

17. Briefing materials for fieldwork visits

These briefing materials are designed to be used by inspectors at the start of meetings to explain the purpose of the meetings or interviews.

They can also be adapted by local authorities if they wish to use them to explain the purpose of the meetings or interviews in advance.

17.1 Briefing materials for focus groups with people who use our services and carers

Script for SWIA inspectors to use for focus groups is as follows:

Introduction

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

By social work services, we mean all the services that the council provides itself or arranges for others to provide to a range of people who need care and support. This includes children and young people (and their families), older people, people who have mental health problems, people who have learning disabilities, people who have physical disabilities or sensory impairments. Social work services also help those who take on a caring role for others, including young carers.

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

The meetings

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

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

Meetings with different groups of people, who use services, and carers are one way of doing this.

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

- knows what to expect;
- is well-prepared;
- is made to feel comfortable and included; and

- has any special needs met.

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

Preparing for the meeting

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

Talking about your experiences

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

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

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

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

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

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

Code of Conduct and complaints

SWIA inspection team is required to meet very high standards of behaviour in carrying out their work. You are welcome to see the Code of Conduct which describes these standards.

Key issues

We will be looking at three key issues:

1. What are the outcomes or benefits of social work services for people and children?
2. What are people's experiences in using social work services?
3. How well equipped is the local authority to deliver improvements in the quality of those services?

This involves finding out about a wide range of areas: -

Outcomes and benefits of social work services and people's experiences

- **Getting a service**
How easy was it for you to know about what services are available and to ask for those services?
- **Assessment**
What do you think about the assessment that you received? – Were you involved in the assessment and were your views taken account of? – Did you have to give information to lots of different people?
- **The social worker or care manager**
Do you have a care plan? – Do you have a copy of it? – Has it been reviewed and changed as your needs have changed?
- **Range of services**
Do you think that there is a good range of services available? – Have you had a choice about how your needs are met?
- **Quality of services**
Have the services you receive been of a good standard? – Have you been treated with respect when receiving social work services?
- **Protection from harm**
Do you think that people who are most at risk receive a good response?
- **Independence and social inclusion**
Do you think that services are helping people to remain independent? – Are services provided in ways that that encourage people to take advantage of opportunities to lead fuller lives?

Ability to deliver improvements to services

- **Staffing**
Do you think that the people who provide social services are well trained? – Have you been impressed by the people who work with you? – Has your social worker changed frequently?
- **Getting the best from services currently provided**
Do you think that there are clear standards to help guarantee good quality services? – Have you been asked your opinion about the services provided or arranged?
- **Planning and partnerships**
Are you aware of any plans for changes in the services that you receive? – Have you been asked about how you think the services could be changed for the better? – If changes are underway, have you been involved in the process? – Do social work services work well with others (including the health service, other departments in the local authority, voluntary organisations and the private sector)?
- **Providing services**
Are you aware of who provides the services in your care plan? – Have you been asked about how well independent providers of services are meeting the terms of their contracts? – Did you have any choice about what services were available to help you?
- **Use of resources (staff, money, premises, etc.)**
Are resources used well? – Do you have experience of duplication, waste or poor use of resources?
- **Leadership and culture in social work services**
Are you satisfied that this is a 'can do' department that puts people who use services and carers first?
- **The role of the council**
Do elected members take a proper interest in the way in which the local authority provides social work services? – Is there a good working relationship between social work services and other departments in the local authority (such as education and housing)?

Overall

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

17.2 Briefing materials for interviews with individuals who use our services and carers

Script for SWIA inspectors to use when interviewing individuals and carers is as follows:

Introduction

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

By now, we hope that you will have received your copy of the leaflet that describes what happens in a performance inspection. This interview is to ask you about the social work services you receive.

The meeting

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

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

Meeting with you and with other individuals, who use services, and carers is one way of doing this.

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

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

We work closely with staff in social work services in trying to make sure that this is what happens. They should have explained to you why you have been chosen for this visit by an inspector and make all the arrangements. You are welcome to contact us and discuss these arrangements.

What happens during the interview

- the interview is likely to last about 45 minutes;
- you may decide that you want a relative friend, carer or advocate to be with you during the interview; and
- we have come to the meeting with some general questions about social work services. We want to check out some of the information we've already received. We have a list of the areas that we may want to discuss and some possible questions (see end of this note). This list is only a guide. You are not expected to have answers to all these questions (or even most of them!).

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

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

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

We hope that you have found this information useful. We look forward to a very helpful discussion.

Code of Conduct and complaints

SWIA inspection team is required to meet very high standards of behaviour in carrying out their work. You are welcome to see the Code of Conduct which describes these standards.

Key issues

We will be looking at three key issues:

1. What are the outcomes or benefits of social work services for people and children?
2. What are people's experiences in using social work services?
3. How well equipped is the local authority to deliver improvements in the quality of those services?

