Independent Evaluation of Estyn/CSSIW Joint Inspection Pilot

Presented to **Estyn and CSSIW**
by **Arad Research** and **Welsh Institute for Health and Social Care, University of South Wales**

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1. Executive summary

1.1 Introduction to the evaluation

Arad Research and the Welsh Institute of Health and Social Care, University of South Wales, were commissioned by Estyn and CSSIW to undertake an independent evaluation of the Joint Inspection Pilot. This evaluation aimed to test whether the concept of joint inspections had worked in practice – both at the strategic and operational levels.

There were three areas of focus for the evaluation (see research questions in Section 2). These were: i) the planning and development of the joint inspection framework; ii) the delivery of joint inspections in practice; and iii) the learning points to emerge from the process. Sections 1.4-1.6 below outline the findings of the evaluation in summary form in relation to each of these three areas of discussion.

1.2 Overview of research methods

The evaluation has drawn on a number of sources of data and evidence. This included documentation and data provided by Estyn and CSSIW: joint inspection documentation and materials; and data from post-inspection questionnaires issued to participating settings. Primary evidence was collected by the independent evaluation team through: a survey of pilot settings; interviews with settings (17 representatives from 10 settings); interviews with inspectors (8 from CSSIW and 6 from Estyn); and interviews with senior managers and other staff from both inspectorates.

Our findings draw on analysis of data from these multiple sources of evidence.

1.3 Overall assessment against the three research questions

Taking into account all of the evidence collected during the evaluation, we conclude that the pilot worked successfully, and achieved what it set out to, namely to plan and develop a joint inspection framework, and deliver joint inspections in a range of settings. In doing so, the pilot has demonstrated that the concept of joint working can be delivered in practice.

As is to be expected, there are a number of learning points that emerged from the pilot, to which we refer in this report. Evidence suggests that these learning points can be taken forward in a constructive manner, building on the relationships and practices established during the pilot. The majority of experiences during the pilot were positive – from the points of view of senior managers, inspectors and settings – however not in all cases. Accordingly, work remains to develop systems and structures to improve joint working.

There follows a more detailed consideration of the key features that were examined as part of the evaluation.

1.4 Planning and development of the joint inspection framework

1.4.1 Alignment

- The joint inspection framework developed proved fit for purpose in enabling aligned inspections in an area where both organisations have responsibility.
- The evaluation has found support among all main constituent groups (senior managers, inspectors and settings) for the concept of joint inspection.
- The development (and subsequent piloting) of the joint inspection framework was well received and viewed positively, almost unanimously, by senior managers, inspectors and settings.
- While the joint inspection framework supported greater alignment between Estyn and CSSIW through the joint strategic planning, there remained separate governance arrangements throughout the process.
- Aligning the operational processes of the two organisations presented challenges, however this improved over time as the inspectorates learned about each other's working practices through the process.

1.4.2 Pre-inspection activity

- Pre-inspection training and preparation was wide-ranging. It provided opportunities for inspectors to familiarise themselves with the joint inspection framework and to learn about each other's working practices.
- There were some aspects of pre-inspection training where more detailed guidance would have been beneficial and may have helped support greater efficiency during the inspection and reporting processes that followed.

1.4.3 Streamlined inspection process

- Pilot settings recognised that joint inspections offered the potential to deliver a more streamlined inspection process. The joint inspection framework encourages both inspectors and settings to consider the care and learning elements of provision in a more holistic and unified way.

1.5 Delivery of the joint inspections in practice

- Drawing on the views of inspectors and settings, the evaluation has identified potential for the joint inspection model to support improvements in the quality of care and education in non-maintained settings, however it is too early to arrive at any definitive conclusions on this.
- CSSIW and Estyn embarked on the joint inspection pilot from different starting points as organisations. The joint inspection pilots involved more that was new for CSSIW inspectors than for their Estyn counterparts, particularly in respect of the process of forming quality judgements. However, the pilot was delivered successfully, and the two organisations made it work despite these challenges.
- Adopting Estyn's systems for the joint inspection pilot was a positive choice that, in the main, worked very well.

- However, CSSIW's IT systems presented challenges during the joint inspection pilot. Problems related to IT impacted on the ability to test joint working practices in full during the pilot. This needs to be resolved before further pilot work is undertaken.
- The pilot demonstrated that the model can work in practice: the joint inspection framework proved fit for purpose as a tool to enable the two inspectorates to cooperate effectively. That is not to say that there is no room for improvement, but it is to recognise that overall, the pilot was a success.
- At its best, the joint inspection pilot delivered truly aligned and streamlined inspections in the view of both inspectors and settings. A minority of joint inspections completed during the pilot were seen as being simultaneous but separate processes.

