

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

GOVERNANCE AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 27 AUGUST 2010

SOCIAL WORK INSPECTION AGENCY FOLLOW UP REPORT FOR PERFORMANCE INSPECTION : EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by Director of Educational and Social Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide Governance and Scrutiny Committee information on the Social Work Inspection Agency (SWIA) Follow Up Report for Performance Inspection of Social Work Services in East Ayrshire published on 9th August 2010. (appendix 1)

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In 2008, SWIA carried out a Performance Inspection of Social Work Services in East Ayrshire. The primary purpose of SWIA Performance Inspections is to provide independent assurance that services are well managed, safe and fit for purpose. The inspection of services in East Ayrshire was undertaken as part of a planned programme of performance inspections of all 32 Councils in Scotland.
- 2.2 The Inspection report was published in June 2009 and contained 15 recommendations where improvement was required.
- 2.3 An Action Plan to respond to the Recommendations was approved by Cabinet in October 2009 and this was subsequently noted in November 2009 by Governance and Scrutiny Committee and it was agreed that progress reports would be presented to this Committee.

3. BASIS OF THE FOLLOW UP REPORT

- 3.1 The Follow Up Report describes progress made on each of the 15 recommendations and in relation to any specific concerns arising or reported on since the original inspection fieldwork. This is based on the following activity since publication of the original report.
- an action plan and two progress reports provided by the Council to SWIA in 2009 and 2010;
 - two monitoring visits from the lead inspector;
 - a final progress report and supporting evidence prepared by East Ayrshire Council, submitted to SWIA on 7th May 2010;
 - SWIA and local file readers reading 30 children and families case file records on 24-26 May 2010; and
 - the follow up inspection of East Ayrshire social work services between 7-10 June 2010.

4. SWIA EVALUATION OF PROGRESS IN SOCIAL WORK SERVICES

- 4.1 The follow up inspection measures progress by the Social work Service in addressing the 15 initial recommendations against a 4 point evaluation scale, with the summary findings outlined below.

EVALUATION	EAST AYRSHIRE PERFORMANCE
Fully Met	8 Recommendations
Substantial progress	4 Recommendations
Some Progress	3 Recommendations
No Progress	0 Recommendations

- 4.2 This positive progress by East Ayrshire within the timescale since the initial inspection report compares very favourably when benchmarked with the progress other Councils have made in their improvement agendas.
- 4.3 This outcome is reflected in the summary of the report where SWIA note in respect of East Ayrshire Social Work Services:

Social work services had met eight of the recommendations in full:

- they had further developed ways of improving communication with staff;
- introduced a more systematic workload management process;
- substantially increased the number of reports submitted the children's reporter within expected timescales with robust management monitoring arrangements;
- carried out more detailed review records for looked after children;
- developed systems to audit, review and update their policies, procedures and guidance documents for staff
- prepared an action plan to monitor and review the national standards for mental health officer services;
- ensured each service area had a training plan; and
- progressed a substantial programme of work around ensuring sustainability of its social work services for the future.

Substantial progress had been made in:

- engagement with children and young people in planning their care and conducting reviews;
- improving the time taken to make decisions for children being considered for permanency;
- improving the quality and consistency of assessments and care plans for children and families; and
- providing leadership training and development for managers.

While some progress had been made, senior managers recognised that further improvements were still needed, particularly in relation to:

- improving the range, quality and consistency of the information they collect about outcomes for all people who use services and their carers;
- increasing the number of carers assessments and achieving the outcomes for carers which result from these assessments; and
- submitting appropriate financial data for all partnership arrangements on a regular basis to elected members for scrutiny.

- 4.4 This excellent progress over a relatively short period of time has been achieved through the dedication and professionalism of staff across the functions of social work and at all levels of the service.
- 4.5 The actions of the Council in supporting service redesign and the social work sustainability programme have also been key elements to this achievement.
- 4.6 In forthcoming months the service will seek to engage widely with people who use services, staff, elected members and communities in the continued development of the service to address the remaining recommendations and deliver positive outcomes to meet the needs of the individuals and communities we serve.

