



The
Respect Accreditation Standard

Assessors' manual

Respect
1st Floor
Downstream Building
1 London Bridge
London
SE1 9BG
Respect Phonenumber:
0845 122 8609
t: 020 7022 1801
f: 020 7022 1806
e: info@respect.uk.net
w: www.respect.uk.net

Contents

	Page
1. Overview	2
1.1 Introduction	3
1.2 Assessment	3
1.3 Role of assessors	4
1.4 Recruitment and training of assessors	4
1.5 Required competencies for assessors	4
1.6 Monitoring and supervision of assessors	5
2. Summary of the assessment process	7
Flowchart	8
3. Stages of the assessment process in detail	12
3.1 Request for accreditation	13
3.2 Application pack	13
3.3 Application	14
3.4 Responding to application; choosing assessors	14
3.5 Issuing assessors with documentation	15
3.6 Initial contact with the applicant organisation	16
3.7 The desktop review	16
3.8 Outcomes of the desktop review	18
3.9 Initial site visit and preparation for full site visit	18
3.9.1 Initial site visit	18
3.9.2 Watching the group recordings	20
3.10 The full site visit	21
3.10.1 Case file checking	22
3.10.2 Interviews	23
3.10.3 Initial analysis of evidence	24
3.11 First full draft of the report	25
3.12 Finalising the full report	27
3.13 Respect checks the report	27
3.14 Panel members read the report	28
3.15 Panel meeting	28
3.16 Panel decision	29
3.17 Follow up visit by lead assessor to organisation	29
3.18 Further short site visit to assess improvement plan	30
3.19 Random visits	30
3.20 Re-application after three years	31
Appeals	31
4. Top tips from Respect assessors	32

1.1 Introduction

The Respect Accreditation Standard (called the Standard in this manual) applies to all organisations that provide domestic violence prevention programmes to perpetrators of domestic violence and integrated support and safety services for partners and ex-partners of programme participants. It has been published as a document that sets out all the requirements and the evidence that will be sought to demonstrate that an applicant organisation (called the organisation) meets the Standard, which is available on the Respect website www.respect.uk.net

The Standard has been developed so that members of the public, funders, commissioning agencies and other professionals can be assured of a high quality and safety-focused service from organisations that achieve accreditation.

Organisations that apply for accreditation must meet **all** the requirements of the Standard in order to achieve recognition from Respect. Where an organisation does not meet any requirement, they will be given a clear description of what the issue is and why the requirement is not being met, so that necessary improvements can be made.

Respect wishes to provide the highest quality support and information to members in enabling them to meet the requirements of the Standard. The thorough and comprehensive nature of the assessment process described in this manual is intended to drive up quality in every aspect of an organisation. Organisations completing the assessment process will be given comprehensive feedback to

encourage and to support members in achieving the highest quality service provision.

1.2 Assessment

Respect has devised a thorough assessment process to examine where the organisation meets the requirements of the Standard. This manual describes that process and provides the tools and guidance for the assessors carrying out the assessment.

The assessment includes various specific activities which must be carried out in order to make the process as thorough, fair and consistent as possible. This process is summarised in a flow chart in section 2 on page 8.

1.3 Role of Assessors

The assessors' role is to gather, analyse and review evidence of how the organisation is meeting each requirement of the Standard. They are not there to carry out an evaluation or to provide training or consultancy for the organisation. However, the process does include opportunities for the assessors to give the organisation's Board and key staff detailed feedback on how far they are meeting the Standard and if necessary, guidance and information about how to meet specific sections.

Assessments are carried out by a team of two assessors who meet defined competency requirements and have been trained by Respect. One of the assessors is allocated to be the Lead Assessor for the team. Their additional role is to ensure that the assessment proceeds smoothly and to liaise with the assessed organisation. Being the lead assessor does not imply any seniority.

Assessors are required to follow the procedures given in Section 3 of this manual at all times. This section describes how to use the tools for gathering, analysing and reporting on the evidence. The tools themselves are contained in the separate assessors' workbook.

1.4 Recruitment and training of assessors

Applicant assessors will have to demonstrate on their application form and/or during interview processes how they meet the competencies required in advance of the training course and if possible, how they meet any of the other competencies. Once they are accepted onto the training course, they will then be provided with opportunities to learn all the skills and knowledge necessary to carry out a full assessment. They will be given practice using these and tools for helping them to carry out assessments, including their own copy of this assessors' manual and workbook.

1.5 Required competencies for assessors

To be tested on application form and at interview

1. Sufficient understanding of domestic violence, risk, perpetrator programmes
2. Interview skills
3. Record keeping skills
4. Report writing skills
5. Attention to detail and accuracy

To be provided during training

1. Understanding of the research and practice justifications for the Standard as a whole and in detail
2. Understanding of the reasons for having accreditation in general and for domestic violence intervention programmes in particular, and of the value for different stakeholders
3. Thorough understanding of the structure, scope and requirements of the Standard
4. Understanding of and skills in using the evidence gathering methods needed for the assessments: a) initial site visit; b) desktop

review; c) case file checking; d) watching group tapes; e) interviews with staff; f) any other relevant methods

5. Skills at organising and carrying out the site visits including managing timetable etc (lead assessors)
6. Familiarity with the assessors' workbook and how to use it
7. Skills at assessing evidence rigorously and fairly
8. Skills at coming to clear and reasonable conclusions about how far the evidence suggests compliance with the requirements of the Standard
9. Skills at drafting the report
10. Skills at defending the decisions to panel
11. Effective co-working with fellow assessor, including dealing with ethics, confidentiality, disagreements, responding to dangerous practice

1.6 Monitoring and supervision of assessors

During the training course and afterwards, assessors will be given the opportunity to review their practice and knowledge against the list of competencies above. Relevant Respect staff and others involved in the accreditation work will observe the practice of trainee assessors during the course and discuss this amongst themselves and with the assessors.