1.6 Learning points for future joint activity

1.6.1 Communication

- Communication between inspection teams prior to, during and after the inspection was crucial. Evidence from the pilots suggests that effective communication had a major impact on how well inspections are delivered and received, especially as settings become used to these new approaches.
- Good communication between inspectors helped support a shared understanding of judgements reached.

1.6.2 Reporting processes

- Reporting, editing and quality assurance processes involved were initially protracted and revealed inconsistencies in approaches between the two organisations.
- Despite some improvements as the pilots progressed, work remains to be done in this area.

1.6.3 Testing the model in a wider range of settings

- The pilot tested joint working in settings that had put themselves forward and proactively chosen to take part in the pilot.
- A second phase of the pilot should include a broader range of settings in order to test joint working in a wider range of contexts.

1.6.4 Joint inspections through the medium of Welsh

- The pilot inspections revealed differences in the capacity of the inspectorates to conduct all aspects of joint inspections through the medium of Welsh.
- It is imperative that all inspectors undertaking joint inspections in Welsh-medium settings are able to deliver all aspects of the joint inspection confidently through the medium of Welsh, ensuring parity across all settings.

2. Evaluation findings

The evaluation team developed a series of overarching research questions to provide a focus for the evaluation. These questions, which were agreed with the Client team at the evaluation inception meeting, were as follows:

1. To what extent does the joint inspection framework developed by CSSIW and Estyn deliver:
    - Effective **alignment**, serving as a unifying feature in the work of both organisations;
    - A more **streamlined inspection process** for settings that provide care and education for three and four-year olds.

2. Based on the experiences of inspection teams and settings, how effective is the **joint inspection framework in supporting improvements in the quality of care and education** in non-maintained settings?
    - Is the joint inspection framework applied consistently by Estyn and CSSIW inspection teams?
    - For setting managers and staff was the joint inspection process clear, coherent and useful in supporting improvements in provision?

3. What are the principal **learning points** to emerge from the pilot (including practical recommendations) that can inform ongoing work to support joint inspection arrangements? Specifically, what are the learning points in relation to:
    - Value of joint working at an organisational level;
    - Integrating / connecting data management and other systems;
    - Professional development and the transfer of skills between organisations;
    - Resource considerations and efficiency.

This section is structured around these questions and sub-questions. We have summarised chapter headings as follows: Planning and development of the joint inspection framework (2.2); Delivery of the joint inspections in practice (2.3); and 'Learning points for future joint activity' (2.4)

2.1 Overall assessment against the three research questions

Taking into account all of the evidence collected during the evaluation, we conclude that the pilot worked successfully, and achieved what it set out to, namely to plan and develop a joint inspection framework, and deliver joint inspections in a range of settings. In doing so, the pilot has demonstrated that the concept of joint working can be delivered in practice.

As is to be expected, a number of learning points that emerged from the pilot, to which we refer in this report. Evidence suggests that these learning points can be taken forward in a constructive manner, building on the relationships and practices established during the pilot. The majority of experiences during the pilot were positive – from the points of view of senior managers, inspectors and settings – however not in all cases. Accordingly, work remains to develop systems and structures to improve joint working.

2.2 Planning and development of the joint inspection framework

This section presents key messages in relation to planning and development of the joint inspection framework.

2.2.1 Alignment

- The joint inspection framework developed proved fit for purpose in enabling aligned inspections in an area where both organisations have responsibility.
- The evaluation has found support among all main constituent groups (senior managers, inspectors and settings) for the concept of joint inspection.
- The development (and subsequent piloting) of the joint inspection framework was well received and viewed positively, almost unanimously, by senior managers, inspectors and settings.

The development of the joint inspection framework was successful and it embodied the important principle of equality between the two organisations. The joint framework built on several years of previous discussion to align inspections in areas where both organisations are required to inspect. The way in which the senior managers and senior inspectors approached this phase of the pilot was valuable in setting the appropriate tone for joint working. Although there are clear differences in the way the inspectorates operate, they recognised that there was much that united them. This helped them move relatively quickly from scoping discussions to beginning the process of creating a joint framework.

The joint framework document, with its equal division of themes and key areas between Estyn and CSSIW, ensured that joint working was enshrined in the spirit and practice of the pilot. Reaching agreement on the content of the framework was a positive process which engaged both organisations effectively. From the start there was buy-in from senior managers and senior inspectors. Of course, the success of any framework is contingent upon the way it is implemented, and evidence demonstrates that the joint inspection framework served as an effective tool to guide the inspection process in practice. Both inspectors and settings agreed that the framework provided a basis for driving improvements in the quality of care and education in non-maintained settings.

