



Office of the
Deputy Prime Minister

Creating sustainable communities

Supporting People Information Sheet 2

Service Reviews for Small Providers – Top Tips



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SERVICE REVIEWS FOR SMALL PROVIDERS – TOP TIPS

This is a positive practice fact sheet to help Administering Authorities and providers learn from others' experiences of carrying out service reviews with small providers.

Policies and procedures

1. **Brighton and Hove** has been working closely with small providers offering support around the service reviews and assisting with quality improvement. This has involved looking at: policies and procedures which have been revised after recommendations from the review; agreeing action plans; meeting with providers; signposting providers to appropriate advice bodies; and provider forums.
2. **Buckinghamshire** providers have found the Performance Indicators quarterly returns challenging. To assist, the local Supporting People team have offered one to one meetings to explain the process. For those who are still unable to make returns electronically, they have agreed to take this information over the phone. This approach appears to be working well.
3. **Cambridgeshire** realises the pressures that smaller providers are under and tries to support them as much as possible. For example, they are providing extra help where required and being flexible in their requirements where appropriate.
4. When **Darlington** reviewed one small provider it became apparent that the figures submitted on Transitional Housing Benefit, and the salaries paid to support staff were inadequate. The authority has therefore been able to give help and financial advice to the provider to make the support costs more realistic. Darlington gave information about the salary scale for similar posts with organisations working with the same client group, and has also spent time analysing costs and management time. The authority also spent time working on support plans and returns.
5. **LB Croydon** has developed a simple pro forma report, for reporting performance against key indicators, in the management of Supporting People to the Commissioning Body and interested stakeholders. Its counterparts in the rest of the South West London sub-region are exploring how they can use this tool locally, and they are all working together to use it as a means of performance benchmarking and service improvement across the sub-region.
6. **Medway** review officers work closely with small providers to assist them in achieving accreditation and level C of the core objectives of the Quality Assessment Framework (QAF). This is done by encouraging them to consult with other providers providing services to the same client group with regard to developing policies and procedures. The Learning Disability Providers are mostly comprised of small providers and they meet together regularly as a group to share good practice and discuss Supporting People issues.

Pre-Review visits

1. **Bristol** held pre-review meetings with all small providers to prepare them for the review process. This was invaluable and allowed the review process to progress more smoothly.
2. **Cambridgeshire** held pre-visits with some smaller providers to explain the review process, introduce themselves and be generally supportive in helping the services improve. Feedback forms are also used by

the authority for reporting back on the validation visits and this seems to be working well. Providers are much clearer on what they need to do to achieve the next level of QAF grade as a result. Cambridgeshire has also involved advocates in the meetings it holds with service users, including a visit to a service user in their own home with an advocate as they did not wish to feed back in a group setting.

3. **Cornwall** has introduced a timetable of 'health check visits'. These visits are carried out at least 12 weeks prior to the provider's service review and incorporate a 'run through' of the QAF, a walk through of a service review, what the provider's obligations are and what they can expect from the authority. Their Performance Indicators are reviewed and training on Supporting People grant processes is given along with training on contracts. Training needs are also identified and collated for future training investment.
4. **LB Hounslow** carries out pre-service review meetings. Meetings are arranged with the authority and a group of three or four providers whose services are due for review around the same time. The meetings are an opportunity to discuss expectations around the review and clarify the process.
5. **North Yorkshire** works through Framework North Yorkshire to advise small providers and go through a pre-review meeting, to identify requirements for the QAF and validation visit. Providers are encouraged to contact Framework direct. Advice is also given on the workbook returns, policies and procedures and general Supporting People enquiries.
6. **Liverpool** is reviewing sets of providers in each quarter year. They convene pre-review meetings for all providers being reviewed including small providers. Small providers have grouped together and successfully applied for a HACT grant with the support of the Administering Authority to fund a series of meetings about the review process and other matters of interest. The Contract Managers have organised training sessions on Performance Monitoring Returns etc for providers and most of those attending have been small providers. The review process has inevitably involved some capacity building work to help small providers to achieve accreditation and level C in the QAF

Post Review visit

1. After **Bristol** reviewed the majority of small providers it was decided to implement an Adult Placement scheme – smaller contracts come under one larger contract held by social services. This reduced the number of reviews they had to carry out with small providers (as it was realised that the outcome for this type of provider was always going to be the same). It will also assist the providers to feel less isolated and help with monitoring and contract compliance.

