

## **22. Guidance for preparing and agreeing the local authority action plan**

At the meeting held to discuss the draft report, the performance inspection team will ask the local authority to draw up an action plan in response to the recommendations, because the primary purpose of the inspection is to improve local services for people who use services and their carers.

It is essential that the process leads to the production of a realistic action plan that is both implemented vigorously by the local authority and effectively monitored by SWIA. The action plan is not published as part of the performance inspection report but should be formally agreed between the authority and SWIA within 12 weeks of the date of publication.

The inspection team will engage in discussion with the authority about its arrangements for producing the action plan from the outset of the inspection. The local authority will receive a written response from SWIA to the draft action plan, giving advice about the way in which the plan deals with the recommendations and priorities for action from the performance inspection.

The local authority is encouraged to adopt an inclusive approach to the task. The plan is likely to be far more robust if the development of the plan is undertaken in consultation with key partners and stakeholders including people who use services and their carers. The authority is encouraged to share the findings of the inspection widely and to consult on its action plan, using established consultative bodies or special meetings.

SWIA will have responsibility for evaluating, monitoring and providing feedback on how effectively the plan is implemented. SWIA's contribution to the process of producing an action plan is organised through the lead inspector, who should be involved appropriately by the local authority throughout.

The local authority will advise the lead inspector about the extent to which the action plan:

- dovetails effectively with its other established plans; and
- describes intended outcomes and indicators in ways that can be monitored and which are explicit enough to demonstrate progress.

It is important that a separate action plan for the SWIA recommendations is drawn up. It should contain:

- quantifiable targets for improvement;
- time scales by which the improvement will be achieved;
- clearly delineated arrangements for the local authority to monitor progress against its objectives;
- the finances that are necessary to achieve improvements;
- those who will take responsibility for key actions and be accountable for progress; and
- monitoring arrangements.

The action plan, quarterly reports and end of inspection report can be contained within another report, such as a Service Improvement Plan, but it must clearly set out the above features. The action plan is best displayed in a table.

The local authority should pay particular attention to involving key stakeholders, including people who use services and their carers, in their monitoring processes in order to ensure that implementation is scrutinised effectively.

The formally agreed action plan should be presented by the Director of Social Work Services to a session, such as a council meeting, of the local authority.