

This Rough Guide seeks to address the sorts of issues that providers face in preparing for and undertaking a Service Review.

Please note that it should be read in conjunction with the Service Review Guidance rather than in isolation. The Service Review Guidance can be found on the Scottish Executive's website at: www.scotland.gov.uk/library5/housing/spogf2-08.asp

Before The Review

Timing of the Service Review

Local authorities have until 31st March 2007 to complete all reviews. It is reasonable to expect at least 4 weeks notice to a review commencing. Some local authorities consult with providers on the timetabling of Service Reviews. If you find that the review is being planned for a time that is not convenient because of other events such as Care Commission inspection, then say so and negotiate a more convenient time.

The process

Local authorities should consult with providers on the Service Review process before undertaking them. It may do this at a providers forum or individually. If no meeting is planned in your area you can ask your local authority to organise one or you can ask to meet with the local authority individually. To find out who to contact go to the Scottish Executive's website at: www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Housing/Housing/Supportpeople/intro

Preparing for the Service Review

You will need to build in preparation time for the Service Review. It may be helpful to consider what is needed at each stage of the process. Generally you can expect an information gathering exercise first (sometimes referred to as a desktop review) during which you will be asked to gather information about aims and objectives, activity, costs and outcomes along with producing copies of policies and procedures. This will generally lead into meetings which may involve people using the services.

It is worth finding out the purpose of any meetings being planned so you can decide who should be involved. This will enable you to prepare staff and service users for what lies ahead. As a service provider you can suggest the most appropriate method for consulting with people using the service.

At the desktop stage you may find that you are being asked for information which you have already collected but in other formats and for different purposes, such as a Care Commission inspection or applying for approved provider status. If this is the case you may want to discuss with your local authority the possibility of using this information albeit in a different format.

You may also wish to discuss the possibility of relaying information electronically rather than on paper.

If you become concerned that the resources being called upon to collect information or attend meetings will impact on service delivery then alert your local authority. You may be able to negotiate a longer timescale or come to an agreement about scaling down who and what will be involved.

If you are being asked for personal or sensitive information regarding service users or staff you must ensure you act within the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Police Act 1997.

Rough Guide To Service Review

Main points:

1. 2007 deadline
2. Reasonable to expect 4 weeks notice
3. Information gathering needs to be planned
4. What to do if you have concerns about the process or outcome

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The Supporting People Enabling Unit is a partnership initiative between Community Care Providers Scotland (CCPS) and the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations (SFHA), funded by the Scottish Executive.

During The Review

Although local authorities are experienced in commissioning a range of social care services they may not be familiar with the sort of housing support services you provide. This may be the case with specialist services of which yours may be the only one in the area. You may find it worthwhile to discuss this with your Supporting People officer to ensure they obtain information about the service and the needs it addresses. If you have had experience of how other local authorities have reviewed similar services then share this with them.

Something else to bear in mind is that Supporting People may be funding only part of a broader social care service. In such situations you can expect the council's Supporting People Team to work with those responsible for commissioning the rest of the service and to carry out the review jointly.

Local authorities are required to carry out Service Reviews in a fair and transparent fashion. They are required to carry out Service Reviews of their own directly managed services just as they are with services provided externally.

If you feel concerned that your service is not being dealt with fairly then write to your local authority Supporting People Lead Officer. It is in everyone's interest to iron out such concerns before the Service Review process has been completed rather than leaving it until the end.

You can contact the SP Enabling Unit for help to interpret the guidance issued to councils and to find out how other areas are approaching Service Reviews. The Unit is also interested to hear how you find the process. It is not clear at the moment what will be required of local authorities beyond 2007 in terms of Service Reviews so it is important that the impact of the process itself is assessed.

Outcome of the Review

The outcome of the Service Review for many providers will be to move into negotiations of a new Contract. The Service Review will provide the basis for negotiating price and service capacity and any reconfiguring of the service.

There may be other situations, however, where the local authority decides not to continue funding a service, or indeed, where a provider decides it cannot continue. Where a local authority decides not to continue funding a service it is required to consider the impact on service users and to agree an Action Plan for closing / ending funding to ensure service users do not face sudden loss of service.

Any decision to cease funding must be ratified by elected members or by senior officers delegated by the local authority.

If you are dissatisfied with the way the Service Review has been conducted you can use the local authorities' appeal process.

Members of the public affected by decisions taken by a local authority can make a complaint using the council's complaints procedure. If a person remains dissatisfied they can go to the Scottish Public Ombudsman. For further information go to www.scottishombudsman.org.uk

Judicial Review through the Court of Session is the ultimate process by which local authority administration can be called to account in Scotland.

Generally Judicial Review is more concerned about process, including its fairness than about the final decision.

This guide has been compiled by the Supporting People Enabling Unit with the assistance of Home InScotland, Quarriers, Key Housing Association and Scottish Womens' Aid.

The Supporting People Enabling Unit assists and supports independent service providers in the implementation of the Supporting People Programme. The Unit is hosted by Community Care Providers Scotland and by the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations and is funded mainly by the Scottish Executive.

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