5. FUTURE INSPECTION ACTIVITY

- 5.1 Further to the Crerar Review of Scrutiny arrangements, SWIA is being merged with the Care Commission and the element of HMIE which is responsible for inspection of child protection arrangements. Work is being undertaken within the new shadow organisation the Social Care and Social Work Improvement Service (SCSWIS) to develop a new proportionate approach to inspection. This means that there will not be another round of full performance inspections, but a greater focus on promoting improvement through greater partnership working and an increased reliance on self evaluation.
- 5.2 As an important element to support our approach to improvement in social work services, Council agreed in 2009 to adopt the SWIA Guide to Supported Self Evaluation.
- 5.3 Future inspection activity will be reviewed by SWIA through their programme of performance improvement and ongoing regular liaison with the council. Link inspector activity has already included discussions with senior managers in social work services on self evaluation activity, including supporting case file audit work.
- 5.4 The future level of link inspector involvement will be determined by the actions above i.e. the council adopting the SWIA self evaluation model and positive engagement with supported self evaluation.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The report includes note of the substantial commitment of the council in supporting the service through the social work sustainability programme. It also notes that although progress has been made in terms of arrangements for the Integrated Resource Framework, further work was required in respect of providing opportunities for elected members to scrutinise partnership financial information.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Delivery of the action plan has supported the commitment of the Council in recruiting and retaining a confident and competent Social Work workforce.

8. POLICY/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The inspection action plan has been considered and agreed by the Cabinet and the Corporate Management Team. There are no specific policy implications.

9. COMMUNITY PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Social Work plays a significant role in the delivery of community planning objectives. The actions taken in the improvement agenda further strengthen Social Work's contribution in particular to the "Improving Health and Wellbeing," "Promoting Community Safety" and "Lifelong Learning" themes.

10. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 10.1 Effective Social Work services across functions contribute to the management of risk, for individuals, communities and the Council.

11. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 11.1 It is recommended that Governance and Scrutiny Committee:
- (i) note the Follow Up Report for Performance Inspection of Social Work Services in East Ayrshire August 2010;
 - (ii) note the positive progress achieved by the service;
 - (iii) agree to accept a future report in 12 months in respect of progress of the action plan.
 - (iv) otherwise note the contents of the report

Graham Short
Executive Director of Educational and Social Services
12 August 2010

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. SWIA Follow Up Report for Performance Inspection of Social Work Services in East Ayrshire August 2010
2. East Ayrshire Action Plan Final Progress Report May2010
3. SWIA Performance Inspection 2009
4. SWIA Improvement Action Plan
5. SWIA Guide to Self Evaluation

IMPLEMENTATION OFFICER:

Eddie Fraser: Head of Service Community Care
Susan Taylor: Head of Service, Children and Families and Criminal Justice

Follow-up report for Performance Inspection: East Ayrshire Council

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 progress report will also highlight any key issues which have arisen since the inspection.

The inspection of East Ayrshire Council, in 2008

We carried out the performance inspection of East Ayrshire Council social work services in 2008 and the subsequent performance inspection report was published in June 2009. Ratings for the ten areas for evaluation included one 'very good', four 'goods' and five 'adequates'. A number of areas for improvement were identified, resulting in 15 recommendations. Five of these recommendations related specifically to children and families services. Sustained improvement was needed in the provision of services to children and families, in particular, to looked after young people and permanency planning in adoption and fostering work.

The performance inspection (2008) found that East Ayrshire social work services were working hard to improve outcomes for people who used services, especially for older people. People who received social work services and their carers were mainly positive about the difference these had made to their lives.

Partnership working was a key strength. Social work services staff enjoyed their work and were well motivated. In 2008 staff had experienced a number of important changes in both leadership and service organisation and some staff were still coming to terms with these changes.

Budgetary control was well managed. As in all councils sustaining levels of service within available resources posed a serious challenge. Two new heads of service took up post at the beginning of 2009, and the council established a sustainability board to identify resource issues and re-configure the service to sustain the service into the future. Elected members and senior managers were strongly committed to developing and improving social work services. We considered capacity for improvement to be good.

Basis of the follow-up report

This report will describe progress made on each of the 15 recommendations in turn and in relation to any specific concerns arising or reported on since the original inspection fieldwork. This is based on the following activity since publication*:

- an action plan and two progress reports provided by East Ayrshire Council in 2009 and 2010;
- two monitoring visits from the lead inspector;
- a final progress report and supporting evidence prepared by East Ayrshire Council, submitted to SWIA on 7th May 2010;
- SWIA and local file readers reading 30 children and families case file records on 24-26 May 2010; and
- the follow up inspection of East Ayrshire social work services between 7-10 June 2010.

*See Appendix 1 for details of the fieldwork

Recommendation 1:

Social work services should build on existing systems to improve the range, quality and consistency of the information they collect about outcomes for all people who use services and their carers. These outcomes should be embedded in all social work service plans and used to consider the range and quality of the services.