Once the assessor is confirmed as suitably skilled and knowledgeable they will be added to the list of accredited Respect assessors and given confirmation of this in writing.

Assessors will initially be paired with lead assessors who have already carried out assessments for Respect. During their first and occasionally on subsequent assessments, they will be observed during some or all of the assessment by another assessor. They will be given feedback on their practice and the opportunity to identify any

further training or assistance that they may need to improve their practice to an adequate level. If the observers identify significant gaps in the competencies of any assessors that they feel mean that an assessor is not suitable for carrying out an assessment fairly and rigorously, they will first discuss this with Respect and if appropriate, with the assessor concerned. If possible, they will be given the opportunity to make improvements.

Assessors will be provided with regular opportunities to update and improve their skills in other ways, through further training or through meetings for assessors to share what they have learnt.

Summary of the assessment process

An assessment involves establishing the compliance of the applicant organisation's systems both on paper and in practice with the requirements of the Standard. It is essential that the assessment takes place in a consistent manner. This manual and the assessor workbook are designed to help assessors achieve this objective. The applicant organisation will have to pay a fee to Respect for the cost of this assessment. Fees will be published on the Respect website in the accreditation section.

It is not always possible to test or observe all of the work practices and processes in operation fully. The various elements of the assessment will provide assessors with the tools to test each element of the Standard fairly, adequately and consistently.

Assessors do not make the final decision about whether or not an organisation has met the requirements sufficiently to be awarded accreditation from Respect. This decision is taken by an independent panel of individuals with relevant skills, knowledge and experience who have been specifically selected as a group for this purpose. They take decisions after reading the assessors' report, considering any supplementary information from the assessors and from the applicant organisation. They will also scrutinise the work of the assessors to help to ensure accountability.

An application for accreditation undergoes a series of stages. An overview of the process is given in the flowchart on page 9. Full details of the activities to be carried out by assessors are given in Section 3 of this manual.

Accreditation lasts for three years. After accreditation is awarded, organisations can be subject to random site visits by assessors organised by Respect at any time during those three years. Organisations will not have to pay for the cost of random site visits.

Towards the end of the three year period for each accredited organisation, Respect will send a reminder notice to the named representative of that organisation. This will include an application form for applying for a renewal of the accreditation. After that point, the process will be exactly as for new applicant organisations.

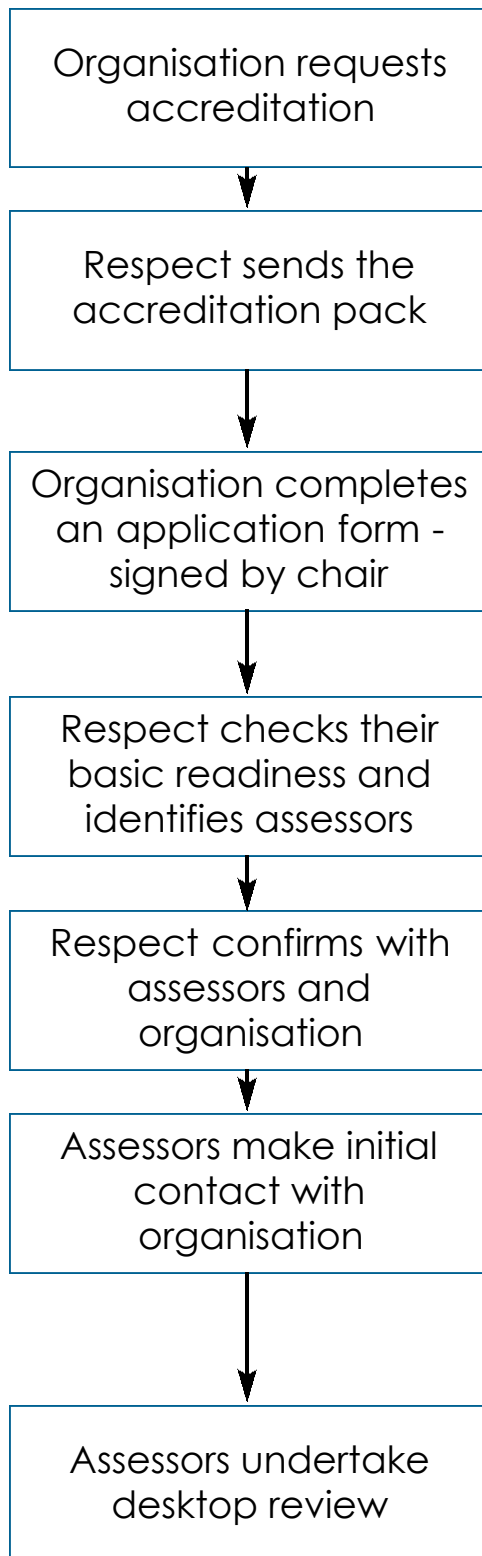
There is an appeals process to deal with issues that arise during or after the accreditation process. Assessors may be required to give evidence to the Appeals Panel.