- While the joint inspection framework supported greater alignment between Estyn and CSSIW through the joint strategic planning, there remained separate governance arrangements throughout the process.
- Aligning the operational processes of the two organisations presented challenges, however this improved over time as the inspectorates learnt about each other's working practices through the process.

Senior managers collaborated well to oversee the strategic planning of the joint inspection pilot. Overall governance of each inspectorate's work as part of the joint working remained separate. The challenges associated with aligning working practices became clearer as the planning process progressed. In particular, the way in which inspectors organised their time

ahead of, during and following inspections varied between the two inspectorates. This is in part a product of the different legal and statutory bases of the organisations.

2.2.2 Streamlined inspection process

- Pilot settings recognised that joint inspections offered the potential to deliver a more streamlined inspection process. The joint inspection framework encourages both inspectors and settings to consider the care and learning elements of provision in a more holistic and unified way.

A clear majority of settings were positive about the joint inspection process and recognised the potential benefits of a more streamlined model of inspection to care and learning, although this was not a view held by all involved in the pilot. Estyn's systems worked very well in preparing settings for the pilot, and settings reported that they valued the fact that both inspectorates were present at the same time. Settings commented positively on the holistic, 'whole child' approach embodied by the joint inspection framework, and valued the work of Estyn and CSSIW in seeking to ensure a seamless approach to the inspection process. A clear majority of settings commented positively on the work undertaken by the two inspectorates in moving towards a new and shared approach. There were nonetheless learning points to emerge from the pilot (see section 2.4 of this paper), and not all settings perceived the process as having been an unequivocal success.

- Pre-inspection training and preparation was wide-ranging. It provided opportunities for inspectors to familiarise themselves with the joint inspection framework and to learn about each other's working practices.

- There were some aspects of pre-inspection training where more detailed guidance would have been beneficial and may have helped support greater efficiency during the inspection and reporting processes that followed.

Training for inspectors was wide-ranging and effective. There was good coverage of the joint inspection framework during training, with close attention paid to how to utilise the framework in practice during inspection visits. However, inspectors reported that there was less detailed attention given to reporting and quality assurance, which impacted on how streamlined some aspects of the joint working were. Some CSSIW inspectors felt that the training didn't provide sufficient guidance in respect of the feedback that they would need to give in the settings at the end of the inspection. There were also IT problems which arose during the pre-inspection period and which impact on how streamlined the joint inspection pilot was: it was apparent prior to the inspection visits that CSSIW inspectors, who were unable to use their laptops remotely, would face difficulties in recording and sharing evidence electonically and accessing the Virtual Inspection Room (VIR) offline.

2.3 Delivery of the joint inspections in practice

This section presents key messages in relation to the delivery of the joint inspection pilots.

Inspectors from both inspectorates reflected positively on their experiences of being involved in joint inspections. In all cases, inspectors felt that they had succeeded in forging professional working partnerships in a short period of time. Inspectors embraced the opportunities offered through the joint working arrangements and recalled having learnt much from their peers during the inspections.

- Drawing on the views of inspectors and settings, the evaluation has identified potential for the joint inspection model to support improvements in the quality of care and education in non-maintained settings, however it is too early to arrive at any definitive conclusions on this.

There was much positive work done during the pilots that moved the two organisations towards the goal of supporting improvements in the quality of care and education provided. In a small number of cases, settings suggested that after receiving some of the judgements they were unclear as to how they might improve. They noted that they were unable to receive a consistent answer on what they might need to do to reach higher ratings within the framework, which would, by extension, provide a clear pathway to improve the childcare and educational provision of their setting. This related in part to the communication between inspectors (see 2.3.1) below, but evidence does suggest that moving towards the whole-child holistic approach offers the potential of achieving this goal.

- CSSIW and Estyn embarked on the joint inspection pilot from different starting points as organisations. The joint inspection pilots involved more that was new for CSSIW inspectors than for their Estyn counterparts, particularly in respect of the process of forming quality judgements. However, the pilot was delivered successfully, and the two organisations made it work despite these challenges.

The joint inspection pilots involved more that was new for CSSIW inspectors than for their Estyn counterparts. This was mainly because CSSIW inspectors were less familiar with the process of forming quality judgements. Estyn's inspectors had been evaluating and grading the quality of educational provision in non-maintained settings (and in other provision) for many years. The reporting style and quality assurance process adopted for the joint inspections also represented a different way of working for CSSIW. Estyn's systems for ensuring that its inspectors meet reporting deadlines are well established and closely managed. The systems and processes in place (including the IT systems) allow for a rapid process of evidence recording, evaluating and reporting evidence.