In 2009, senior social work managers produced a framework document, 'outcomes: our framework and approach'. This document sets out a social work services framework for an outcomes based approach for delivering services at strategic, management and practice levels across all services. The social work management team held an externally facilitated development session around outcomes. Subsequently the commissioning team started to develop commissioning action plans with service providers based on outcomes for people receiving the service. The commissioning team planned to use this information to assist in monitoring the range and quality of commissioned services. This was still at an early stage of development.

Social work services managers had developed a more robust process for reporting performance, particularly within children and families services, to consistently measure data. To date, managers concentrated on process rather than outcome data, for example, how many cases were allocated, waiting times for a service and staff deployment. We did not receive any evidence of aggregate data on outcomes.

Managers had continued to make efforts to improve systems, which in time will improve outcome measurement and deliver aggregate data on outcomes for people who used services and their carers. Social work services had commissioned an upgrade to its SWIFT social care database system. This will equip the SWIFT system with the capability of creating reports on aggregate outcome data. Work was underway to test the system. Full content of single shared assessments (SSA) and the integrated assessment framework (IAF), which identified outcomes, will be recorded in SWIFT, once the new version is implemented later in 2010.

Managers also reviewed and revised their assessment and care planning forms to ensure staff focused on outcomes for people using services. Staff from both community care services and children and families teams received some training on outcome focused practice. The teams were beginning to create a culture that was more outcome focused. Staff we met were more confident talking about the differences social work intervention made to the lives of the people they worked with, rather than what outcomes meant and how they collated data about outcomes. Our follow-up file reading showed evidence of improved individual outcomes contributing to increasingly effective social work practice, although they were not always recorded in the case files as outcomes.

Children and families staff routinely engaged with young people who were looked after and accommodated about their views on the outcomes social work services delivered for them. Home care managers also routinely carried out outcome focused home care surveys.

Social work service managers were taking a number of steps to build a more outcome focused culture. Evidence will be required to confirm that the systems social work services had put in place will deliver aggregate data about outcomes for people who use services and their carers. Overall, social work services had made some progress in implementing this recommendation.

Recommendation 2:

Social work services should improve its performance both in the number of carers assessments recorded and completed and in achieving the outcomes for carers which result from these assessments.

The number of carer assessments increased from 27 in 2008 -09 to 56 in 2009 -10. It was anticipated they would conduct more in 2010 -11. East Ayrshire carers action plan 2009-11 had set a modest target of 50 carer assessments to be undertaken annually by 2010-11. This target was exceeded in 2009-10. Overall, there was a low awareness of performance amongst frontline staff, team leaders and service managers. Staff and managers were aware of some improvement and that more was needed. We did not receive any evidence of aggregate data on outcomes that resulted from carer assessments.

We heard about specific actions, such as involving the carer centre staff in social work team meetings to promote understanding and learning on carer assessments, and highlighting good practice where individual social workers had completed good quality carer assessments. Applications by staff on behalf of a carer for short breaks required that a carer's assessment accompanied the request or an explanation as to why one was not available.

There was less awareness and less focus amongst children and families staff on assessing the needs of young carers. As part of the implementation of GIRFEC¹, the development of a new approach to recording children's assessments and plans was

¹ GIRFEC: Getting it right for every child is a Scottish Government programme that is changing the way adults think and act to help all children and young people develop and reach their potential.

underway. Specific guidance was planned for staff later in the year, in respect of young carers.

Social work services had introduced a new carer action plan and identified a lead officer for carers, with responsibility for driving implementation of the plan. It was anticipated that this would provide impetus for the action plan. The plan did not include a financial framework. As implementation of this plan is progressed, and more carer assessments are completed, additional resources will require to be addressed within the overall social work sustainability plan.

Further actions identified for 2010-11 to promote carers' assessments, set out in the community care service plan, included using the evaluation of a pilot of person centred carers assessment, undertaken in partnership with the carers centre staff, and also staff training sessions.

Carers we met during our follow up inspection were critical of carer assessments and did not place value on them. This is a commonly held view of many carers across Scotland. Social work services will need to engage actively with local carers on this matter. The carers were more supportive about the establishment of the carer's forum that would link to community planning and the community health partnership. They saw this as a real opportunity to have their voices heard at a strategic level.

In considering all the evidence, social work services had made some progress in implementing this recommendation. Senior managers were aware they still had more to do.

Recommendation 3:

Social work services should engage with children and young people more effectively in planning their care and make sure that reviews are properly conducted.

Our performance inspection (2008) found that some young people leaving care were not effectively engaged in their pathway planning process, nor were they actively involved in their reviews. In response to this recommendation, social work services had taken a number of actions to promote greater involvement and participation of children and young people in the care planning process and improve practice.

