broad and comprehensive evaluation in which the focus is on gathering intelligence from a wide variety of sources and using a range of methods (analysis of existing information about performance, surveys, file analysis, group interviews with stakeholders). This is followed by the interim assessment in which the information from the first phase is analysed. The review team establishes the extent of reliable evidence already to hand, makes a provisional assessment of relative strengths and weaknesses, and determines the areas of focus for the Phase 2 fieldwork.

Milestones:

- Notification
- Review planning meeting
- Introductory meeting with social services and corporate management
- Surveys
- Broad review fieldwork
- Interim assessment

PHASE 2 - THE DETAILED REVIEW

The main fieldwork programme takes place in Phase 2 and it provides a more detailed examination of specific areas and issues. Again, a range of methods is used (such as case studies, interviews and meetings, value for money exercises). Some of these methods are standard and others are customised to enable chosen areas to be explored in depth. This phase ends when the joint review team presents the initial headline findings to the local authority.

Milestones:

- Introductory meetings
- Fieldwork (case studies service users/carers and service providers)
- Fieldwork (assessment/care management teams)
- Fieldwork (management and partners)
- Feedback meetings

PHASE 3 - FOLLOWING THROUGH

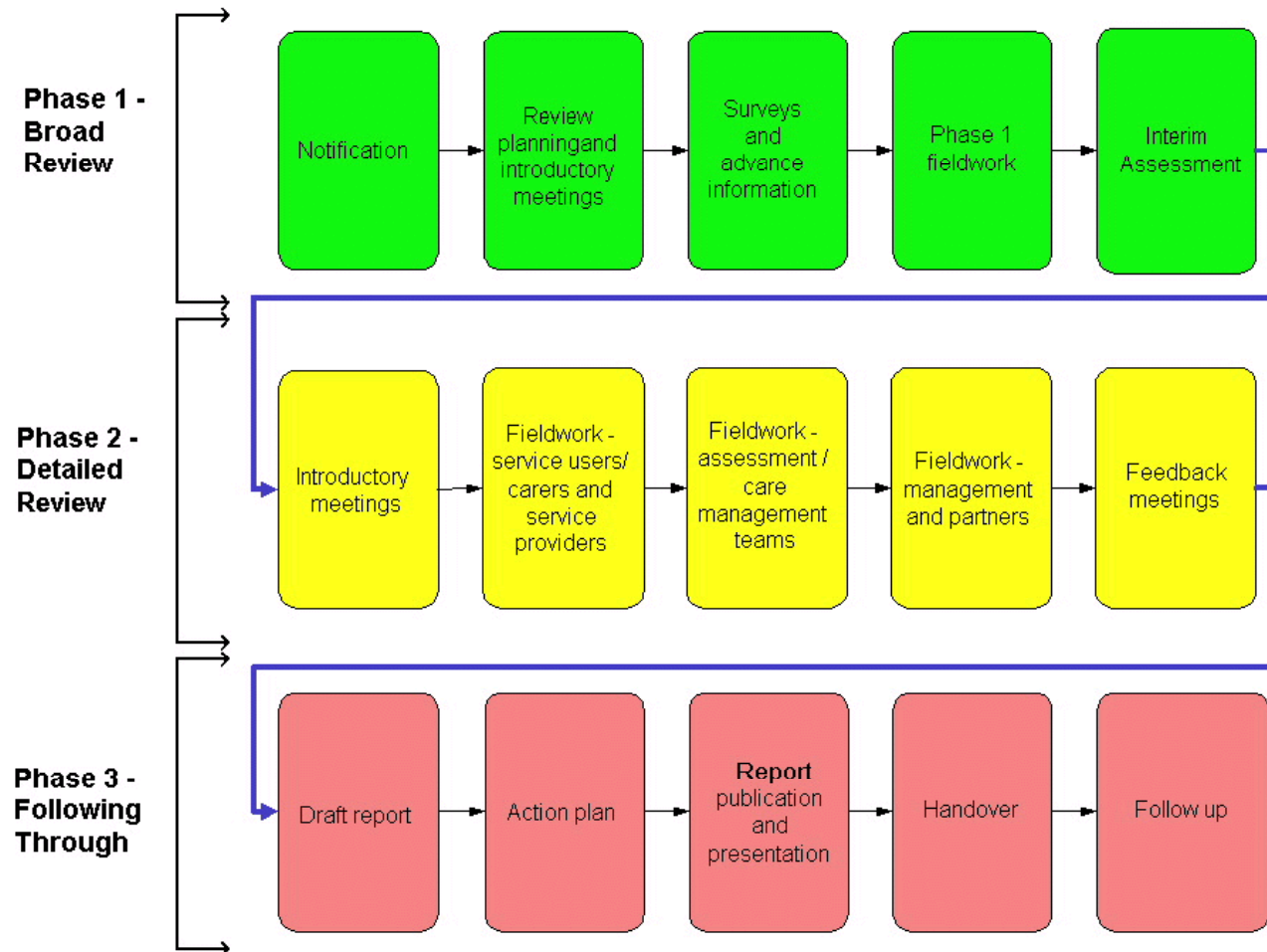
The next phase of the joint review focuses on public accountability, achieving improvement and monitoring the progress made in response to the review. It involves presentation of the report to elected members in a meeting open to the public. The local authority produces an action plan and there is a monitoring framework within which the local authority, SSIW and ACiW work together to ensure positive outcomes for service users and carers.

