

Corroborating evidence

The team described using an evidence grid to populate with evidence before and during the fieldwork, which worked well as a method to collate evidence in a succinct and central way. It was designed to help the team as they went through the assessment process, corroborating the evidence and eventually helping to form the basis of the assessment report.

If there had been more time ahead of the fieldwork it could have been an even more useful tool in informing the fieldwork, instead with so little time at this point, not all existing evidence had been added. There was also feedback of the need to improve how it was used by better summarising evidence and agreeing a method for highlighting key evidence. This would support the assessment leads in managing the overall evidence gathering process and later in report writing. There was general support for continuing use of the grid but with more guidance, as one team member explained:

“If we're going to use the evidence grids as we are doing now, I don't know whether that will change, there will need to be some guidance for that in terms of how we should fill that in and how that information should then be pulled through from the evidence grid for the managers.”

At the end of each fieldwork day, the team usually held a corroboration meeting. Led by the lead for that pilot, this followed a process of working through the timetable of meetings that had happened that day and sharing key points from each.

We observed several corroboration meetings, and feedback from others showed that they provided opportunity for people to test out what they had heard alongside others' understanding, which frequently led the team to areas of interest to address in further conversations. The contribution of external team members was also critical at this point, and they were able to clarify or challenge thinking with their expert knowledge, for example in clarifying typical local authority governance or responsibilities of certain roles.

The team shared some mixed views about the effectiveness of the format of corroboration meetings, with some suggesting there is no other way to do it, but others finding it too long-winded especially at the end of a long day. Overall, it was thought it improved over the course of the pilots as the team became more focused on sharing the key points and less so on other commentary about their meetings. There was suggestion that the evidence grid could be better used as part of corroboration to help identify gaps. We also heard some thoughts on whether other members of the team could take the lead on the corroboration meetings, allowing the pilot lead to better absorb what was being said.