This involves finding out about a wide range of areas:

Outcomes and benefits of social work services and people's experiences

- **Getting a service**
How easy was it for you to know about what services are available and to ask for those services?
- **Assessment**
What do you think about the assessment that you received? – Were you involved in the assessment and were your views taken account of? – Did you have to give information to lots of different people?
- **The social worker or care manager**
Do you have a care plan? – Do you have a copy of it? – Has it been reviewed and changed as your needs have changed?
- **Range of services**
Do you think that there is a good range of services available? – Have you had a choice about how your needs are met?
- **Quality of services**
Have the services you receive been of a good standard? – Have you been treated with respect when receiving social work services?
- **Protection from harm**
Do you think that people who are most at risk receive a good response?
- **Independence and social inclusion**
Do you think that services are helping people to remain independent? – Are services provided in ways that that encourage people to take advantage of opportunities to lead fuller lives?

Ability to deliver improvements to services

- **Staffing**
Do you think that the people who provide social services are well trained? – Have you been impressed by the people who work with you? – Has your social worker changed frequently?
- **Getting the best from services currently provided**
Do you think that there are clear standards to help guarantee good quality services? – Have you been asked your opinion about the services provided or arranged?

- **Planning and partnerships**
Are you aware of any plans for changes in the services that you receive? – Have you been asked about how you think the services could be changed for the better? – If changes are underway, have you been involved in the process? – Do social work services work well with others (including the health service, other departments in the local authority, voluntary organisations and the private sector)?
- **Providing services**
Are you aware of who provides the services in your care plan? – Have you been asked about how well independent providers of services are meeting the terms of their contracts? – Did you have any choice about what services were available to help you?
- **Use of resources (staff, money, premises, etc.)**
Are resources used well? – Do you have experience of duplication, waste or poor use of resources?
- **Leadership and culture in social work services**
Are you satisfied that this is a ‘can do’ department that puts people who use services and carers first?
- **The role of the council**
Do elected members take a proper interest in the way in which the local authority provides social work services? – Is there a good working relationship between social work services and other departments in the local authority (such as education and housing)? – Describe these rules.

Overall

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

17.3 Briefing materials for visits and meetings with service providers

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

- a short meeting with the manager and a tour of the premises *15 minutes*;
- a look at processes *30 minutes*;
- a meeting with staff (not including the manager) *30 minutes*;
- a meeting with the manager *30 minutes*; and
- meetings with people who use services *30 minutes*.

Each service setting may wish to provide in advance some background information (such as an outline of the work they do, information leaflets, staffing structure, budget, etc.), operational plans and recent inspection reports. Please make this material available to the inspection team at least two days in advance of the visit.

People who use services should be informed about the nature and purpose of the visit in advance. They should have access to copies of the general leaflet about SWIA performance inspections.

Information

Accurate and clear information about the inspection is essential, if unnecessary anxiety or uncertainties are to be avoided. It is helpful if:

- everybody understands the nature and focus of the inspection and why they are being seen;
- everybody should be provided with a copy of the relevant inspection leaflets and information about the Code of Conduct for SWIA inspection teams;
- they know the name(s) of the inspectors undertaking the visit; and
- fieldwork time scales for the inspection are usually tight, so punctuality is important for all those involved, including the inspection team. Delays may well impact on numbers of people.

Areas for examination

The fieldwork meetings and visits are a crucial means of obtaining evidence regarding the areas for examination in which judgements are made. The *Performance Inspection Handbook* outlines these areas and,

when asking questions, the reviewers will focus upon them. We will be looking in particular at three key issues:

1. What are the outcomes or benefits of social work services for people and children?
2. What are people's experiences in using social work services?
3. How well equipped is the local authority to deliver improvements in the quality of those services?

We will have prepared some questions, in part to check out some of the information we've already received. As well as asking questions, we want to make sure that staff and managers in provider organisations have the chance to talk about the issues that concern them and to tell us about their experiences. We are interested in things that are working well as much as those things that need to improve.

17.4 Briefing materials for meetings and visits with partner organisations and other stakeholders

It is important that everybody understands the nature and focus of the performance inspection and why they are being seen. Before meeting with members of the SWIA inspection team, you should be informed about the nature and purpose of the visit or interview.

The local authority inspection co-ordinator will:

- make arrangements for the interview, visit or meeting;
- provide you with a copy of the leaflet about performance inspections for partners and stakeholders; and
- inform you if there are any particular themes that the team wishes to explore with you.

You will be told the names of the inspectors undertaking the visit or meeting.

We appreciate very much your willingness to provide time for the visit or interview. Fieldwork time scales for the review are usually tight and people have busy diaries, so punctuality is important for all those involved (including the inspection team). Individual interviews are usually scheduled to last between 1 to 1½ hours, group interviews from 1½ to 2 hours.

Areas for examination

The fieldwork visits are a crucial means of obtaining evidence regarding the areas for examination in which evaluations are made. The *Performance Inspection Handbook* (available on the SWIA website: www.swia.gov.uk) outlines these areas and, when asking questions, the inspectors will focus upon them. We will be looking in particular at three key issues:

1. What are the outcomes or benefits of social work services for people who use services and carers?
2. What are people's experiences when using social work services?
3. How well equipped is the local authority to deliver improvements in the quality of those services?

We will have prepared some questions, in part to check out the information we've already received. As well as asking questions, we want to make sure that you have the chance to talk about the issues that concern you. We are interested in what is working well as much as what

needs to improve. The inspection team is required to meet very high standards of behaviour in carrying out their work. You are welcome to see the Code of Conduct, which describes these expectations.