Milestones:

- Draft report
- Action plan
- Report publication and presentation
- Handover
- Follow up activity
- Signing off

EXHIBIT 2 illustrates the three phases and the most significant milestones associated with them.

Milestones



4.2 Tasks

For the local authority, stakeholders and both the organisations responsible for the joint review programme, each review is a major exercise. There are a number of substantial tasks to be performed in every phase, as shown in Exhibit 3.

EXHIBIT 3 TASKS⁴

Task - Joint Review		Milestone	Task - Local Authority	
PHASE 1		PHASE 1 - BROAD REVIEW	PHASE 1	
1	Notification letter	Notification	Appoint link officer	1
2	Examine performance evaluation material and start advance information template			
3	Advance information template and leaflets sent to the local authority			
4	Review team briefing			
5	Meeting of regulators and inspectorates		Briefings and publicity	2
6	Review planning meeting	Review planning meeting	Review planning meeting	3
7	Introductory meeting with social services and corporate managers	Introductory meeting with social services and corporate managers	Introductory meeting with social services and corporate managers	4
			Provide information for surveys and case samples	5
8	Receive information for surveys			
9	Issue user/carer/staff/partner surveys	Surveys	Assist with distribution of user/carer/staff/partner surveys	6
10	Draw up plan for case file samples		Complete advance information template and other information for Phase 1	7
11	Provide local authority with case samples		Prepare for file reading and Phase 1 fieldwork	8
12	Complete advance information template	Advance information		
13	Receive and analyse user/carer/staff/partner surveys			

⁴ This is a general model and may vary from review to review because of local circumstances or unforeseen events

Task - Joint Review	
14	Phase 1 fieldwork
15	Interim assessment / decide focal areas for review
PHASE 2	
16	Customise methodology to reflect focus
17	Plan Phase 2 fieldwork
18	Introductory meetings in the local authority and finalise fieldwork programme
19	Fieldwork (case studies users and service providers)
20	Fieldwork (assessment/care management teams)
21	Fieldwork (management and partners)
22	Analysis and feedback planning
23	Feedback meetings
PHASE 3	
24	Draft report
25	Moderation
26	Send report to the local authority
27	Agree report with the local authority
28	Receive and comment on the action plan
29	Ministerial briefing and press release
30	Publish and present the report
31	Handover
32	Follow up

Milestone
Phase 1 fieldwork
PHASE 2 - DETAILED REVIEW
Introductory meetings
Fieldwork (case studies users and service providers)
Fieldwork (assessment/care management teams)
Fieldwork (management and partners)
Feedback meetings
PHASE 3 - FOLLOWING THROUGH
Draft report
Action plan
Report publication and presentation
Handover
Follow up

Task - Local Authority	
Phase 1 fieldwork	9
PHASE 2	
Plan Phase 2 fieldwork	10
Introductory meetings in the local authority and finalise fieldwork programme	11
Organise fieldwork programme	12
Fieldwork (case studies users and service providers)	13
Fieldwork (assessment/care management teams)	14
Fieldwork (management and partners)	15
Organise feedback meetings	16
Feedback meetings	17
PHASE 3	
Respond to draft report	18
Prepare action plan	19
Prepare for presentation of report	20
Report publication and presentation	21
Prepare progress report	22
Handover	23
Follow up	24

4.3 Project planning for joint reviews

If the overall joint review process is to operate to a high standard, each task must be performed in the right sequence and at the appropriate time. These are detailed and complex activities that require considerable preparation, planning and co-ordination. Good project management is crucial for all participants. The local authority and the joint review team will be operating under pressure. It is important to minimise potential disruption to the work of social services.

Exhibit 4 is a model process calendar that provides a timeline for delivering tasks and achieving milestones.

