

Follow-up report for Performance Inspection: Perth and Kinross

Introduction

The Social Work Inspection Agency (SWIA) was established in April 2005 to undertake performance inspections of all of Scotland's local authority social work services between 2005 and 2008. Each inspection focuses on the approach to continuous improvement of the local authority.

SWIA subsequently monitors the implementation of recommendations made in performance inspection reports, undertaking a follow-up inspection visit one year after publication.

SWIA uses a six-point scale in its evaluation of social work services. It does not re-evaluate these when completing the follow-up report but does indicate if satisfactory progress has or has not been made for each recommendation. The report also highlights any key issues which have arisen since the inspection.

The inspection of Perth and Kinross Council - March 2007

The performance inspection of social work services in Perth and Kinross was conducted in September 2006, and the report published in March 2007. It was a positive report overall, with fifteen recommendations on areas for improvement.

Social work services provided by the Council were generally well regarded by service users, partners and other stakeholders. Good outcomes were achieved for many service users and there was clear evidence of ongoing improvements across the two service areas. There was a strong and committed workforce and most staff spoke positively of training and development opportunities offered by the Council.

Improvement was required in some areas including:

- continuing with efforts to establish effective ways of measuring outcomes;
- continuing to improve communication between senior management and front line staff;
- undertaking regular reviews and evaluations of internal specialist teams and services;
- expanding paid employment opportunities for people with disabilities; and
- improving performance in offering carer assessments.

The attitude and motivation for improving social work services within the Council was positive and we found capacity for improvement in Perth and Kinross to be very good.

Basis of the follow-up report

The performance inspection report made fifteen recommendations, aimed at improving services. This report will describe progress made in relation to each in turn. This is based on the following activity undertaken by the Council and SWIA since the publication of the performance report:

- the Council submitted an action plan to SWIA twelve weeks after the publication of the report.
- quarterly monitoring visits were carried out by inspectors from the publication of the report in 2007 until the follow up visit in 2008.
- progress reports and supporting evidence prepared by the Council were submitted to SWIA throughout the year.
- a follow up visit to the Council took place from 21 to 23 April 2008. It was carried out by two SWIA inspectors

See Appendix 1 for details of the follow up visit.

Main points for action

Recommendation 1: The Council should continue to put in place and improve ways of measuring outcomes for people who use services.

The Council had made progress in this area. However, it was acknowledged that there was still work to be done. The Council had focused work on its Single Outcome Agreement and how it linked into the BMIP (business management improvement plan) of each service area. Each manager we spoke to during the follow up was familiar with these processes and their relevant responsibilities.

In Housing and Community Care (H&CC), we were told about a number of tools being used to measure outcomes, including the BMIP, LIT (local improvement targets), JPIAF, and asking service users. We read the most recent BMIP for H&CC and noted there was a new column for the measurement of outcomes. Staff in learning disabilities told us about a survey undertaken with service users which asked "*when you are using the service, does it help you?*". The results of which had been positive. In Education and Children's Services (ECS), we heard about a number of new outcome measures that had been put in place. For example, how long children had been on the child protection register and the recording of reasons for ending children's supervision requirements. Both ECS and H & CC had done some surveys with service users asking about the impact of social work interventions and the difference these had made.

Overall, we noted the Council had put in place more measurement tools for capturing outcomes of services users. We would expect to see greater evidence of outcome data emerging from these activities in years to come.

Recommendation 2: The Council should continue with efforts to improve educational outcomes for looked after children.

Although the most recent published figures had not improved¹, we heard about a number of initiatives to improve educational outcomes for looked after children that had either been put in place or strengthened since the time of the inspection. These included:

- a strategy for looked after children was produced in 2007. This had emphasised the importance of improving the understanding of all professionals in raising the educational achievements of looked after children.
- a raising achievement strategy was produced – titled “*Attainment and Achievement for All*”. In this, the Council denoted attainment as the formal recognition evaluated against specified standards and achievement, as a process of developing a sense of personal success and achieving as highly as possible. A Raising Achievement Strategy Group (programme board) was established to oversee and evaluate the implementation of the strategy. It reported directly to the Lifelong Learning Partnership.
- an education co-ordinator had been approved for vulnerable children excluded or in part time education, which included looked after children. This post focused not only on educational achievement but on other accomplishments. The post was jointly funded with education services.
- integrated team meetings were now taking place at both primary and secondary schools. Police, health, school work and education attended these meetings where all children and young people whose educational experience was at risk, were discussed. This included looked after children. Through these meetings, it had become clear that some schools did not know which enrolled children were actually looked after. This had now changed. Furthermore, these meetings improved each professional’s understanding of their respective roles in meeting the needs of looked after children.
- the senior integrated team (SIT) continued to meet on a regular basis. This team was observed during the original performance inspection. Senior representatives from education, police and social work discussed young people at risk of exclusion from school and those who were not achieving, with a view to providing enhanced supports.
- corporate parenting pilot - twenty looked after children had been assigned to 10 senior officers (2 each) from across the Council. The senior officers will receive updates on the child’s overall progress (including education) and will

¹ The Council provided SWIA with internal figures which showed improvement from the published figures of 2006/2007. The Council figures for 2007/2008 showed that 68.6% of young people who ceased to be looked after, had obtained at least one SCQF level 3 (any subject) – up from 50% on 2006/2007 and 37.1% had attained at least SCQF level 3 in English and Maths. For the purposes of this report, published figures from 2006/2007 were used, but these improved figures {which will be externally validated} were noted.

act as a virtual parent/sponsor to each child. It is hoped this will help to highlight the challenges faced by some looked after children to succeed in education and in other areas of their lives. Front line and management staff we spoke to were aware of this project and were very supportive of its potential.

- staff and managers were enthusiastic about the forthcoming opening in 2009 of the Almondbank centre. This centre will offer vocational and part-time educational opportunities for young people struggling in mainstream school settings.² It will encourage and support young people back into mainstream schools.

Staff and managers told us there were still issues with young people being excluded from mainstream schools. In particular we noted the numbers of children being excluded from primary schools remained high³. We were told that the new Executive Director and the Head of Children's Services were looking closely at this issue and that there was a drive to keep children and young people in mainstream schools⁴. Furthermore, there had been a greater acknowledgement from education services about the need to offer a more flexible curriculum to some young people.

Given the amount of activity in this area, we concluded that the Council had made progress in efforts to improve educational outcomes for looked after children and young people. We expect to see continued improvement in the published figures over the next two years and would encourage the Council to continue with its focused attention to this important area.

Recommendation 3: Both ECS and H&CC should continue to keep under review how they involve service users in care planning. This ongoing process should involve service users.

Staff and managers in ECS told us how there had been considerable efforts to improve the involvement of parents and children in care planning. For example, we were told that for child protection conferences there were now laminated placemats for parents and other participants which explained the process, what was going to happen in the meetings and what input they would be looking for from families. We were also provided with a recent service user action plan for ECS which identified a number of areas and ways in which service users could and should be involved in care planning.

Staff had sent a questionnaire to parents, children and young people who attended reviews in 2007. One hundred were distributed and 57 were returned, 80% of respondents felt that they had been helped to express their views at the reviews. However, staff told us parents were not signing care plans, as they often disagreed with them. Yet, their signatures were intended to show that they had seen the care plan. Staff admitted that they should be more proactive in stating on the care plans where a parent had not signed, their reasons for this, or –that they had seen it and

² Almondbank Centre will also offer many other services to children and young people in Perth and Kinross

³ This impacted on both looked after and non-looked after children.

⁴ The council's own provisional figures indicate a decline in the number of primary school exclusions of 50% in 2007/08

had been involved in discussions about it. The one young person we met told us that she had not seen a copy of her care plan, but that she had been involved in discussions about it, and had felt fully involved in its development.

Staff we met from H&CC were generally positive about how service users had become more involved in care planning. All agreed that service users were involved in reviews, but how often this happened varied across services. For example, older people in residential care had daily reviews with staff, but annual reviews involving the service user and family did not always happen. In one of the dementia units, we were told that reviews with service users and families took place monthly. We were also told about a number of events and consultations with services users, including those receiving home care or learning disabilities services.

Overall, we found the Council to be committed to involving service users in care planning and to improving this. Progress had been made in this area and staff and managers were very clear about how it could be further improved. This was confirmed by the evidence and from our meetings with staff and service users.