Social work services had developed a more child-centred approach to care planning for looked after and accommodated children and young people (LAC). They instigated a system to collate the views of young people through LAC review meetings. They produced practice guidance for care leavers with the aim of supporting staff in completing the IAF approach. They used IAF action plans, which replaced pathway plans, at LAC reviews. They developed age appropriate materials for younger children to augment the current "Having your Say" forms. They refined the monthly LAC care planning monitoring report in their management information system, so that staff had a much clearer focus on the need to involve children and young people.

From a focus group involving young people we heard their positive experiences of attending their reviews, as a result of changes in practice. They all received effective

support, encouragement and assistance to express their own views, including any matters of concern. They all indicated they were happy with their current placements. They had a supportive and enabling relationship with an adult, a social worker, foster carer or key worker. They could discuss matters easily and this helped in meeting and addressing their needs.

File reading largely endorsed this positive impression. In a very small number of files, there was evidence that staff did not listen to the young people's views in review meetings. These young people had completed their 'Having your Say' forms but the issues they raised were neither discussed nor resolved at the reviews. In the same few files, the views and concerns of these young people were also not always taken forward effectively in the agreed actions from the review meeting.

The young people we met indicated that they were fully involved in their care planning through the completion of "Having your Say" forms and discussions with staff about their care planning arrangements. Managers monitored the completed forms in order to improve practice and there was evidence that improvements were being achieved.

Children and families services had carried out an audit of care plans for looked after and accommodated young people. We read a small number of these care plans. They took into account the views of the young people, highlighted target setting and monitored progress.

A care leavers' event had recently taken place as part of a programme of multi-agency development. The young people involved performed a dramatic presentation to elected members, highlighting key issues for them, such as wanting more housing options, financial stability and having a consistent worker throughout their care journey.

Although work was still in progress to ensure a more consistent approach across the service, social work services had made substantial progress in implementing this recommendation.

**Recommendation 4:
The Department of Educational & Social Services should continue to develop ways in which communication with staff could be developed further.**

When we carried out our performance inspection in 2008, the service was going through a period of major change. Some staff did not feel that managers valued them.

Social work services had implemented a communication strategy and a public relations strategy. We spoke with a range of staff who confirmed that communication between senior managers and staff had greatly improved over the last year, since the new strengthened senior management arrangements were put in place. Staff informed us that social work services appeared more secure since managers moved into permanent posts and that staff morale had improved.

There was corporate recognition of social work services achievements in delivering the sustainability review programme. The service was used as an example to other departments. Staff appreciated that their service was held in higher regard within the council, which also had a positive effect on staff morale.

The heads of service and other senior managers had conducted visits to all services and had protected time to meet with staff. Staff we met were positive about the increased visibility and accessibility of the Chief Social Work Officer (CSWO) and senior managers. They appreciated the opportunity to raise issues and said their views were listened to and acted upon. Extended staff meetings occurred to discuss specific topics, for example, updates on progress from the sustainability board.

There were opportunities for managers to engage with staff through meetings and electronic communication. Staff within children and families services told us they received feedback about their own improving performance and found this helpful. We read and heard about examples of celebrating success. Following the award of 'residential child care worker of the year' to a senior residential worker at Sunnyside children's house and the publication of the 2010 HMIE joint inspection report, the head of children and families and criminal justice sent emails across the council to promote the valued work undertaken by children and families social work staff.

Staff confirmed that they had been consulted in the re-design of home care, learning disability and children and families services. Managers kept them informed of decisions made during the reconfiguration of services.

The local practitioner forum was well supported by the CSWO. The chair and vice chair of the forum had protected time to undertake work relating to the forum. This included dissemination of information, sharing practice ideas and consultation on draft policies and procedures. Staff were encouraged to pass practice suggestions to the management team and participated in planning activities and short life working groups. We were given examples where staff had prepared discussion papers for senior managers on providing different models of care, for example in mental health services.

While recognising that communication and involvement of staff will be ongoing, social work services had met this recommendation in full.

Recommendation 5:

Social work services must introduce a more systematic workload management process and make sure that all teams have the capacity to prioritise and manage the demands for their service. Information on workloads should be subject to robust management monitoring.

When we carried out our fieldwork in 2008, the occupational therapy service had a waiting list for low priority referrals, due to the level of demand. We also identified that because of pressure on the children and families service, a number of children were held as pending and awaiting allocation.

Since our performance inspection, a number of actions had taken place to address this recommendation. Further developments to the SWIFT system enabled case

priority to be recorded. This assisted frontline managers to monitor caseloads. An improved suite of management information was available to support effective decision making and allocation of work. Managers found this useful.