For all of these positive reasons, the project board determined that the joint inspection pilot would adopt many of Estyn's systems and processes. CSSIW inspectors welcomed the opportunity to learn from Estyn's established working practices. One consequence of the approach taken, however, was that the two groups of inspectors were faced with different 'learning curves' during the joint working pilot, which was compounded by the IT problems experienced by CSSIW inspectors (see below).

Due to the organisations' different starting points, inspectors demonstrated different levels of assurance when it came to undertaking their work during the early stages of the joint inspections. Linked to this, some Estyn inspectors felt that the process was lacking the level

of challenge or rigour they would have expected (some noted that they are used to peer inspectors questioning each other to ensure that the judgements they reach are sound and robust). It should be noted that this changed over time, particularly as CSSIW inspectors became increasingly familiar with the new approach, and had grown in confidence in making judgements.

- Adopting Estyn's systems for the joint inspection pilot was a positive choice that in the main worked very well.
- However, CSSIW's IT systems presented challenges during the joint inspection pilot. Problems related to IT impacted on the ability to test joint working practices in full during the pilot. This needs to be resolved before further pilot work is undertaken.

As described, it was decided that Estyn's VIR would be the means by which inspectors in the field would collate their evidence. There were, however, a significant number of issues that CSSIW inspectors had in gaining access to the VIR that impeded their ability to work effectively alongside their Estyn colleagues.

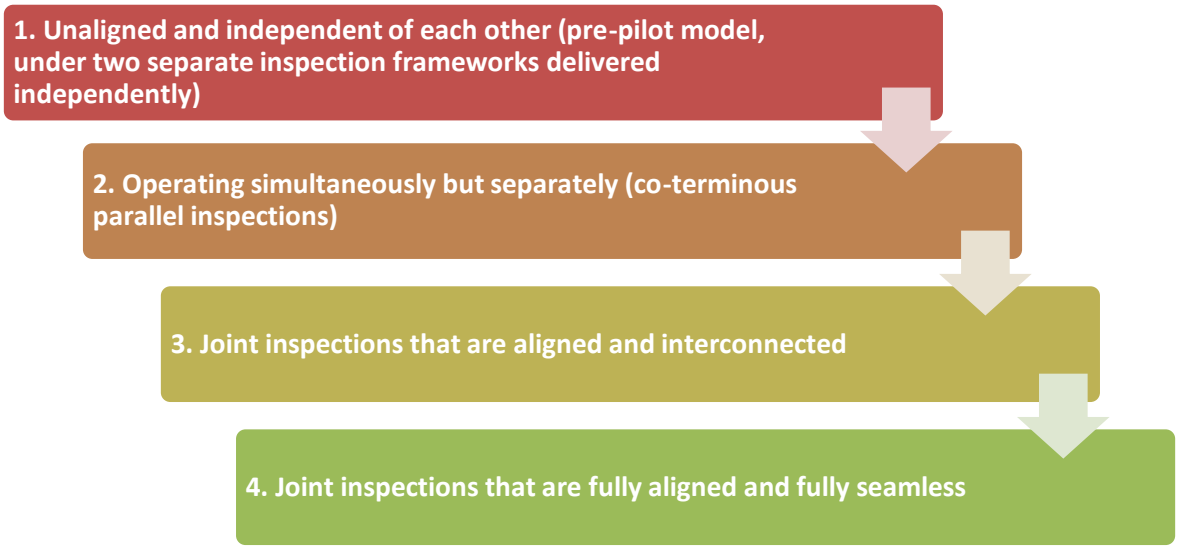
IT problems arose during initial training events. It was evident that issues with the Government Secure Internet meant that CSSIW inspectors were unable to record evidence electronically without an internet connection. Despite various attempts by senior managers within CSSIW, the failure to find a solution to the IT issues prior to the inspection visits caused considerable difficulties for CSSIW's inspectors and resulted in additional time pressures and workload.

CSSIW's inspectors were therefore working under different conditions to their Estyn counterparts. All inspectors from both organisations reported that this had impeded the inspection process significantly. Inspection teams worked around the problems with varying degrees of success: some teams compensated for the failure to record and collate evidence electronically by spending additional time discussing findings face-to-face in order to form joint judgements. A small number of CSSIW inspectors found 'work-arounds' for the IT problems which meant they were still able to input information electronically. The IT problems proved frustrating for both partners, and led inspectors to question whether organisations can deliver a truly aligned joint inspection without the corresponding alignment in their IT systems.