Recommendation 4: The senior management team of H&CC should take active steps to address low morale amongst staff groups. Particular attention should be given to those working in home care, learning disabilities and adult residential care services.

We did not focus on morale as an issue for ECS staff during the follow up. However, staff we met from ECS told us morale was good. They were fully staffed and those we met were enthusiastic about their work. They had repeated the SWIA staff survey and similar positive results were found with regards to staff morale in ECS.

We met with a small group of staff from H&CC, and heard mixed comments about morale from the specific groups identified in the performance inspection. Staff from homecare maintained that low morale was still an issue.

Staff from the learning disability service were very positive, those from residential care had more mixed views.

Learning disabilities

We were provided with a list of improvements to the learning disability service since the performance inspection and the best value review undertaken by the Council. It included details on how all teams now had service plans, held regular meetings and how both the supervision of staff, and employee review and development had improved.

The staff from learning disabilities we met were unanimously positive about the changes to the service since the performance inspection and confirmed the written evidence provided to us. More training had been offered, roles had been clarified, staff were getting more regular feedback and had been given more responsibilities. Importantly, the morale of staff had improved. The best value review of the learning disability service and the subsequent changes to the service were credited with these positive changes. Staff felt that the service was moving towards being the

'best service' it could be. The change was described to us by one staff members as "excellent".

Older people (residential care)

In older people residential care homes, we noted that staffing levels had improved. Staff we met were mixed about morale – with some thinking it had improved and others stating it remained low. Although, more posts were filled, there were still issues with staff being off sick and others being left to cover. There was a sense amongst the staff we met that managers were not doing enough to tackle staff who were repeatedly off sick and how this was affecting staff morale overall.

Home care

We did not meet a large number of staff from homecare. We received comments which included how the management structure had improved, but that there were still issues for front line staff. The Council continued to struggle with securing providers for rural households and this was impacting on existing staff. Staff felt managers were expecting too much from the workforce and there was not enough upwards communication to managers about the issues faced by front line staff. Managers were conscious of this and had made a commitment to continue looking at this area with a view to making improvements within defined timescales.

We recognised the efforts by the Council to improve staff morale and commend in particular what had been achieved in the learning disability service. However, we maintain that other important areas still require improvement. We noted that there was a solid homecare communication plan and that work had been done with providers of homecare services to improve commissioning and contracting arrangements (discussed under recommendation 14), with a view to easing pressures of existing staff. However, there was a sense that low morale continued to be an issue for those working in homecare. Continued efforts are required in this area.

Recommendation 5: The Council should extend efforts within its own capacity, with local businesses and the local community to establish paid employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

The Council had put in place a number of actions to address this recommendation. It had been working with Job Centre Plus, Perth College, Scottish Enterprise, Careers and the Voluntary Sector – together they made up the Local Employment Partnership. The group had agreed the following aim "to improve access to employability services and opportunities for sustained employment for vulnerable and disadvantaged groups and individuals living in both urban and rural areas". Furthermore, a corporate management group had been set up to take forward the Employability Strategy and Action Plan. This group had representation from across the Council and from both ECS and H&CC.

We were told that the CANABLE service was moving towards a social enterprise model, which would allow people with learning disabilities working there to be paid salaries. We were also told about work with the Health and Social Care Academy – which was a specific scheme to offer training to people, who would then be guaranteed an interview with the Council with potential for employment in health and social care. To date 10 people attended the academy in Cohort 1, 70% of whom are in work; 10 people attended in Cohort 2 which was completed in March 2008. Of these 60% were now in work and 3 were awaiting the outcome of interviews, 2 of whom applied to the Council. Four people were employed within social care settings in Perth and Kinross. Staff working in learning disabilities had noted that there were more employment opportunities for service users.

We think the Council had made progress towards meeting this recommendation and that positive attention had been given to this area.

Recommendation 6: The Council should develop and co-ordinate public information about social work services. Particular attention should be paid to how social work services are explained on the Council's website.

ECS had produced a number of different public information leaflets about the service. These covered a number of different areas, including child protection, being looked after and accessing support. We found these to be clear and informative. Service users, including young people had been shown the leaflets in draft and their comments were taken into account for the final drafts. We were told by staff that leaflets were in local offices and were sometimes distributed to service users on home visits. However, some staff acknowledged to us how they had not always remember to take them out to service users and this was something they could improve.