In 2009, community care locality services were restructured. Home care services had very recently moved from assessment to service provision. Home care managers no longer undertook the assessment of need for home care services. This had an immediate impact on the community care team leaders, as this markedly reduced the number of staff they supervised. They said they were able to focus more on workload management through supervision and team meetings. Community care staff we met appreciated the additional support from their team leaders to assist with their workload management.

Community care managers said their staff completed assessments quickly. Home care services were put in place with no delay, but this development was at an early stage of implementation. The management information we read showed there was no waiting time for social work assessments.

Within occupational therapy services, staff had succeeded in reducing the number of people waiting for an assessment but not the time people waited for a service. They had tried various initiatives to reduce the time people waited for a service. These included a pilot mobile service and the introduction of self assessments for simple equipment to aid daily living. These initiatives had not significantly reduced the time people with complex needs waited for a service.

Children and families locality services had also been restructured. The new structure of children and families services had helped to solve the problems of unallocated work and delays in case transfers. They had developed two initial response teams to undertake initial screening of all referrals, investigations and short term interventions. Team leaders and service managers told us that children's services had virtually no unallocated work. There were no delays transferring work from the initial response team to the long-term teams.

From the documentary evidence submitted and the evidence from the follow-up fieldwork, children and families services and community care services were effectively managing current demands and the requirement to deliver services in a timely manner. Social work services had met this recommendation in full.

Recommendation 6:

Social work services needs to increase the number of reports that are submitted to the children's reporter within expected timescales, with targets and a clear plan, subject to regular monitoring and review, to address this issue.

In 2008-09, East Ayrshire had the joint lowest percentage of reports submitted on time in Scotland. Monitoring of this area of work was not rigorous enough. On the evidence of this follow-up inspection, children and families staff had worked hard to improve practice.

Senior managers undertook a comprehensive review of the whole process to improve performance. They reinstated regular meetings between the authority reporter, chair of the children's panel and the senior manager for children and families services. They established a time intervals working group to tackle performance and developed performance information in relation to the submission of reports. Managers presented figures to their teams at their weekly business meetings. The council wide electronic performance management system included monthly data on the reports submitted to the children's reporter. This emphasised the importance the council placed on this issue.

In discussions with staff, a culture shift had been achieved since our performance inspection. Staff now saw the report as a piece of social work activity to enable the child to access services, rather than an end in itself. The teams took collective responsibility for the completion of assessment reports due within their teams. This meant that workers had protected time to make sure that reports were completed. The introduction of IAF had also included training for all staff on assessment skills, including risk assessment. The trend was improving upwards, and in April 2010, staff completed 83% reports within the appropriate time scale. This was above the Scottish average and exceeded the 75% national target.

We interviewed the authority reporter, who was confident that monitoring and supervision by social work managers was now consistently in place. She said the reporters had good working relationships with children and families staff. They met with the teams on a regular basis to discuss operational issues. The teams had developed local champions. Panel members were confident they received more reports on time. We found evidence that social work managers were managing poor performance, whilst also recognising good practice. Staff reported that this was a positive process.

Social work services had shown a significant improvement in practice, which needs to be sustained. There was a strong commitment from the staff we met to keep improving. Social work services had met this recommendation in full.

Recommendation 7:

Social work services needs as a priority, to improve the time taken to make decisions for children being considered for permanency, and to meet their needs.

Our performance inspection (2008) found significant delays in making permanent placement arrangements for some young people. In response to this recommendation, East Ayrshire had undertaken a number of actions. These included establishing a system of permanency workshops aimed at ensuring the timeous completion of permanency work by staff for identified children and young people. All social work staff involved in permanency work received training on the new legislation² concerning permanency planning. Social work services set up monthly monitoring meetings for first line managers to overview children being considered for permanency.

² Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act 2007

From our file reading and interviews with staff and with the independent chair of the permanency panel during the follow up inspection, there was evidence of greater priority for permanency work within children and families services. The independent chair of the panel saw no indication of drift for younger children. Social work services had put in place systems to track progress of children being considered for permanency in the court. This was greatly assisted by the involvement of a council solicitor, seconded to social work services, who monitored all children to the stage when decisions were made in the court concerning parental responsibilities orders, residence orders and adoption.

At our meetings with children and families staff, we learned that the involvement of service managers in permanency planning had brought about marked improvements in their understanding and knowledge of where children were in the process. They described improvements in decision making for children where in the past there had been delays. These changes had brought significant benefits to the children concerned. They had added to the job satisfaction of staff, who also spoke in positive terms about the introduction of the new management systems. They welcomed the more robust management and leadership style, which had improved overall performance and confidence.

