

Performance Inspection Summary

Aberdeenshire Council

November 2006

Inspection findings

The social work service in Aberdeenshire was generally positively regarded and worked well with other agencies to achieve good outcomes for most people who use services. It had a stable, committed and competent workforce which was well managed and supported. Staff had good training opportunities and were involved in service development and improvement.

Resources were well managed overall. Vulnerable people were appropriately safeguarded. In many cases, good outcomes were achieved by working in partnership with people who use services but more could be done to strengthen partnerships with carers, including families of children with disabilities. The social work service played an important role in many local communities and had done much to develop services to meet local need. Managers now need to make sure that services provide equally good outcomes for people, wherever they live in Aberdeenshire.

We found evidence of good political and professional leadership. The Council was in a good position to make the most of opportunities for improved partnership working afforded by the new Community Health Partnership. We found a positive attitude towards improving services and we judge capacity for improvement in Aberdeenshire to be good.

The Council was investing a level of funding which exceeded grant-aided expenditure, but this was still insufficient to meet the cost of the services provided by the social work service. Action is required by the Council to resolve this gap.

Other areas for improvement include:

- ensuring staff have manageable workloads and that the work they do is appropriately recorded
 - improving ways of supporting carers and involving them in planning services
 - ensuring that plans are linked to key priorities, that these are adequately resourced and that progress can be measured
 - establishing a performance management system for all areas of service.
-

SOME EXAMPLES OF GOOD SERVICES DELIVERED BY SOCIAL WORK SERVICES AND PARTNER AGENCIES

Central Community Dementia Team – this multi-disciplinary team supported people living in central Aberdeenshire with a diagnosis of dementia. Carers particularly valued the flexibility of the support they received and described how the service enabled their relatives to remain at home with dignity and a good quality of life.

Alternatives to Secure Care – in partnership with Barnardo's, the Council recruited, trained and supported foster carers specifically to care for young people who would otherwise have to be placed in secure accommodation outside Aberdeenshire. This initiative had provided good outcomes for a number of very vulnerable young people.

Dalvenie Gardens – this resource provided a variety of day services along with extra care housing for older people. A wide range of community activities took place there and it had become an important and much valued community resource. There were excellent links with the secondary school next door.

Fraserburgh Families Project – this service was provided through a partnership between Aberdeenshire Alcohol and Drug Action Team and Children 1st. It supported pre-school children whose parents have drug or alcohol problems and worked with parents to help them make and sustain positive changes. Particularly important was the ability of the project to resume work where families had relapsed.

Employment projects – the Council’s policy was to encourage people with disabilities to work in the community wherever possible. Thirty employment projects had been established across Aberdeenshire, offering experience of work to more than 400 people with a wide range of disabilities. While some projects were directly funded by the social work service, others operated as commercial enterprises with varying amounts of social work support. Sponsorships from private businesses gave additional funding and resources. In addition to providing employment, all of the projects aimed to make a positive contribution to the community. Examples included a recycling service, an internet café, a visitors’ centre, manufacturing projects and small catering businesses.

What is a performance inspection?

The Social Work Inspection Agency (SWIA) is carrying out performance inspections of all local authority social work services in Scotland.

SWIA gathers and analyses a wide selection of information about a local authority and the social work services it provides or is responsible for. The inspection findings are published in a report that identifies strengths as well as areas for improvement.

This leaflet summarises some key findings of the inspection of Aberdeenshire Council's social work services, found in a report published in November 2006.

Aberdeenshire Council will produce an action plan in response to the inspection report. The plan will set out how any necessary changes are to be made. Once the plan is agreed, SWIA and the Council will monitor the implementation of the plan together.

If you would like a copy of the full report or would like to know more about SWIA, please contact:

Corporate Manager
Social Work Inspection Agency
Ladywell House
Ladywell Road
Edinburgh
EH12 7TB

Tel: 0131 244 4885

Fax: 0131 244 5496

E-mail: info@swia.gsi.gov.uk

Website: www.swia.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2006

ISBN: 1-905501-25-0

Alternative formats are available on request from the Social Work Inspection Agency. An electronic version is available along with our contact details on the SWIA website at swia.gov.uk

Astron B49103 11/06