H&CC had also developed informative leaflets, available in area offices and these will now have a common strapline to those used in ECS. Staff were less familiar with them and it was not clear to what extent they were distributed to service users. A public relations/communications officer had just been appointed in H&CC. Managers were optimistic that this post would take forward actions to continue making improvements in this area - both in terms of the website and other sources of public information about H&CC.

The Council had made improvements to its website and this was acknowledged externally by the Society for Information Technology Management (SOCITM) which undertook a published analysis of local authority websites across the United Kingdom in 2008. Perth and Kinross website was rated as excellent along with seven other Scottish local authorities. The analysis also identified improvements in the website since 2007. SOCITM also published a supplementary report, where the Perth and Kinross website was rated as 'excellent' for accessibility for people with learning disabilities. During the follow up inspection, we noted improvements to the website, but some felt that access to information about social work services could still be further enhanced particularly in children's services.

Recommendation 7: The Council should take action to improve performance in offering carer assessments.

H&CC had produced a Carers Strategy 2008-2010. A draft of the strategy was presented to carers at a conference in late 2007. Following a consultation with carers, the Council changed the name of carer assessments to 'carer's support assessment – *What help do you need?*' We were provided with a copy of this and considered it was comprehensive and covered important areas. Staff described the changes as more "user friendly". We did not speak to service users about the new format but were told that feedback had been positive.

We were provided with the most recent figures and the number of carer assessments completed was 208 for 2007-2008 - surpassing the target of 120. We noted that the figure for 2006-2007 had been 24, representing a significant increase. However, we were cautioned that although there had been significant improvements, there had been under-reporting of the number of assessments completed in previous years. This recording issue had now been rectified. It was now recorded on SWIFT – whether or not an assessment was offered and whether or not it had been completed. This had allowed for more accurate figures to be calculated.

We think the Council had made good progress in meeting this recommendation.

Recommendation 8: The Council should review how key stakeholders are involved in service planning and development.

The Council had undertaken a number of events and initiatives over the past year to increase the involvement of service users in service planning and development. Several examples of this were provided to us as evidence. The following highlights a few of these from H&CC:

- external consultants were commissioned to carry out a consultation with community care service users. It took place in late 2007 and was published in March 2008. The consultation explored the views and experiences of people currently receiving home care, day care and care home services, and people who had recently gone through the assessment and care management process.
- as part of the Learning Disability Best Value Review, the Council commissioned the Scottish Consortium for Learning Disability to carry out a consultation with adults with learning disabilities and family carers. Questionnaires were distributed and four consultation events were conducted. Views gathered from these activities influenced changes made to the service.

Senior officers in Children's Services had been working with Youth Services over the past year to improve how they involved looked after and accommodated children and young people in service planning. They had not been able to get as many young people involved as they had anticipated, but they will continue to support this initiative and encourage other young people to get involved.

During the follow up inspection we met with two staff from Youth Services⁵ and a young person who was looked after and accommodated. This young person sat on the Council's Youth Forum, representing looked after and accommodated children and young people. She also sat on a specific sub-group for looked after and accommodated children. She told us how she and another young person had been working with youth services and social work services to organise a future event for looked after children. We also heard about work they had done on developing materials for children and young people coming into care – which would include information about what to expect, how to contact the children's rights officer and other useful contacts.

We heard from a number of different staff how the *Kaizen*⁶ method of focussed change and processes had been used to review some specific service areas. These included transitions from children's services to adult services for people with disabilities, the after-hours service and accessing community care social work services (Kaizen was also used for other council services). We heard how staff as stakeholders from different levels had been involved in these processes. Front line staff we met had not been directly involved but they were informed about the process and had been asked for input.

We think the Council had made good progress in meeting this recommendation.

Recommendation 9: The Council should regularly evaluate specialist projects and initiatives, both for improvement purposes and for measuring the impact of social work services on improving outcomes for service users.

This recommendation had implications for the whole service, but was directed at ECS and some specific projects within that service. The follow up inspection focused on these areas.