From observation of one of the permanency workshops, established in December 2009, we saw evidence that staff received both the necessary time and the professional support to ensure the effective completion of reports with regard to adoption and permanency orders. Social work services had produced comprehensive guidance notes to help and assist social workers in completing the paperwork. Staff had received training on carrying out effective assessments, including the assessment of resilience, which was adapted to assist an overall level of understanding across children and families services.

All staff interviewed acknowledged that whilst good progress had been made concerning this recommendation, work was still in progress to ensure an overall effective culture towards prioritising permanency planning work, and that all reports to the permanency panel were of the standard required. Some young people continued to experience moves in care and securing appropriate foster care homes remained a significant challenge.

We found evidence that there was now leadership, direction and monitoring from the head of service, including a more robust approach concerning the time taken to make decisions for children considered for permanency than was previously the case. These changes had followed improved quality assurance and better staff performance.

Social work services had made substantial progress in relation to this recommendation.

Recommendation 8:

Social work services should prioritise improving the quality and consistency of assessments and care plans for children and families. Improvement and scrutiny processes should be closely linked.

Although there was a great deal of activity in children and families services at the time of our performance inspection (2008), some of the work undertaken was not sufficiently purposeful. Staff did not always follow through actions in care plans. Managers informed us this was due to workload pressures. Subsequently, children and families services had tackled these issues through a number of actions.

A positive recruitment campaign had resulted in the filling of all posts within the service, including some being filled by experienced managers. The council had increased investment into children's services, leading to additional resources of £3.83 million over three years.

The strengthened management structure appeared to provide greater scrutiny and quality assurance of assessments and care plans by team leaders, service managers and senior managers. Tightened auditing processes were in place for managing poor performance and developing local champions to mentor and train others. Staff told us they found this quality assurance process supportive. Managers were aware that more work to improve the quality of assessments was required.

Multi-agency training had taken place on assessment through the introduction of IAF. Staff positively evaluated this training. An implementation plan for the roll out for IAF was well underway. They had completed phases 1 and 2 and the final phase was planned for later in 2010.

The authority reporter advised that the quality of assessment and care plans had improved with the introduction of IAF. Our file reading indicated that the assessments read were more likely to be excellent or very good than they were when we carried out the performance inspection. The files were also more likely to have care plans that addressed the risks and needs identified in those assessments, but they were still variable.

Training on the resilience matrix³ had taken place. Our file reading suggested mixed results in terms of risk assessment. We read some good examples of detailed risk assessments and risk management plans. Others were too descriptive, lacked actions, timescales and lead responsibilities and did not contain enough analysis of the risks to the young person. The chronologies in the files tended to be computer generated. As a result, significant events in a child's life were not always used effectively to support risk assessment and risk management plans.

Staff working in the initial response teams informed us that their function was to undertake initial assessments and that they were focussed on improving the quality of these assessments. Our file reading also indicated mixed results. We read some good case recording, with effective progression of short term interventions. In a few instances, staff were slow to complete assessments and there was little evidence of the actual work undertaken with the young person.

In terms of the culture shift, children and families services were focused on getting this piece of work right. Managers were aware that more work was required to improve practice and had identified developing a consistent standard of assessment

³ Resilience matrix is used to make sense of assessment information and to evaluate children's needs. (GIRFEC)

and care plans, improving reflective practice and the use of chronologies as their main priorities. All tiers of staff were aware of this.

Overall, social work services had made substantial progress in implementing this recommendation.

Recommendation 9:

Social work services must ensure that more detailed review records for looked after children are completed.

At the time of the performance inspection (2008), we found that whilst independent reviewing officers chaired child protection case conferences and reviews for children looked after away from home, the former were fully minuted but decisions only were recorded for LAC reviews. Regulations and guidance from Scottish Government highlighted the need to record the facts and judgements that inform these decisions.

The business review of administration and support services, as part of the review of social work sustainability, considered the arrangements for minuting LAC reviews. East Ayrshire's cabinet approved the outcome of the review in December 2009. One of the approved recommendations was the establishment of a dedicated administration team, responsible for fully minuting LAC reviews.

We saw evidence from our file reading exercise of minutes of LAC reviews that provided details of the professional considerations that informed decision making at these reviews. Social work services had met this recommendation in full.

Recommendation 10:

Social work services should develop systems to audit, review and update their policies, procedures and guidance documents for staff.

Our performance inspection (2008) found that overall policies and procedures were easy to follow, although some required more detail and amendment following legislative changes. It was not clear how managers audited, monitored and reviewed the documentation.

