

Executive Reviewers and Specialist Advisors Guidance

Local Authority Assessments

Context

The roles of Executive Reviewer (ER) and Specialist Advisor (SpA) are critical to supporting the credibility, robustness, and consistency of Local Authority assessments. They provide an expert peer perspective, drawing on current professional experience and knowledge to inform, challenge, and support findings, judgements, and recommendations.

Both roles should act as pro-active participants throughout the assessment process, contributing constructively to evidence-based judgements and supporting continuous improvement.

- Executive Reviewers are very senior leaders employed within Local Authorities, the LGA, or ADASS, with a strong track record of effective leadership across complex environments.
- Specialist Advisors are experienced professionals currently working within Local Authorities, the LGA, or ADASS, with established credibility and leadership expertise.

Role Expectations and Values

Professional behaviours

- Engage with induction and ongoing training as required
- Work collaboratively and respectfully with all team members, recognising that all team members are equally valued and bring experience and knowledge, and contributing in a way that reflects mutual respect and consideration throughout the assessment process
- Remain approachable and accessible during site visits
- Maintain confidentiality and comply with all relevant CQC policies
- Ensure all work remains within the scope of the role

Assessment approach

- Actively contribute at all stages of the assessment process

- Start from a perspective of looking for good
- Avoid confirmation bias and reserve judgement until evidence is triangulated
- Assess against the Care Act 2014 Part 1, using the nine quality statements, and ratings characteristics to identify risk, good practice, and impact
- Executive Reviewers should actively consider Theme 4 leadership and governance.

Preparation and planning

- Review key documents and evidence provided prior to the assessment
- Contribute to interview schedules and questions
- Highlight areas requiring further exploration

Interviews and evidence gathering

- Lead or co-lead interviews where appropriate
- Balance structured questioning with open discussion
- Focus on outcomes and impact (the so what)
- Support accurate evidence capture, which may include keeping proportionate notes to support evidence-based judgements, quality assurance activity, and the completion of the Summary of Findings.
- Agree key points to take to corroboration and any areas for follow up.

Analysis, challenge, and outputs

- Participate fully in corroboration discussions
- Provide constructive challenge where bias or misinterpretation is identified
- Submit a written Summary of Findings within agreed timescales
- Contribute to QA processes and feedback, to key messages shared during the assessment process

Expected Time Commitment

ERs and SpAs must commit to a minimum of two full assessments within a 12-month period. Each assessment typically involves approximately five days of activity:

- Preparation and planning calls (4–5 hours)
- Fieldwork on site (minimum of 2 days)
- Advisory input to the team (approximately 6 hours)
- Quality assurance activity (6–8 hours)
- Completion of a written summary of findings

Practical Requirements of the Role

Induction

- Attendance at ER/SpA induction or agreed alternative
- Completion of HR onboarding with the Advisory and Complementary Workforce team
- Introductory engagement with a Deputy Director, or Assessment Manager

Ongoing requirements

- Respond promptly to scheduling and communications
- Engage in required training and contract review
- Complete conflicts of interest declarations and system requirements
- Use sustainable travel where possible in line with policy
- Escalate concerns via the Assessment Manager or Deputy Director

Site visit and post-site

- Attend planning meetings and daily corroboration sessions
- Remain available during site visits to support the team
- Submit Summary of Findings within 3 working days, unless otherwise agreed with the Assessment Manager
- Executive Reviewers may be invited to attend Calibration Panels
- Where concerns arise during interviews or other on-site activity, ERs and SpAs should discuss these with the lead manager in the base room before any further action is taken, to support shared understanding and consistent handling.

Other Sources of Information

- ER/SpA Handbook
- Conflicts of Interest Policy
- Travel and Subsistence Policy (ACW)
- LAA Quality Assurance Guidance
- Local Authority Assessment Framework
- Ratings Characteristics
- CQC Guidance: Addressing Conduct and Performance Issues