There are various documents which assessors will use for each assessment. These are provided each time in the form of a workbook for assessors.

FLOW CHART SUMMARY OF THE PROCESSES

ACTION

DETAILS



1) Organisation can make a request via phone, email, etc. Alternatively, Respect reminds them that they need to apply under the 3-year rule*.

2) The pack contains information on the process, details of costs, guidance on how to apply, an application form and the requirements for the assessment process.

3) The application form provides information about the organisation, an agreement to enter the accreditation process, agreement to fees and a confirmation that the organisation can meet the assessment requirements.

4) Respect checks the completeness of the application and identifies the appropriate assessors.

POSSIBLE STOP POINT

5) Respect issues the assessors with application documentation and contracts (if freelance), and the organisation with contract and invoice.

6) The lead assessor contacts the organisation to introduce themselves, establish lines of communication, confirm the process and propose a timetable for it.

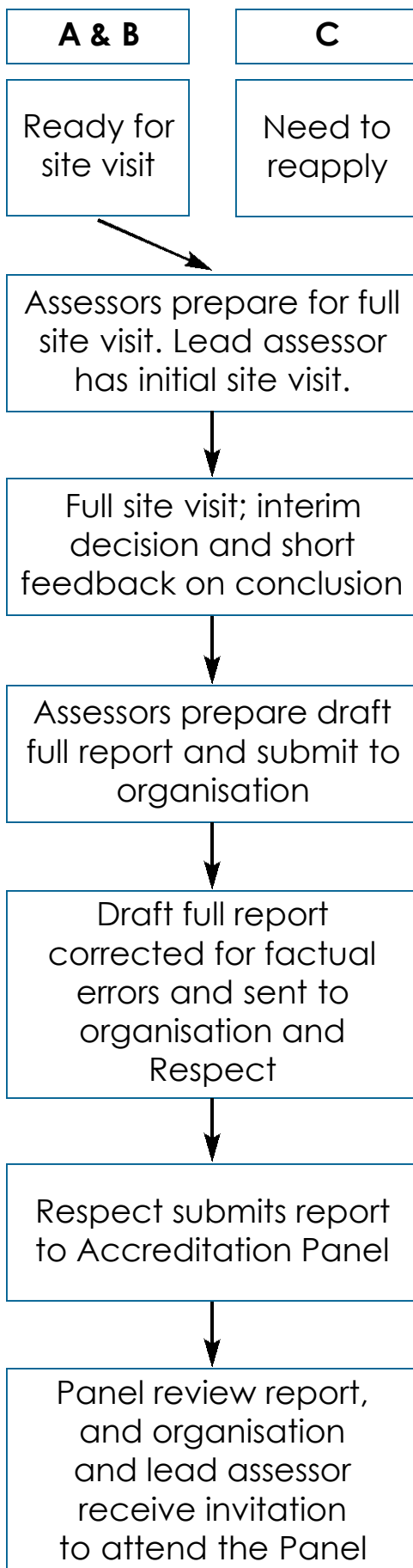
7) The assessors undertake a desktop review of all the documentation submitted. They conclude that either **A)** the organisation is ready for the rest of the assessment; **B)** there are small changes which can be made before the rest of the assessment; or **C)** there are significant changes and the assessment should not proceed at this time.

POSSIBLE STOP POINT

* No-one can be a full member of Respect for more than three years without undergoing accreditation.

ACTION

DETAILS



8) **C)** The organisation is given clear written feedback and agree date when they can reapply and part of their fee is refunded. **B)** Time is allowed for improvements before agreeing date for site visit **A)** Date for site visit is set.

9) Lead assessor carries out initial site visit, collects recordings of group sessions etc. Assessors watch recordings and agree programme for the site visit.

10) Assessors visit the organisation, view files, interview staff and provide an interim decision about whether or not they feel the organisation has met the requirements of the Standard.