- The pilot demonstrated that the model can work in practice: the joint inspection framework proved fit for purpose as a tool to enable the two inspectorates to cooperate effectively. That is not to say that there is no room for improvement, but it is to recognise that overall, the pilot was a success.
- At its best, the joint inspection pilot delivered truly aligned and streamlined inspections in the view of both inspectors and settings. A minority of joint inspections completed during the pilot were seen as being simultaneous but separate processes.

Settings perceived the joint inspection pilots in different ways depending on the degree of alignment they observed between the inspectors. These ranged from those who felt very

positively that the inspectors' work was integrated to other settings who held a much more negative impression that two separate inspections were taking place at the same time, increasing their workload without a corresponding benefit. Based on the feedback of providers and inspectors, the evidence points to the fact that progress towards effective and fully aligned joint inspection can be considered along a continuum. There are arguably four stages on this continuum that range from the previous (separate) inspection model through to the model of joint working to which CSSIW and Estyn aspire, as illustrated below.



At the moment it is debatable where the two organisations are on the continuum, but much of the practice observed during the pilot can be classified in the third category, depicted above. It was, of course, possible for the organisations to reach stage four in the continuum, but it should be noted that getting as far as stage three represents a significant achievement – moving from a position of independent organisations with a common group of settings to inspect, to one that embodies the important principle of alignment. Settings, inspectors and managers all identified that more needed to be done (see Learning points section 2.4 and Areas for Further Consideration section 3), but that there had been much progress.

2.4 Learning points for future joint activity

This section highlights some of the key learning points to emerge from the pilot, specifically linked to communication, reporting processes and the inclusion of a broad mix of settings in any further piloting activity.

2.4.1 Communication

- Communication between inspection teams prior to, during and after the inspection was crucial. Evidence from the pilots suggests that effective communication had a major impact on how well inspections are delivered and received, especially as settings become used to these new approaches.

During the training, it was suggested to inspectors that they should build time into their joint inspections for regular team discussion. Evidence collected during the evaluation suggested that such discussions, and the quality of communication more generally, were a significant factor in how well the joint inspections were delivered and received, however the way in which these happened varied in terms of length and frequency.

Where communication was less effective either before and/or during the inspections, the inspectors reported that there were greater challenges in making effective judgements and decisions about the quality of care and educational provision. If there had been little discussion ahead of the field visit, there was a degree of confusion about how each inspector would operate, what data and evidence they would collect and how the framework would be populated. These challenges were exacerbated either in larger settings and/or those with more complex layouts for example where children were located in different buildings on one site, or where they were in lots of different rooms. This lack of clarity (where it occurred) was also evident to settings.

Guidance issued to inspectors stated that they should meet and discuss findings on the afternoon of the first day. However, communication challenges manifested themselves when they were unable to find sufficient time to discuss the outcomes of day 1 before going back into the setting on the morning of day 2. (Where this did not happen, it impacted on the ability of inspectors to clarify their positions in respect of the themes and key areas of the framework ahead of day 2. In a number of cases the problems CSSIW inspectors had with the IT systems exacerbated the teams' ability to meet and discuss findings.)

Conversely, other examples during the pilot demonstrated that effective communication between the two inspectors led to a much closer and more efficient working relationship. Indeed, the evidence suggests that it is the key success criterion that predicted whether settings (and the inspectors themselves) were confident that the judgements made were genuinely joint judgements, and were an accurate reflection of the combined evidence that had been collected.

- Good communication between inspectors helped support a shared understanding of judgements reached.

This issue of communication is also important in respect of the clarity around *how* judgements were arrived at. The descriptions written for 'good' judgements by the Project Team across the framework were welcomed by all. However it was left to the professional judgement of the inspection teams to extrapolate their findings to fit the other rating categories. Good communication between inspection teams led to a positive and shared understanding of the other categories described clearly to settings.
This is especially important on the occasions where there were some shortcomings identified especially around how to make joint decisions when there was initial disagreement. The disagreements may have been between inspectors or indeed between inspectors and settings. These were resolved with some pairs of inspectors effectively, but less so for others, and greater consistency was identified as an important improvement.

2.4.2 Reporting processes

- Reporting, editing and quality assurance processes involved were initially protracted and revealed inconsistencies in approaches between the two organisations.
- Despite some improvements as the pilot progressed, work remains to be done in this area.

As noted above, there were some differences in working practices that were revealed and addressed through joint working. To a considerable degree this was a positive process, but evidence suggests that in respect of reporting, editing and quality assuring this was not as universally effective as it might have been. In particular, evidence presented during the evaluation indicated that there remains a need to arrive at a clear agreement on the style of reports and how to ensure that the appropriate amount of supporting evidence is included in joint inspection reports, and is agreed by both inspectorates.

