

Applying to be an associate assessor – frequently asked questions

Question 1: What is an associate assessor?

Associate assessors are professionals with considerable practice experience (including managerial and strategic experience) in services for children, adults or justice. Associate assessors participate in joint inspections by agreement with their employer. We aim to have at least one associate assessor working with us on every joint inspection team.

Question 2: What is the legal basis for involvement in inspections?

The Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010 (“the Act”) provides the legislative basis for joint inspections. The Care Inspectorate has the authority to deploy teams of inspectors, including associate assessors.

Question 3: Why does the Care Inspectorate use associate assessors?

The inclusion of associate assessors brings current practice perspectives to our joint inspections and can enhance our understanding of the contemporary picture of service planning and delivery. Involving associate assessors contributes to transparency in our work and allows greater peer challenge and learning.

At the same time, their involvement provides an ideal opportunity to help build capacity for self-evaluation and improvement in their local partnerships. There is an opportunity for associate assessors to provide feedback on their experiences at the end of their inspection involvement. Previous associate assessors have told us that they found participation in inspection beneficial because it enabled them to contribute to improvement and development within their own work and partnership settings and also enhanced their professional learning and development.

Question 4: Who can become an associate assessor?

An associate assessor must have considerable practice experience (including managerial and strategic experience) in services for either children, adults or justice. Dependent on the task, experience at a joint strategic level, working within formal partnership structures and previous involvement in service improvement work may be necessary. Examples include professionals currently working in health, local authority social work and education services, police, SCRA, third and independent sector services. Further detail about the required skills, knowledge and experience is provided in the person specification within the nomination form.

Question 5: What activities does the role entail?

Associate assessors undertake activities such as: reading and analysing self-evaluations and supporting evidence; contributing to inspection team meetings; record reading; undertaking interviews and focus groups with staff; and meeting with people who use services.

As part of an inspection team, associate assessors are responsible for gathering and recording evidence and analysing this to reach balanced conclusions. This is done to agreed timescales at each stage of the inspection.

Question 6: What preparation and support is provided?

Associate assessors will be provided with an opportunity to attend an orientation or briefing session before commencing involvement in an inspection. There will be opportunities to ask questions and learn about the role. It is important that associate assessors prioritise attendance and take time to read any recommended documents or study inspection tools before taking part in the inspection.

Once the inspection is underway, associate assessors are paired with a member of the inspection team for support and guidance. Feedback from previous associate assessors highlighted that this buddying approach, together with the support of the wider inspection team, had been particularly beneficial.

Question 7: How much time is needed?

The amount of time needed will depend on the needs of the particular inspection. This may range from four days to a maximum of 15 days of inspection activity. More information can be provided on request.

We normally aim to provide the associate assessors with at least three months' notice of any proposal to deploy them, giving sufficient time for this to be agreed or declined. Associate assessors are informed of the location at the time of the formal announcement of the inspection and the inspection lead is then in contact directly to discuss the deployment arrangements and specific requirements.

Since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, we have employed a hybrid approach in our strategic inspections. As a consequence, the amount of time onsite may vary depending on the inspection and the circumstances of the local area. Engagement is undertaken using a mix of face to face and remote approaches that best meet the requirements of the inspection and the needs of the children, young people, adults and professionals we are speaking with.

Question 8: What equipment will I need?

You will be able to use the laptop or tablet computer already provided to you by your employer for recording your inspection activities and analysis, providing that this supports you to access our documents when working remotely. More information can be provided on request and we will discuss IT equipment with all associate assessors.

You will need to have your employer's permission to use any equipment that they provide.

It is helpful if you have a driving licence and access to a car but this is not essential. You will need to be insured for business use if you are using your car for inspection purposes.

Question 9: Who meets the associate assessor's expenses?

We are unable to reimburse any organisation for their employee's salary or backfill to their position for the time they spend on inspection as an associate assessor. We will arrange and meet the costs of travel and accommodation and reimburse the employee for any additional subsistence costs incurred by them in line with the Care Inspectorate's allowances.

Question 10: How does the application process work?

Applications are made using the nomination form. Consent must be granted from your employer **before** submitting the form and your line manager is required to consent to this on behalf of their organisation in Part B of the form. Please note that it is our expectation that your head of practice (for example your chief social work officer, chief officer, chief executive etc) approves your application in line with their responsibilities for oversight of learning and development.

If you would like to speak to someone about the associate assessor role, please email: StrategicTeam@careinspectorate.gov.scot to request an informal discussion with a joint team member prior to submitting a nomination form.

Once deployment has been agreed, formal confirmation will be sent out to finalise the arrangements. Prior to deployment, associate assessors will be asked to read and agree to the Code of Practice for Associate Assessors.

Question 11: What does a line manager need to do if a member of their team is expressing interest in the role?

Line managers, in consultation with the nominee's head of practice (for example chief social work officer, chief officer, chief executive etc), must consider carefully whether a member of staff should apply for the role. In particular they must consider:

- Whether the applicant is suitable for the role as outlined in the person specification on the nomination form.
- Whether the applicant is able to be deployed for the required time period.

The manager must confirm that the applicant is a member of the Protecting Vulnerable Groups scheme and as such are suitable to work with children, young people and vulnerable adults. On signing the declaration in Part B of the nomination form, the line manager is agreeing to update the Care Inspectorate should any protection concerns arise.

If in agreement, line managers should complete Part B of the nomination form. Nomination forms are not progressed if Part B is incomplete. Prior to becoming involved in any inspection, associate assessors are given a letter confirming the dates of the inspection activity which they are expected to share with their line manager. Please note that we expect associate assessors to be fully released from their normal employment duties while engaged in inspection activities.

Question 12: What does the Care Inspectorate do with applicant's information?

The Care Inspectorate respects the applicant's privacy and will only use personal information collected to support the process for them to become an associate assessor in accordance with Data Protection legislation. To find out how we handle personal information please read our [privacy notice](#). More details can be found on the nomination form.

Question 13: Is there any opportunity for feedback from associate assessors?

Following the inspection, associate assessors are provided with an opportunity to reflect on their contribution to the inspection and how they might apply any learning gained to their day-to-day work. We ask that associate assessors complete a short survey in the month following their deployment and again at six months. This will help us identify the ways in which services have benefitted from the learning gained by associate assessors and ensure that we offer the best possible experience to them.