The Council had introduced a 'how good is our team' evaluation scheme. All teams were required to fill out a self evaluation. For the follow up, we were provided with reports from the permanence team, the re-integration team and the family change project. Strengths and areas for improvement were identified in each of these.

The Council had contracted BAAF (British Association for Adoption and Fostering) to act as an external consultant, consider the self evaluation of the permanence team and to determine if further independent scrutiny of the service was needed. This had not been recommended. The family change project and the re-integration team also underwent self evaluations and external consultants had been brought in to consider these. This work was ongoing at the time of our follow up inspection.

We were encouraged that the Council had initiated evaluations of these specialist projects and other teams throughout social work services. The evaluations were

⁵ Youth Services was a Culture and Leisure Services team within Education and Children's Services and was not a statutory social work team.

⁶ The Kaizen method was an incremental change/improvement business model. It involved taking key members of staff from their offices for a week of intense activity, aimed at identifying opportunities for immediate and long-term improvement.

used to inform the BMIPs for each service area and the OCIP (the corporate improvement plan). We would encourage this kind of self scrutiny and evaluation to be ongoing and applaud the council for linking it to their existing quality assurance activities.

Recommendation 10: The Council should fully and consistently implement its sickness management policy across H&CC and ECS.

In the past year, the Council had begun working with a new occupational health company and a new health and well being policy was introduced replacing the sickness management policy.

ECS staff told us how the new policy had been presented to staff. Information about it was available on the intranet for reference. Staff we met thought the policy was clearer than it had been during the performance inspection. A health and well being officer had been recruited and the post would be responsible for monitoring overall absence of all staff in ECS.

Staff from H&CC told us how this process had been “tightened up” and that absences were now regularly discussed at supervision with line managers. Some staff who had been off sick found the process of getting back to work supportive and positive. However, some staff were negative about colleagues who continued to be repeatedly off sick – impacting on their workloads and rotas, and informing their views that the procedures were not dealing effectively with persistent offenders. The Council had introduced mandatory health and well being training for all managers.

Overall we think there was a more consistent approach to managing sickness and staff absence and that the Council had made progress in meeting this recommendation.

Recommendation 11: Prior to the full implementation of policy led budgeting in 2008/09, H&CC and ECS should continue strengthening links between service priorities and budgets.

The Council had moved away from fully implementing policy led budgeting. It had decided it was not the best way forward. However, it was clear that service priorities were influencing the setting of budgets, service redesign and the commissioning of services. We read committee papers and were satisfied that there was a commitment to aligning services and budget plans and that this was well linked to the corporate plan and priorities.

We considered the Council had made progress in strengthening the link between service priorities and budgets.

Recommendation 12: All social work risks identified in risk profiles should continue to be prioritised, monitored and reported upon on a regular basis. Evidence of this should be retained.

Social work risks from both ECS and H&CC were recorded, retained and brought together in the annual report of the Chief Social Worker Officer (CSWO) to the

Council. These separate risk registers were also routinely discussed at a sub group of the integrated social work group. Furthermore, the CWSO chaired the corporate management group where all heads of service could raise risk related issues.

We found that there was better consistency amongst senior staff that the processes of identifying, monitoring and reporting on social work risks had been 'tightened up' and those managers were clearer about what these were for their respective service area. We think the Council had made good progress in meeting this recommendation.

Recommendation 13: Using existing management information systems ECS and H&CC should continue to develop its capacity for measuring and reporting activity, key processes, outcomes and performance against agreed targets.

Managers were provided with regular management information reports. Key monitoring reports were provided to all heads of service and team leaders also received relevant reports. Managers told us that these were helpful in noting trends and monitoring performance. However, staff continued to have concerns about the quality of the data and that there was still a problem with inputting the data to SWIFT. There was still a backlog and some discrepancies about where some information should be recorded. We found that managers and staff were aware of these issues and were working to improve this. The BMIPs demonstrated actions, baseline figures and targets considered by the senior management team each month

Work on this recommendation was in progress. Important improvements had been made but we agreed with the Council that it remained an area where further action needed to be taken.

Recommendation 14: The Council should give priority to the development of comprehensive, written commissioning strategies for the social work services.