With the benefit of hindsight, these matters received insufficient attention during the inspectors' training. This meant that there was a lack of clarity about how exactly the reporting process in particular would be undertaken. That said, inspectors worked well to learn 'on the job' and to pick up approaches from each other as to how evidence might be presented.

Quality assurance processes also presented challenges for inspectors and colleagues across the two inspectorates. It became a very protracted, lengthy and resource-intensive process which did not really work to the satisfaction of either organisation.

Whilst the organisations were satisfied they discharged their duties effectively and made standardised judgements, there were a number of concerns raised by settings that there was a disconnect between messages received during feedback and the final reports. They pointed to the problems as they perceived them with the quality assurance mechanisms and suggested that work needs to be done to prioritise this in the next phase of joint working. This may in part be explained by the difference in understanding that the organisations have about quality assurance, but it is likely to improve as the inspectorates increase their alignment over time.

2.4.3 Testing the model in a wider range of settings

- The pilot tested joint working in settings that had put themselves forward and proactively chose to take part in the pilot.
- A second phase of the pilot should include a broader range of settings in order to test joint working in a wider range of contexts.

Pilot settings had applied to be involved in the joint inspections and were supportive and by definition enthusiastic for the development. They variously described themselves as wanting to be at the cutting edge of new practice and viewed the joint inspection pilot as a means of driving further improvements in their provision. They had expressed an interest in

being involved in the pilots because they believed it to be a progressive, innovative model, and as 'early adopters' were keen to know what was to come of this pilot.

Joint working was therefore successfully delivered on a small scale and under relatively 'controlled' conditions. This is not a criticism of the approach, and nor should it be seen to minimise the fact that there were challenges in delivering the pilot as described above. However, the fact that the joint inspection pilot did not deal with settings likely to be non-compliant with the regulations or in need of significant improvement means that the joint approach has not been fully stress-tested. There is an argument that the settings selected for any future piloting of the model should include a broader cross-section, including providers with lower past ratings. This would allow for the testing of joint governance and accountability structures so that a determination can be made as to whether they will stand up to the kind of scrutiny that would lead to judgements being challenged formally, perhaps even in court proceedings.

The evaluators also received comments from the inspectors on the benefit realised within CSSIW now it has moved to an outcomes framework across the whole of its childcare work. This has meant that a larger number of CSSIW staff are now engaged in making ratings and judgements.

2.4.4 Joint inspections through the medium of Welsh

- The pilot inspections revealed differences in the capacity of the inspectorates to conduct all aspects of joint inspections through the medium of Welsh.
- It is imperative that all inspectors undertaking joint inspections in Welsh-medium settings are able to deliver all aspects of the joint inspection confidently through the medium of Welsh, ensuring parity across all settings.

During the pilot Estyn ensured that its inspectors who were assigned to inspections in Welsh-medium settings were able to engage with staff, collect evidence and report through the medium of Welsh. Senior managers and inspectors interviewed explained that this is usual practice for Estyn. Evidence presented during the evaluation found that CSSIW inspectors selected for joint inspections in Welsh-medium settings lacked confidence in their Welsh language skills to complete all tasks (including evidence collection and reporting) through the medium of Welsh. As a result, all reporting and QA processes were managed through the medium of English as part of the joint inspection pilot, including for inspection of Welsh-medium settings. Some senior managers noted that additional training may be required to ensure that inspectors from CSSIW are equipped to deliver all aspects of the joint inspection confidently through the medium of Welsh.

3. Areas for further consideration

This final section draws the evaluation evidence together and leads us to the 'Areas for Further Consideration' borne out of the data provided during the study. They are contextualised by a brief commentary about the nature of what needs to be considered. They are not however presented in any formal priority order, but do reflect the general weight of opinion about the need to improve these areas. As an over-riding principle it is suggested that whatever happens, Estyn and CSSIW realise the amount of expert knowledge that resides in the experiences of the people who have participated in the pilot and do not miss the opportunity to utilise that resource.