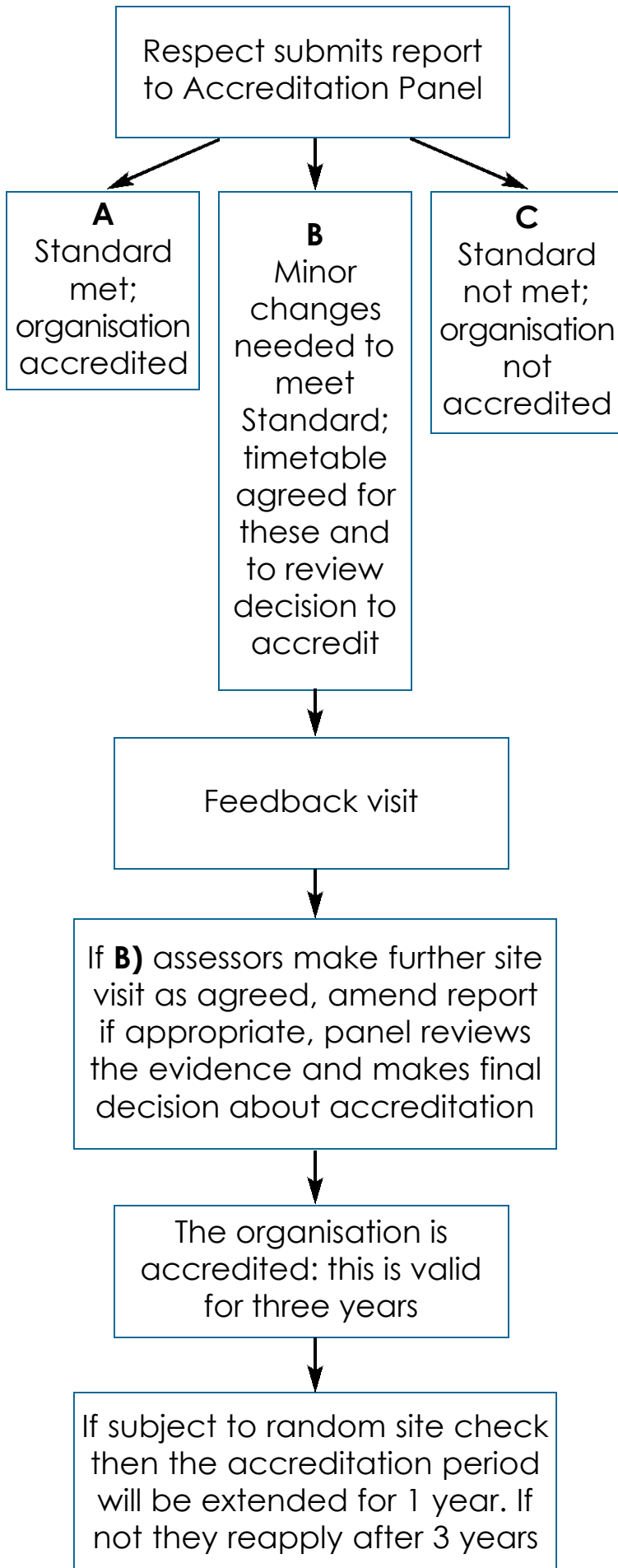
11) Assessors write draft full report and submit to the organisation. They respond with details of any factual errors or other clarification.

12) Assessors finalise full report, including amending any factual errors, and send to the organisation and Respect.

13) Respect checks the report, sends it to the Accreditation Panel members and convenes panel meeting.

14) Panel members review report and ask for more details, request evidence in relation to particular concerns, and invite organisation and lead assessor to a panel meeting.

ACTION



15) Panel meeting with lead assessor and a representative from the organisation.

16) The panel will decide if the organisation either A) has met the requirements and is therefore accredited B) needs to make minor changes in order to meet the requirements, in which case they will be given a short period of time to improve before a further site visit C) has not met the requirements and will need to make major changes to do so, in which case they will not be accredited and will be asked to reapply.

17) The lead assessor will visit the organisation to provide feedback on the decisions and if appropriate discuss the review date and changes required.

18) If the organisation has agreed to make minor amendments in order to meet the Standard, one or both assessors make a further site visit to assess this and report back to the panel.

19) If accredited the organisation could be subject to a random site visit any time during the three-year period during which accreditation is valid.

20) Respect undertakes random site visits or requests that the organisation reapply six months before the end of their accreditation period.

Stages of the assessment process

Numbering

Please note that each numbered stage of the assessment corresponds to the equivalent numbered elements summarised in the flow chart in the previous pages.

Stop points to the assessment

Throughout this description of the process, there are various possible stop points identified. In each case, if the assessors feel that one or more of these applies, they will take every possible step to verify the evidence for this conclusion, discuss it with each other and with Respect staff where necessary. They will then identify clearly and in writing their reasons for their recommended decision, using the pro forma supplied in their workbooks. They will then submit this document to Respect.

Respect staff will then check this document and if they agree that the recommendation is valid, based on the evidence described, will send the relevant pro forma letter to the applicant organisation terminating the assessment and sending a copy of this letter to the accreditation panel. It may be that a partial refund of the assessment fee is due. Respect staff will make a decision about this and notify the panel of their decision. The organisation will have a right to appeal to the panel about the termination of the assessment and over the refund amount. The panel has final decision.

3.1 Request for accreditation

All Respect members must register their application for accreditation assessment before December 31st 2010 in order that they may be assessed before 31st March 2011 i.e. within three years of the implementation of the accreditation system.

Once accredited, both members and non-members of Respect will have to re-apply every three years. Respect will send reminder notices to accredited organisations three months before their accreditation status is due to expire. They will then have to re-apply within 28 days of this notice and the assessment should normally take place before accreditation expires.

If an organisation does not respond to this reminder or is assessed as not fulfilling the Standard, their accreditation status will be removed until they have been successfully accredited again.

3.2 Application pack

Respect will send applicant organisations an application pack. This will include the following documents:

1. An application form, which will include space for organisations to confirm that they are eligible for the assessment by fulfilling the necessary minimum conditions. The organisation must also supply the name and contact details of the member of staff who will act as the main liaison person with Respect and with the assessors for the process;
2. A guide to the process and notice of current fees for assessment;
3. A workbook for applicant organisations to use to self-assess their suitability and readiness for assessment;
4. A list of documents required for the desktop review, with space for the organisation to identify which of their policies and procedures they are sending with their application to meet these requirements.