Since the inspection, a substantial level of activity had taken place in this area. Managers audited and reviewed existing policies and procedures across the service to identify and catalogue these documents. They developed an index of the policies and procedures for each section within social work services. They revised the house style front cover for social work policies and procedures. This ensured that each policy, procedure and practice guidance document clearly indicated dates of implementation and review, the lead officer, authoriser and equality impact assessment and review. There was an action plan for updating policy and procedures with computerised triggers for administration purposes. We read some of these documents and saw evidence of them on the council's intranet.

Staff from community care and children and families services were aware of new policies and procedures. They stated that managers introduced these providing good support, including briefing or training for relevant staff. They were more confident

using these procedures, as they were now current. They received regular policy updates at weekly team meetings and through the local practitioner forum.

In recognition that there is a programme of reviewing policies and procedures by senior managers and the seconded council solicitor, social work services had met this recommendation in full.

Recommendation 11:

Social work services should ensure that an action plan is developed to monitor and review the National Standards for the Mental Health Officer service, with agreed timescales for implementation.

When we conducted our performance inspection in 2008, there was no overarching plan to monitor, in partnership with health colleagues, the national standards for the mental health officer (MHO) service.

Social work services had prepared and implemented a comprehensive action plan to monitor and review these national standards. This was a clear, outcome focused plan with actions, timescales and lead responsibilities all identified. In preparing the plan, work on recruitment and retention for MHOs was explored and new remuneration arrangements implemented that linked payment directly to MHO activity.

Senior managers had undertaken succession planning for the MHO service. We met a social worker who had just completed the MHO training course and gained the MHO award. Managers had identified a further two candidates for the next course, due to commence later this year. MHOs were located throughout the service, as well as in specialist community mental health teams. There was good awareness amongst staff about the action plan. Many were positive about the support and advice they received from MHOs on mental disorder issues.

Social work services had met this recommendation in full.

Recommendation 12:

Systematic leadership development, with appropriate focus on social work services, should be available and undertaken by all senior, middle and first line managers within social work services. This work should link to the social work services workforce plan and EAGER⁴.

When we carried out our performance inspection in 2008, we found that a significant number of frontline and middle managers offered effective leadership to their teams. There were limited opportunities for leadership development and management training for this staff group, due to workload pressures, acting up arrangements and management vacancies.

In response to this recommendation East Ayrshire Council had undertaken a number of actions. Senior and service managers will participate in the corporate competency leadership and development framework that linked to EAGER, provided by an

⁴ EAGER: East Ayrshire general employee review.

independent organisation. This included 360 degree feedback, coaching and work based projects. There was slippage in the start date for this competency training, but the programme was issued whilst we carried out this follow up inspection. It was due to start in July 2010 and then be rolled out across the service.

The social work training and development team introduced a specific programme for first line managers, in conjunction with the council's organisational development section. This included sessions on the role of the manager, the manager as a leader and self evaluation. Once first line managers completed this training, they progressed to the competency based corporate leadership programme. Managers were aware that training was planned. They had participated in discussions and consultation about leadership and management training, both on an individual basis to meet their own training needs, and as a group of managers.

Although significant progress had taken place in planning for the training and development programmes, the identified managers had not yet undertaken leadership training. Overall, social work services had made substantial progress in relation to this recommendation.

Recommendation 13:

Social work services should ensure that each service area has a training plan that is based on a training needs analysis and links to the training strategy and workforce plan.

At the time of our inspection in 2008, there was a dedicated training team within social work services. A training strategy was in place for 2008-2011, but there were no distinct training plans for community care and children and families services.

In response to this recommendation, each service unit had an identified link training officer. The linked training officers worked with senior and service managers to analyse training needs and developed a learning and development plan for each service area. Community care and children and families services had developed training plans. These plans laid out priorities that ensured that the workforce met their regulatory and registration requirements. They included induction, mandatory training, post registration courses and more specialist learning and development opportunities, such as on autistic spectrum disorder.

Staff from children and families and community care services told us they discussed training needs in supervision and generally received training to meet these needs. Staff we met all had annual appraisals that linked to EAGER. Nonetheless, some occupational therapists told us they had not always had access to specific learning and development opportunities to support their continuing professional development. Other staff said there were good career opportunities.

The 2010-2011 community care and the children and families and criminal justice updated service plans included sections on workforce planning. Ongoing actions in relation to the development of the workforce will be subject to continuous review.

Social work services had met this recommendation.

Recommendation 14:

The council must ensure that it continues to address the problem of sustainability in relation to the provision of its social work services.