Based on the broad conclusions presented above, we have identified six priority areas for the next phase of the pilot. We trust that these prioritised 'Areas for Further Consideration' will help the organisations make an effective transition from this pilot project to scaling up joint inspection activity. In the view of the evaluation team, further consideration of these issues will help strengthen joint working or clarify working arrangements. The priorities are listed here, and detail is provided on each in the table that follows:

1. **Review the accountability and governance arrangements for joint working with a view to encouraging greater strategic alignment.**

2. **Provide greater consistency of working practices in part through the development of a Memorandum of Understanding.**

3. **Ensure read across between the Joint Inspection Framework and the other frameworks of CSSIW and Estyn for non-maintained settings.**

4. **Invest in an ongoing commitment to the joint training and development of inspectors, and review the materials and resources for subsequent phases of training.**

5. **Provide a clearer link between the judgements reached and how settings might improve their provision in order to secure better outcomes in care and education for children.**

6. **Work to maintain the consistency of approach across all setting types, including the prioritisation of the quality assurance processes (including, by extension, report writing).**

As an additional point for consideration, we feel that it would be beneficial if both sets of inspectors take part in a joint debrief on the pilot, perhaps prompted by the gathering of findings in the evaluation.

Area for Further Consideration	Commentary to support the conclusion reached
1 **Review the accountability and governance arrangements for joint working with a view to encouraging greater strategic alignment.**	There appear to be three different governance and accountability challenges for the next phase of work post-pilot: 1. There are very different strategic and legislative bases for the two inspectorates. The pilot has led to an increased awareness of each other's roles, but there is still some work to be done to ensure that the core purpose of each is able to be served and is not lost in joint working. These differences in the role of regulator (concerned with enforcement of standards) and inspector (concerned with improvement) need to be rehearsed and reconciled further before the pilot is taken further. Governance and accountability mechanisms need to be codified in order to ensure that arrangements are robust, and that there is an effective test of evidence gathering processes if conclusions and judgements are challenged in court; 2. At the project working group level colleagues from Estyn and CSSIW have worked well. However the membership of the project working group was asymmetrical with a more senior involvement of Estyn colleagues than CSSIW decided to supply. One of the unintended consequences of this was unnecessary delay and confusion when it came to key decisions being made. Further, given the crucial role of the senior inspectors in this process, it might be beneficial if senior CSSIW inspectors take part in inspections in the next phase of the work. Overall, operational and project management arrangements, including the internal infrastructure of how the next phase is to be governed should be reviewed to ensure it is fit for purpose; and 3. The joint inspection arrangements that have been developed in the pilot need to be tested in the field in more challenging environments to ensure the concept is robust in all circumstances. This may require a review of how expert the joint inspection process is to be governed in order to satisfy the issue raised in point 1 above, especially given the legal scrutiny to which these judgements can be exposed. It may also be useful to think through whether having a pooled team of inspectors who become experts in undertaking joint working is developed. The arrangements that are needed may well already be in place, but we have seen no codified evidence that they are. If these are 'understood' but not documented, then this needs to be addressed.
2 **Provide greater consistency of working practices in part through the development of a Memorandum of Understanding.**	The pilot revealed differences in working *cultures* between Estyn and CSSIW in many positive ways. There is a need to continue to respect and value the role of each inspectorate as the work develops. There is much to be gained from continuing to learn from each other. The pilot also revealed differences in working *practices* between Estyn and CSSIW in terms of recording evidence and reporting. Despite discussing the plan and resourcing at the outset of the pilot, there were also different expectations in relation to meeting reporting deadlines, when work would take place, when drafts should be ready, and generally how the inspectors would work as a team. Overall, the resourcing of the organisations and approach to running the pilots was very different. Accordingly inspectors worked different types of day. At times, this got in the way of effective communication between the teams, and impeded

Area for Further Consideration	Commentary to support the conclusion reached
	the efficient running of the joint inspection pilot. It is suggested that a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the organisations be developed which would address these matters by clearly specifying how the inspectors would work, to what deadlines, within an agreed resource allocation. An agreed MoU that genuinely was sympathetic to the way the organisations operate and which found an effective compromise between the very different working patterns to find a genuinely shared new way of working would go some considerable way to resolving the majority of operational problems observed during the pilot (notwithstanding CSSIW's difficulties with the Government Secure Internet as described above which requires separate attention).
3 **Ensure read across between the Joint Inspection Framework and CSSIW's new inspection framework for non-maintained settings.**	CSSIW have now moved to an inspection framework based on ratings across all childcare settings. This is very positive as CSSIW inspectors are now in a better position to understand the process and the importance of consistency in reaching ratings/judgements on a large scale across a number of settings. However it is crucial that there is alignment between the joint inspection framework and CSSIW's and Estyn's other frameworks for non-maintained settings, otherwise confusion for both inspectors and settings will be result. This further alignment would allow settings to compare their judgements over time when subsequent inspections are completed, regardless of whether the visit was undertaken jointly by CSSIW and Estyn (i.e. once in every six years) or whether it was undertaken by CSSIW individually in the intervening period either once or twice (depending on the nature and circumstances of the setting).
4 **Invest in an ongoing commitment to the joint training and development of inspectors, and review the materials and resources for subsequent phases of training.**	The pilot involved a greater shift in working practices for CSSIW's inspectors. Estyn inspectors had to learn how to work alongside another organisation but CSSIW inspectors had to do this in addition to learning a whole new approach to inspection. Consequently, there was more for their inspectors to take on board and familiarise themselves with during the training and at other stages of the pilot. In particular, the process of forming judgements was a relatively new experience for CSSIW inspectors. Training for inspectors was comprehensive. Despite investing a significant amount of time in these areas, greater attention needs to be focused on certain aspects of the joint inspection process, notably: how to collect evidence jointly under various themes; reaching joint judgements; the importance of challenge and critical reflection during the inspection; reporting styles; and quality assurance. There are two very different cultures coming together in this joint inspection framework. One of the consequences of this different culture is that Estyn inspectors felt confident to critique and challenge the evidence being collected by CSSIW colleagues to help make the findings more robust, but did not feel that CSSIW colleagues challenged them in kind. This issue may resolve itself over time, but might need to be thought about carefully in subsequent joint working. Moving forward there is a need to ensure that internal challenge and critical reflection is built into the model of joint working. This could be given greater focus during training activity.