3.3 Application

Applications for accreditation are made to Respect. These will include the following:

1. A completed application form, which must have been completed by a named representative of the organisation and signed by the chair of the governing body or equivalent;
2. Payment for the required fees for assessment;
3. A completed list of desktop review documents, indicating the name of each document supplied to meet a particular requirement, or, if they cannot be supplied at the time of application, confirmation that they can be supplied within 28 days (by the time of the initial site visit);
4. All the desktop review documents listed in the desktop review record.

Wherever possible the application form and desktop review documents should be supplied electronically.

3.4 Responding to application; choosing assessors

All applications are acknowledged by Respect within ten working days of receipt.

Respect staff will:

1. Check the application for completeness and that the minimum requirements for assessment are met; these are that a DVPP and ISS must both exist, that the model of work is available in writing and that they have complete sets of recordings of groups for the last six months; if the minimum requirements are not met or the application form is incomplete, Respect staff will contact the named representative of the organisation to see if this can be remedied immediately;

2. Check that the desktop review documents are all clearly listed and included;
3. Identify a suitable assessment team of two people and allocate the assessment to them. They must not have had any recent personal involvement with the organisation within the past three years as a staff member, volunteer or trustee. One assessor is a lead assessor and takes responsibility for coordinating the assessment and liaising with the organisation.



The assessment should stop now if the applicant organisation:

- Cannot supply sufficient recordings of groups;
- Has no integrated support service for partners and ex-partners of programme participants;
- Has no written model of work;
- Cannot supply all the documents required by the desktop review or provide confirmation that missing documents can be supplied within 28 days.

3.5 Issuing assessors with documentation

Once the assessment team has been contacted and has agreed to carry out the work, Respect staff will:

1. Issue contracts to assessors;
2. Send both assessors all the desktop review documents and copies of the application information supplied by the organisation;
3. Ensures that each has a blank assessors' workbook to use for this specific assessment; these will be available on the Respect website or can be forwarded as attachments to emails.

The members of the assessment team receive the documentation and the lead assessor takes responsibility for ensuring that they make contact with each other to discuss it within five working days of receiving this information.

3.6 Initial contact with the applicant organisation

The lead assessor will make initial phone contact with named representative of the organisation within five working days of receipt of all the documentation from Respect. They will then follow this up with a letter confirming what has been agreed and providing more information about the assessment team and process. This is to introduce the team, establish clear lines of communication, confirm the process and agree a proposed timetable for it. The site visit must take place within two months of the receipt of the application by Respect or when all the required pre-visit tasks have been completed, whichever is the earlier.

3.7 The desktop review

The desktop review will take place within 28 days of the Respect receiving the application documents. This is the first formal step of the assessment process. The assessors read all the supplied documentation carefully in preparation for this.

A desktop review is a paper-based assessment that is undertaken by the assessors in order to:

- Become familiar with the organisation and its model of work;
- Assess how far the organisation is meeting the requirements of A1.1 and other relevant sections of the Standard on paper;
- Identify issues to be explored on the site visit;
- Identify areas of good practice;
- Start to draw up a programme for the site visit.

Assessors should use the desktop review document supplied in their workbook. They should usually use this to record the results of their own initial evaluation of documentation. Assessors will usually agree to divide up overall responsibility for assessing the requirements of the six sections of the Standard. This means that some documents will not need to be read in detail by both assessors.

At the desktop review discussion, the assessors go through each requirement of the Standard and identify any gaps in the submission or areas of apparent non-compliance, using the checklist supplied. They should record their decisions in the pro forma assessment report which they will use throughout the assessment. This is supplied in the assessors' workbook.

The assessors will identify if the organisation is meeting the requirements of the desktop review. Organisations who are not meeting these requirements will usually fit into one or more of the following categories:

- The organisation has a model of work which is in direct contravention of any of the key required elements of the Standard;
- There are gaps in the documentation or the documentation reveals significant inadequacies in service, such as inadequate budget or insufficient staff;
- The organisation is not meeting the requirements of the Standard for written documentation.

In any of these cases, the lead assessor should contact the liaison person to find out if these gaps are reflected in practice and if they can be remedied within two months, i.e. before the full site visit. If the changes are minor and can be remedied in time, the assessors can then proceed with the rest of the assessment. If the changes are not minor or cannot be remedied in time, the assessors will then recommend that the rest of the assessment is cancelled.

3.8 Outcomes of the desktop review

There are three possible outcomes to the desktop review stage. Assessors should consider carefully which of these three outcomes they feel is demonstrated by the evidence supplied so far. They should record these in the pro forma document for this decision supplied in the assessors' workbook. This should then be sent to Respect for ratification and forwarding to the applicant organisation. The three possible outcomes are:

- A. The organisation has fulfilled the requirements of the desktop review and is ready for the rest of the assessment process to take place;
- B. The organisation needs to make minor changes in order to be ready for the rest of the assessment and has indicated to the lead assessor that they are able to make these;
- C. The organisation needs to make significant changes in order to be ready for the rest of the assessment process or has indicated to the lead assessor that they cannot remedy minor changes in time for the site visit.

The pro forma will require the assessors to describe clearly their reasons for their decision.



The assessment will stop now if Respect staff feel that the assessors have clearly indicated that the outcome C above applies and have given sufficient justification.