Within homecare, managers had set up a 'commissioning working group'. Its remit was to look at a range of issues in relation to the way in which the Council commissioned home care services from independent providers. The group had been tasked with defining the following:

- the level of service,
- agreed key performance and quality indicators,
- appropriate pricing structures
- appropriate commissioning strategy.

This group had agreed a pricing structure with private providers of homecare and it was intended this would improve overall consistency in how services were commissioned. The same approach was to be taken with residential care services for older people.

We were provided with a draft commissioning strategy prepared for H&CC. We considered this was comprehensive and signalled a positive direction for how services would be commissioned by the Council.

There was no commissioning strategy for ECS, nor was there a single post, nor specific posts with responsibility for commissioning in the service area. We were told every commissioned provider had an up to date service level agreement with the council and arrangements were monitored by managers. Although we think service level agreements and monitoring of services are essential and good practice, we did question why the same strategic approach to commissioning being developed in H&CC, was not also being considered in ECS.

We think the council had focused its attention on this important area and that some progress had been made towards meeting the recommendation.

Recommendation 15: Senior managers should take steps to improve communication with all staff. Particular attention should be paid to how staff are involved in established improvement and change processes.

Staff described good leadership of change in ECS. Despite some lack of continuity at the executive director level, this did not appear to have had a negative impact on staff or services. Staff described a sense of things moving forward rather than having to wait until a permanent director was in place. Those we met felt the head of service had provided good stability and leadership to social work services during this time.

Staff in both ECS and H&CC thought there was better awareness of the bigger picture throughout the Council and of their service area. Newsletters, regular communication from senior officers, service visits by senior officers and the Chief Executive, team meetings, delayed openings to permit staff training, service meetings all contributed to a positive sense of staff communication. Staff we met from ECS and those from the learning disability service were very positive about how they had been engaged in the service improvement and change processes.

We think the Council had made good progress in meeting this recommendation.

Conclusion

Summary

Since the performance inspection was published in March 2007, the Council had used the recommendations of the report, along with other areas for improvement identified in the report and their own performance management to develop a comprehensive improvement and action plan. This report detailed some of the important actions they had achieved, through a formal follow up inspection process.

We found that the Council had achieved progress towards meeting fourteen of the fifteen recommendations. We noted how some recommendations had been more fully implemented than others, whilst with others good progress had been made and

work was ongoing. We commend the Council for its work to achieve improvements in social work services in both H&CC and ECS since the publication of the performance inspection in 2007.

Key areas for further improvement:

- continue with efforts to measure and monitor outcomes;
- continue to pay attention to improving the low morale of some staff groups; and
- continue to pay attention to improving their management information systems.

Key achievements noted included :

- efforts to improve the educational attainment for looked after children;
- involvement of service users and other stakeholders in care planning and service planning;
- improvements to the learning disability service and the positive impact of this on staff morale;
- efforts to establish employment opportunities for people with disabilities;
- improvements to public information about social work services provided by the Council;
- an increased number of carer assessments;
- evaluation of teams, services and connecting this to performance management systems;
- improvements to the management and support of staff absences;
- budgets more aligned to service priorities;
- systematic recording and reporting of social work risks; and
- improvements to the commissioning of services.

On-going contact between SWIA and the local authority

SWIA will continue to have contact with the Council, but not with the same frequency as this past year following the publication of the performance inspection report. Further performance inspections will be proportionate and focused on specific areas for improvement.

Jennifer Crowson
Link Inspector

8th August 2008

Appendix 1 – Details of follow-up visit

Sessions completed during SWIA visit to Perth and Kinross from 21 to 23 April 2008.

Focus groups

- mixed group of children's service staff (6 in total)
- mixed group of adult services staff (8 in total)
- one looked after and accommodated young person and two youth services workers

Interviews

- Jim Dean – Head of Community Care
- Evelyn Campbell, Senior Partnership Manager, Older People's Services
- John Gilruth – Criminal Justice Service Manager
- Alison Irvine – Service Manager (Children in Need and Child Protection)
- Andy Turnbull – Service Manager Looked After and Throughcare Service
- Bill Atkinson – Head of Children's Services
- Lorna Cameron – Head of Strategy and Support
- David Burke, Depute Director Housing and Community Care and Chief Social Work Officer