Area for Further Consideration	Commentary to support the conclusion reached
	Finally, it should be recognised that no other group of inspectors who work on the joint inspections within non-maintained settings will not have the same amount of lead-in time that this group has benefitted from. This should be seen as an asset, as their knowledge should be valued and used positively in the ongoing commitment to the joint training and development of inspectors.
5 **Provide a clearer link between the judgements reached and how settings might improve their provision in order to secure better outcomes in care and education for children.**	Whilst the development of an exemplar / criteria describing 'good' was viewed as a positive first step, there are no equivalent criteria describing the other rating levels for the joint inspection framework. Some settings have complained about this as it does not allow them to see how they need to develop and improve. Despite the fact that criteria for 'good' exist there are questions about its application. There is evidence to indicate that the framework was not applied consistently across all pilot settings, with variations in terms of the evidence that was collected and reported. A number of inspectors felt that additional exemplar paragraphs that describe 'excellent' and 'adequate' may help ensure consistency in arriving at judgements. This was particularly the case for inspectors less experienced in formulating quality judgements. It is important to note that these variations were addressed through the moderation and quality assurance processes. That said, there are still improvements needed in the quality assurance process (see 6 below). Ensuring that settings are clear about how they can improve their provision is crucial in developing the work together. Some settings reported that they were unclear how they could improve their rating based on the outcomes of their joint inspection – e.g. from a good to an excellent, or from adequate to good. This underlines the need for clarity in recommendations given, and is a call for a greater focus on how to secure better outcomes in care and education for children.
6 **Work to maintain the consistency of approach across all setting types, including the prioritisation of the quality assurance processes (including, by extension, report writing).**	Settings reported that they valued the fact that both inspectorates were present at the same time, noting that there was a 'whole child and whole facility approach'. There were, however, a range of different types of setting involved in the pilot. On the basis of the evidence received, it would appear that certain types of settings are more suited to joint inspection than others. For example if there are roughly equal numbers of children who have education funding and those that don't, the joint inspection can work very effectively. This is especially true if the setting has all of its activities in one room. More complex buildings with many different rooms are much harder to undertake effective joint working in. This is exacerbated if there are large numbers of children in the nursery do not receive education funding. It would be very useful to ascertain how many settings match this description to allow the inspectorates to determine whether a different balance of their respective contributions is needed in such places. However, in some settings the imbalance can be significant and clear guidance is required to address this. There is also, to a degree, a lack of clarity about which inspectors should gather evidence against which elements of the framework. In the view of some inspectors, it is still unclear whether CSSIW inspectors gather robust evidence for Estyn and vice versa. This is especially problematic where there are large numbers of children not covered by education funding. Some pairs of inspectors worked this through well and shared the task effectively, but this did not work so

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	well for others. It is not clear the extent to which this is happening across the board, and this needs to be addressed. The editing and quality assurance processes involved in the pilot were protracted and revealed inconsistencies in approach across the two organisations. Through working together the process was robust and with first and second editors it made sure that quality was maintained throughout the process. However, there exists a need to ensure even greater consistency in approaches to quality assurance during the second phase of joint working given that it is still relatively immature. Much work needs to be done in order to ensure that confidence is maintained within the inspectors and settings about the conclusions reached. This will be an effective test of the revised governance structure for the pilot advocated above, and is absolutely crucial given the need for this joint working approach to be stress-tested.