3.9 The initial site visit and preparation for full site visit

3.9.1 Initial site visit

The assessors will consult each other at this stage and identify any specific priorities for the full site visit. The lead assessor will use these to prepare a draft timetable for the full site visit. The lead assessor will

then send this draft timetable together with the pro forma letter supplied in the workbook for this stage of the assessment to the named representative of the organisation. They will then liaise with the named representative to confirm the date of the initial site visit and identify provisional dates for the full site visit. The named representative will liaise with staff and others in the organisation over this provisional timetable and other requirements in advance of the initial site visit.

The lead assessor will carry out an initial site visit to the organisation. The purposes of this initial site visit are:

- To work with the liaison person in the organisation to arrange how the full site visit will work including planning a draft timetable;
- To gather recordings of the groups currently running - a random selection covering all facilitators; this will usually mean three session recordings per group;
- To identify suitable space for interviews;
- To discuss and arrange how the case file sampling will work, how to navigate the organisation's records system including consideration of the organisation's policy on records;
- To introduce the lead assessor to as many of the staff and board members as possible and familiarise her/him with the site;
- To collect the remaining documents needed to fill any gaps in the desktop review;
- To gather information from the practice manager or equivalent about the ways the organisation works, in order to identify who should be interviewed; this will be partly done in advance during the desktop review, however, hearing it first hand is helpful for clarifying the actual nature of the work.

The lead assessor will work with the relevant staff to agree the process and methods of case file checking. This will include agreeing how case files will be selected, what security precautions, if any, will need to be used and how the files should be returned to the correct

locations. They will discuss and agree how they will be able to identify the relevant files for partners and ex-partners of men on the DVPP so that these files can be linked to the men's files.



The assessment may stop now if:

- There are no suitable recordings of groups;
- The organisation cannot agree with the assessor about how to carry out the case file checking adequately and at random;
- The organisation cannot supply any documentation necessary to fulfil gaps in the desktop review.

3.9.2 *Watching the group recordings*

The assessors should spend a day together watching a selection of the recordings of groups and assessing these against the requirements of B2.1. They should usually use the assessment sheets provided in the assessors' workbook. They should watch at least one recording of each pair of facilitators together on this day. This is partly so that the assessors can discuss openly what they are looking for and how they are interpreting the group facilitation against the requirements and identify together what they need to look out for when watching the rest of the recordings (which they will do separately) and any particular aspects of the group work to pick up in interviews during the site visit.



The assessment could stop if practice in the groups is of such poor quality that it will not easily be remedied.

If the assessors feel that practice is of an unacceptably low level, they should always take every step to ensure that this judgement has been reached fairly. This should usually include:

- Watching all the recordings they have, with particular attention to the recordings of sessions following any which the assessors have felt were not acceptable;
- Discussing this with relevant Respect staff;
- Asking the practice manager or other member of staff if they can discuss the recordings concerned, asking for their opinion if they have watched them, to find out if the concerns have been noted by the organisation and if they are being addressed. In this case, the assessment may continue, with particular attention in the full site review to the practice of the facilitators concerned and to the practice manager, to find out how the practice is being improved.

3.10 The full site visit

The site visit must take place within two months of Respect receiving the application. It usually lasts for two days. It may take three days in the case of a large organisation, especially where there is more than one site to be visited.

The purpose of the site visit is to carry out a full review of how well the organisation complies with the Standard in practice, and to identify any changes needed to bring the organisation to full compliance with it. The team does this by gathering relevant evidence of compliance through interviews, observing work with clients (or tapes of this work) and examining relevant documents: in particular case files and case management records.

The programme always includes:

- An opening meeting, to introduce the team to staff and Board members (if applicable) and vice versa, to confirm the programme for the visit, to identify any last-minute issues and to ensure that there is clarity about the process
- Interviews with staff, volunteers (if used), members of the Board; these should usually be in person but can also be by telephone, particularly for sessional facilitators;

- Case file assessment;
- Interview with the person in the organisation who has responsibility for representing the organisation strategically within a multi-agency context, Director/CEO/Senior Manager;
- Time for the assessors to meet regularly during the site visit to discuss their findings, record these on their pro forma assessment reports and prepare their initial conclusions;
- OPTIONAL: short verbal feedback at the end of the visit.

The assessors need to agree who will carry out each element of the programme. Interviews are usually undertaken by individual assessors alone. Each assessor will record their findings as they carry out their evidence gathering, using the pro forma assessment report provided and any other relevant tools from the workbook.

The assessors follow the programme agreed with the organisation whilst on site. There may be a need to change the order or timing of interviews to accommodate the needs of interviewees.

3.10.1 Case file checking

The lead assessor should already have agreed at the initial site visit how the case file checking will take place.

The number of case files checked will depend partly on the number of men referred to or contacting the organisation in the past year. The minimum number of files to be checked will be 10 files for clients of the DVPP and the files for their partners or ex-partners. This minimum will apply no matter how many applicants there are in a year. The maximum should be 20% of the total number of applicants. Assessors will make a selection of 20% to check but may not necessarily check each one in detail. They should usually make this selection on the day of the assessment, with no advance notice given. They should usually make at least 10 selections themselves at random and ask the representative of the organisation to supplement this where necessary in order to ensure that there is a range of clients included in the case file selection.

Assessors should try to ensure that the range includes:

- Clients whose children have been or are the subject of child protection investigations or child contact proceedings;
- Clients who have been assessed as unsuitable for the group for some reason;
- Disabled clients or applicants;
- Clients who are the subject of legal proceedings.