Action Planning

1. **Brighton & Hove** has been writing comprehensive action plans for some providers. This has included areas such as checking the contract, nomination rights and ensuring clear actions for reaching level C. This has been in a word document for easy printing rather than in excel and includes the following, where appropriate:
 - Strategic Relevance, Nomination rights
 - Performance Indicators and Contract
 - QAF objectives- (these would need to be adapted to the relevant objectives)
 1. Needs Assessment
 2. Support Planning

3. Health and Safety
 4. Protection from Abuse
 5. Fair Access, Diversity and Inclusion
 6. Complaints
- Move On
 - Value for Money
 - Service user handbook
2. Abbeyfield Societies are often small and have a volunteer element and many find the requirements of the QAF quite onerous. In **Essex** one of their local Abbeyfield Societies, when given an action plan, utilised the facilities offered by Abbeyfield UK to acquire policies and procedures. Whilst this has taken staff time, it has helped the society fulfil some of the requirements without having to start from scratch.
 3. **Buckinghamshire** assists its small providers in a number of ways. These include pre-meetings, explaining the review process, offering the QAF Lite, and helping to devise and formalise documentation, e.g. Support Plans and process flowcharts for accepting referrals.

Provider/Inclusion Forum:

1. **Cambridgeshire** has encouraged providers to liaise with each other (both large and small) to share good practice and reduce the workload (avoiding reinventing the wheel). It has held forums specifically for small providers and has encouraged them to continue to meet amongst themselves. It has also encouraged providers to visit each others' schemes as a way of sharing good practice and learning from each other, particularly where the service is specialist (for example teenage parents). With teenage parent schemes in particular, the authority worked with the Teenage Parents co-ordinator who offered to chair meetings with the providers. These meetings continue to take place.
2. **Kingston upon Hull** partnership funds a post of Involvement Facilitator employed in the voluntary sector. This post represents the Inclusive Forum, service users and providers and leads on reviews of Local Authority support services (rather than a member of the Supporting People team. This demonstrates openness, transparency and reduces the potential for a perception of conflict of interest in the review process). The impact has enhanced trust and partnership working in the programme in Hull.
3. **MB Wirral**, through the Inclusive Forum, set up workshops for Service Providers. The authority was able to establish links between small and large providers to enable mentoring. This has enabled smaller providers to discuss common issues, concerns or problems and together come up with joint solutions.
4. **MB Wirral** seconded two temporary staff members from support/service providers through the Inclusive Forum during the first year of the programme. They carried out pre-review meetings with all providers concentrating on small providers to help them to prepare for the forthcoming service reviews.

Mentoring & Training

1. **Cornwall** has introduced a mentoring scheme which is used for smaller providers. Larger providers are recruited to guide and assist the smaller providers to achieve their action plans.
2. **Derbyshire** has established a series of training workshops for small and medium providers as a result of the issues coming out of the reviews, and from some complaints, such as the role of Trustees and budget

management. The first round will take place in due course. The outcomes will be monitored to see what ongoing support and training is required. Derbyshire will expect providers to put the knowledge into practice, and this will impact on future service reviews and action plans.

3. Prior to the start of each batch of scheme reviews, **LB Croydon** always runs workshops for the providers concerned. These workshops check that the providers understand the process, ensure that they are aware of the strategic issues relating to their service/s, and any special issues that LB Croydon may be interested in. LB Croydon has run these seminars since the start of the review programme and has found them invaluable in building trust and gaining co-operation. The authority has used these events as an opportunity to get smaller providers to work together or in partnership with larger providers.
4. **Liverpool** is in the process of developing a training programme to help small providers achieve the necessary standards required from the Scheme Review process.
5. **Medway** has organised two Business Planning training days. The aim of which is to give guidance to small providers who have struggled to understand the nature of robust planning. The team has also offered a workshop on charging to assist small providers. The team continues to respond to the training requests from small providers.

Capacity Building:

1. **Liverpool** is in the process of recruiting a Service Improvement Manager whose key role will be to capacity build within services which are strategically relevant, but which fail to meet the quality standards expected. Liverpool anticipates that due to the wide skills set required to effectively manage Supporting People contracts, small providers will receive a significant amount of time from this Manager to build capacity within this sector.
2. **North Yorkshire** has used independent advocacy services throughout the county to undertake user consultation with users in learning disability schemes. One advocacy service has acted as manager of the project and assisted in developing appropriate materials. Reports are also sent to joint commissioners i.e. Social Services.

Collaboration:

1. **North Yorkshire** has convened a regular meeting for small providers of older persons' services such as Abbeyfields and Almshouses in order to share and disseminate good practice.
2. **Hounslow** has conducted reciprocal reviews with another authority for in-house services. This has been a very successful pilot and the West London Sub Regional Group intends to formalise this.
3. **MB Wirral** carried out a review with a smaller provider, who was experiencing difficulties with the delivery requirements of the Supporting People programme. Following the initial review, MB Wirral arranged for a Review Officer from a neighbouring independent authority to conduct a further review. This approach helped to facilitate open discussions and resulted in a positive outcome.

Please let us know of any good practice in your areas, through the Quarterly Milestones or any other means you may find suitable.

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