EXHIBIT 4 - SCHEDULE		
Task for joint review team	Week Number	Task for local authority
PHASE 1	PHASE 1 - BROAD REVIEW	PHASE 1
Notification letter		Appoint link officer
Advance information template and leaflets sent		Briefings and publicity
Review planning meeting	Week 1	Review planning meeting
Introductory meeting with social services and corporate management	Week 2	Introductory meeting with social services and corporate management
Receive information for surveys and case samples	Week 3	Provide information for surveys and case samples
Issue user/carer/staff/partner surveys	Week 4	Issue user/carer/staff/partner surveys
Provide local authority with case file reading samples	Week 5	Complete advance information template and workbooks
Complete advance information template and workbooks	Week 7	Prepare for file reading and Phase 1 fieldwork
Receive and analyse user/carer/staff/partner surveys	Week 8	
Phase 1 fieldwork	Week 10	Phase 1 fieldwork
Analyse broad phase fieldwork	Week 11	
Interim assessment / decide focal areas for review	Week 12	
PHASE 2	PHASE 2 - DETAILED REVIEW	PHASE 2
Customise methodology to reflect focus		
Plan Phase 2 fieldwork	Week 13	Organise fieldwork programme
Introductory meetings in the local authority and finalise fieldwork programme	Week 16	Introductory meetings in the local authority and finalise fieldwork programme
Fieldwork (users/carers and service providers)	Week 18	Fieldwork (users/carers and service providers)
Fieldwork (assessment/care management teams)	Week 20	Fieldwork (assessment/care management teams)
Fieldwork (management and partners)	Week 22	Fieldwork (management and partners)
Analysis and feedback planning	Week 24	Organise feedback meetings
Feedback meetings	Week 26	Feedback meetings
PHASE 3	PHASE 3 - FOLLOWING THROUGH	PHASE 3
Draft report	Week 29	
Moderation	Week 30	
Send report to the local authority	Week 31	Respond to draft report
Agree report with the local authority	Week 33	Prepare action plan
Receive and comment on the action plan	Week 42	
Ministerial briefing and press release		Prepare for presentation of report
Publish and present the report	Week 46	Report publication and presentation
		Prepare progress report
Handover	Week 54	Handover
Follow up	One year later	Follow up

4.4 The Joint Review Handbook

For ease of reference, more detailed material about the joint review process is included in the Joint Review Handbook, the contents of which are set out in Appendix 1. The Handbook guides 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. The handbook is used especially for material that needs more regular updating in response to:

- feedback from local authorities, service users and carers, the advisory board and others;
- work within SSIW and ACiW to improve review processes;
- wider developments in social care and in government.

CONTENTS OF THE JOINT REVIEW HANDBOOK

INTRODUCTION	
FRAMEWORK DOCUMENTS	
0.1	Contact details for joint reviews
0.2	Code of conduct and complaints
0.3	Roles and responsibilities of those involved in delivering joint reviews:
0.3.1	guide for the local authority link officer
0.3.2	role of the lay assessor
0.3.3	role of the SSIW link inspector
0.3.4	role of the ACiW relationship manager and local auditor
0.4	Guide for the user and carer reference group
0.5	Summary guide for elected members
0.6	Judgements in reviews
0.7	The joint review process:
0.7.1	milestones
0.7.2	tasks
0.7.3	schedule
0.8	Arrangements for giving feedback to the local authority during

	fieldwork and for dealing with concerns
	PHASE 1 - THE BROAD REVIEW
1.1	Description
1.2	Leaflets:
1.2.1	general public/service users and carers
1.2.2	staff
1.2.3	partners and stakeholders
1.3	Advance information:
1.3.1	guidance
1.3.2	template
1.4	Outline agenda for review planning meeting
1.5	Outline agenda for introductory meeting with social services and corporate managers
1.6	Service user/carer survey: guidance for the local authority
1.7	Service user/carer questionnaire
1.8	Guidelines for conducting the staff survey
1.9	Staff survey
1.10	Guidelines for surveying partner agencies and corporate partners
1.11	Survey for partner agencies and corporate partners

1.12	Case file analysis - guidance for the local authority
1.13	Case file schedule for the local authority practitioner
1.14	Stakeholder meetings
1.15	Interim assessment
<u>PHASE 2 - THE DETAILED REVIEW</u>	
2.1	Description
2.2	Fieldwork planning for the detailed review
2.3	Introductory visits
2.4	Fieldwork visits - Guidance for the local authority
2.4.1	Week 1 - Service users, carers, advocates and service providers
2.4.2	Week 2 - Assessment/care management teams
2.4.3	Week 3 - Political leadership, management and partners
2.5	Briefing material for fieldwork visits:
2.5.1	Service users and carers -
2.5.1.1	groups
2.5.1.2	individuals
2.5.2	Service providers
2.5.3	Other organisations
2.6	Final assessment
2.7	Guide to feedback meetings

<u>PHASE 3 - FOLLOWING THROUGH</u>	
3. 1	Description
3. 2	Producing the report
3. 3	Guidance for preparing and agreeing an action plan
3. 4	Presenting, publishing and distributing the report
3. 5	Review evaluation form
3. 6	Handover and follow-up
3. 7	Protocol for intervention