Assessors will use the pro forma case file checklist to record their findings for each of the cases checked. This is supplied in the workbook.

3.10.2 Interviews

Assessors will carry out interviews with relevant staff and members of the governing body as needed in order to assess the compliance with the Standard. This may mean that some staff will not be interviewed.

The interviews are intended to provide further evidence of how far the organisation is meeting specific relevant sections of the Standard and will therefore vary according to the responsibilities of the person concerned. For example, if there is a sessional member of staff who carries out risk assessments and nothing else, they will need to be asked questions related to section D on risk management and on other specific elements of the Standard. When assessors become very familiar with the Standard they will often find that they do not need to prepare a detailed script or checklist for these interviews and can rely on preparatory notes. Less experienced assessors and some experienced facilitators will make use of the checklists and interview guides provided in the assessors' workbook.

Assessors will be mindful of the purpose of the interviews and respectful of the people they are interviewing. This process can provoke anxieties for staff and assessors will reassure them that they are not individually under inspection. If there are gaps in the

competency or knowledge of an individual member of staff, this will not always mean that the organisation has not met a particular requirement. If the organisation demonstrates in other ways that they identify and respond to particular problems quickly and effectively and that their systems are rigorous enough to do this consistently, assessors may conclude that a particular requirement has been met even where an individual member of staff did not fulfil the competencies implied.

Assessors will always aim to end the interview on a positive note and within the time agreed. If they need more time than that allocated, they will negotiate this with the named representative of the organisation.

3.10.3 Initial analysis of evidence

The pro forma of the full report provides the assessors with a structured way of recording and assessing their evidence and coming to fair conclusions based on this evidence. There is space for consideration of each section of the Standard A - F. Within each section there is space for consideration of each specific requirement. Assessors will record the evidence they have seen for each requirement, identify any examples of good practice and if there are any improvements to be made to the way the organisation meets a specific requirement, clear identification of what these are.

During the visit the assessors assess and document the evidence presented in their individual copy of the pro forma of the full report. They will do this regularly throughout the process. They will meet each other regularly during the days and discuss their findings and if possible, combine their individual copies of the pro forma as they write their draft findings up. This will allow them to use the range of evidence available to come to initial conclusions as to whether the requirements of the Standard have been met. They will spend **at least** 30 minutes alone together at the end of the first day (and second, if the site visit lasts longer than two days in total) to identify where they may have insufficient evidence and how they will best

make use of the available remaining time to gather and document such evidence.

As close as possible to the end of the site visit, the assessors will spend 20 - 30 minutes alone together to identify clearly if they feel that there is evidence that any section of the Standard has or has not been met.

These conclusions are reported at the end of the assessment to the full staff team and representatives of the governing body or to selected members of staff and governing body as appropriate. The decision about how to give this feedback will be taken by the assessors together with the named representative of the organisation and if possible the chief executive or equivalent. Ideally, in the interests of transparency and fairness, the whole staff team and governing body should be present. However, in some cases, particularly where the assessors feel that practice is inadequate or that there are significant problems, it is more useful for the assessors to give feedback initially only to a relevant manager or member of the governing body. Wherever possible, assessors assume that the feedback will be offered to everyone and identify as soon as possible during the full site visit if this is not appropriate.

3.11 First full draft of the report

Assessors will prepare a full draft of the report as soon as possible after the assessment and within 10 working days of the last day of the full site visit. They may do this by working jointly on one copy of the draft report, using the pro forma, or by working separately on their own copies and then combining them. They may find that they need to contact particular staff in the organisation or in external agencies they work with, in order to verify some evidence or gather missing information.

The lead assessor takes overall responsibility for ensuring that the report is complete and that it identifies clearly the evidence gathered, any good practice examples and any improvements

needed. The lead assessor will also usually take responsibility for completing the introduction section, consulting documentation from the desktop review or liaising with the named representative of the organisation where necessary.

Both assessors should agree to the conclusions about whether or not an individual requirement has been met or not met. They should then complete the record table for each section, showing clearly how many requirements are met or not met and providing a summary overview of how far the organisation is meeting the section overall. Finally, they should assess the overall recommendation to the panel for a decision about the result of the assessment.

Each requirement of the Standard has to be met for the organisation to be recommended by the team for accreditation. In some cases this will be a straightforward conclusion. In others a judgement has to be made as to whether the organisation has done enough to meet the objective contained in the requirement. The evidence provided must be sufficient to demonstrate compliance and clearly identified. There are three possible conclusions:

1. If the assessors conclude that the requirements of the Standard have not been met completely and that improvements needed cannot be classed as minor or cannot be remedied within six months of the assessment they will recommend that the organisation should not be accredited.
2. If they conclude that the requirements of the Standard have not been completely met but that minor improvements only are needed and that they feel that these can be made within six months of the assessment, they will recommend that the organisation may be accredited if they can demonstrate that they have made these improvements within the timescale agreed.
3. If the assessors conclude that the requirements of the Standard have been completely met they will recommend that the organisation is accredited.

After the first full draft is completed the lead assessor will send this document, clearly marked as draft and confidential, together with the covering pro forma letter provided, to the named representative of the organisation. *They should be given a further five working days to respond with any questions, supplementary information and if necessary clarification of any factual errors.*

Where the assessor identifies minor improvements which they feel the organisation can make within six months of the assessment, *the organisation must send the assessors an improvement plan within 10 working days of receiving the draft final report.* The assessors check it for validity, discuss if further with the organisation if necessary, approve it and add this to their report as an appendix.

3.12 Finalising the full report

After five working days of sending the draft report to the organisation, or 10 working days if there is an improvement plan to be made by the organisation, the assessors will assess any information provided by the organisation and if appropriate amend the report within a further five working days. They should then send it to Respect.

3.13 Respect checks the report

Once the report has been received by Respect, the appropriate staff will check through it for clarity and completeness. *This should take place within five working days of receipt of the report from the assessors.*

Providing the relevant member of Respect staff is satisfied that the report is complete and clear, they will then send copies to the chair of the governing body or equivalent, to the chief executive or equivalent and to the named representative. They will also invite them to send one representative to the panel meeting and to provide any other additional material they feel is necessary, in advance.

Respect staff will then either identify an existing meeting of the accreditation panel at which this report will be considered, or convene one. In either case, Respect staff will then send the panel members a copy of the report and notification of the date of the panel meeting.

3.14 Panel members read the report

The panel members will read the report within 10 working days of receiving it. Within these 10 days they will also contact the assessors or the organisation, if necessary, with any questions, copying these to the chair of the panel. The organisation and the assessors may then provide the answers in writing in advance of the panel meeting or at the panel meeting, depending on the timing of the panel meeting.

3.15 Panel meeting

The panel meeting should take place within three months of the initial application for accreditation. Reports will be usually be considered at the next available panel meeting following completion of the full site visit.

Panel meetings are intended to fulfil the following functions:

1. To scrutinise the work of the assessors, by asking the lead assessor questions about the methods used, the evidence gathered and the conclusions and recommendations made by the assessors;
2. To provide an opportunity for a representative of the organisation to provide relevant further information, particularly if they feel that they have not been accurately represented in the assessment;
3. To provide the organisation with the opportunity to witness the process of hearing the evidence, in the interests of transparency and accountability;

4. To discuss the evidence and recommendations and come to decisions about accreditation of all the organisations about which reports have been submitted.

3.16 Panel decision

The Panel comes to a final decision on accreditation. It may request further improvements be made in order to meet the requirements of the Standard, which may involve a further site visit and report by the team.

The chair of the panel will then write to the organisations concerned with the results of the meeting. *This will take place within five working days of the meeting.*

3.17 Follow up visit by lead assessor to organisation

The lead assessor will make a further follow up visit of usually half a day to provide feedback to the organisation about the findings of the report. Unless the organisation explicitly states that they do not want this to happen, it will take place within 20 working days of the panel meeting.

The purpose of this visit will vary depending on the result of the accreditation process, the findings of the assessors and the needs of the organisation. The lead assessor will liaise with the named representative of the organisation to discuss this and to agree a suitable date and agenda.

Possible content of the follow up visit includes:

- Discussing the findings of the assessment in more detail;
- Identifying progress against the improvement plan and providing assistance if possible and appropriate;
- Reviewing the process and allowing the organisation to give feedback to the assessors on the assessment process.

3.18 Further short site visit to assess against improvement plan

If the panel agreed to allow the organisation to make minor improvements as described in an agreed improvement plan there will be a further short site visit by one of the assessors within six months of the panel meeting to assess if the improvements have been made. They will consult with the other assessor and write a shorter version of the full assessment report and submit this to Respect within five days of this short site visit.

If the assessors conclude that the improvements have been sufficiently well made to satisfy the previously unmet requirements of the Standard, they will recommend to the panel that the organisation is now accredited.

If the assessors conclude that the improvements have not been made or not sufficiently well to satisfy the previously unmet requirements, they will recommend to the panel that the organisation is not accredited and is required to re-apply for accreditation. In these cases, they may also make recommendations about whether or not the organisation will be required to go through the entire assessment process again. The Respect staff will then follow the same procedure as before, from steps 13 onwards as described above in sections 3.13 onwards.

3.19 Random Visits

Accreditation is granted for a three-year period. Respect arranges random site visits of accredited organisations during this period. Assessors are appointed by Respect for this and an assessment is carried out in accordance with the process described above, although the scale and scope of the assessment will be limited as defined by Respect.

3. Stages of the assessment process

3.20 Re-application after three years

If the organisation is not subject to any random visits during the three year period, Respect will notify accredited organisations to re-apply in time for them to be re-assessed fully before their accreditation expires.

Appeals

Organisations may appeal against the verdict of the Accreditation Panel, as described in the Appeals Procedure. Assessors may be invited to give evidence to the appeals body.

Top tips from Respect assessors

- Know and stick to the Standard. Your job is to assess how well an organisation is meeting these requirements, not to carry out an evaluation or to provide consultancy or training.
- Get to know the Standard really well, this will help you to interview people comfortably and thoroughly.
- When analysing the evidence, focus on each individual requirement at a time and identify clearly what evidence you have seen.
- Beware of making early conclusions and taking a global overview. It's very easy to come to a quick conclusion which is not based on evidence. If you do this, it may colour how you interpret data in unfair ways. Be patient and methodical.
- Remember that this is hard work and you will have to concentrate solidly. Take lots of notes, drink lots of water, check in regularly with your fellow assessor and take proper breaks.