East Ayrshire Council had progressed a substantial programme of work around ensuring sustainability of its social work services for the future. The programme of work was overseen by the sustainability board, consisting of senior personnel across the council. Reports were provided to the cabinet outlining progress of the programme and elected members fully appraised of the financial position. The programme included reviews of:

- homecare;
- adult services;
- children and families services; and
- management, administrative and support services.

In progressing these reviews, social work services identified a significant level of efficiencies, which were realigned within the service to support areas of social work overspend and budget pressures. Efficiencies included a significant reduction in enhanced homecare hours, savings targets in relation to adult services, and revised management and administrative structures. The service had also achieved the required savings to contribute to corporate efficiency targets. There was clarity about the financial situation at all levels of social work services and corporately.

In respect of adult services, the council was part of the integrated resource framework⁵ (IRF) pilot developed with the Scottish Government. We discuss this in more detail under Recommendation 15.

Notwithstanding the identified modernisation and efficiencies, social work services faced pressures, including increasing numbers of older people and looked after children. Social work services also continued to face financial pressures, in common with other councils across Scotland. Managers had projected substantial funding gaps for 2011-12 and 2012-2013 and the council continued to face financial pressures.

Work was underway to find ways of addressing these substantial financial challenges. The chief executive wrote to all staff outlining the financial context and challenges facing the council, the efficiency strategy and inviting ideas for reducing spending, while maintaining quality. Staff we met were responding positively to this challenge. East Ayrshire Council planned to progress a further strategic review of its revenue budget to address the financial challenges currently identified.

Reviews of externally commissioned services also contributed to the sustainability agenda. Providers were apprised of the council's overall financial circumstances. New models of care were under active discussion and social work services staff were working with the two other Ayrshire councils and with NHS Ayrshire & Arran to explore collaborative commissioning practice. Much of this work was at a fairly early

⁵ Key to the IRF is the principle that, in order to make best use of available resources, partnerships need to understand the costs associated with the activities they plan for, invest in and deliver across the entire resource spectrum and examination of variation in practice and outcomes for patients and people who use services in different localities.

stage, but it was one of the main priorities identified in the council's improvement action plan (2009).

This work had provided a great deal of information about the cost, quality and volume of externally commissioned services. The building blocks were in place for a more proactive and strategic approach in managing the social care market in order to achieve efficiencies through revised care models and provider arrangements. The scope for joint commissioning with neighbouring authorities should also be explored beyond what was currently purchased and considered in relation to a range of provision.

Although social work services continues to face financial pressures, due to the programme of completed work, it had benefited from a greater understanding and clarity of its financial position. The council had met this recommendation.

Recommendation 15:

The council should ensure that full partnership joint financial management information is further developed and that appropriate financial monitoring data for all partnership arrangements are regularly submitted to elected members for scrutiny.

In the performance inspection report (2009), we noted that financial and budget monitoring aspects of joint working had not progressed to any extent, apart from a few specific areas, and required further development. A degree of progress has been made in implementing this recommendation but its full effect will not be realised until well into the 2011-12 financial year.

As stated earlier, East Ayrshire Council participated in the *Phase 1*⁶ pilot work around the Pan Ayrshire partnership arrangements for the IRF, a mapping exercise across all areas of joint working. Working with the two other Ayrshire councils and NHS Ayrshire & Arran, the partners scrutinised the use of resources to understand and cost a number of different services provided to different care groups. East Ayrshire had the lead role for complex care within adult services. A report on the *Phase 1* IRF resource alignment was presented to the Ayrshire Strategic Alliance and the community health partnership committee in August 2009 and to cabinet in December 2009. The council and partners, with the support of the Scottish Government, were one of four IRF *Phase 2*⁷ pilot sites.

Considerable work had also been undertaken on a Pan Ayrshire basis to seek opportunities to minimise overheads within provider agencies and to maximise joint commissioning arrangements. This work included a spreadsheet analysis of each area of spend by each organisation.

⁶ *Phase 1*: Explicit mapping of patient and locality level cost and activity information for health and adult social care, to provide a detailed understanding of existing resource profiles for partnership populations.

⁷ *Phase 2*: Implementation of agreed and transparent mechanisms that allow resource to flow between health and social work partners, following the patient to the care setting that delivers the best outcomes.

Partners had made progress on understanding more fully the importance of seeking agreed financial data in support of joint planning decisions and service improvements. This was good preparation for the further development of joint financial management information. Elected members had not yet had the opportunity to scrutinise partnership financial information, although contributions from NHS Ayrshire & Arran will be included in reports to cabinet, as will details of resource transfer.

Further reporting was programmed for over the summer of 2010 and beyond. Given this is an area of ongoing work, the council had made some progress in implementing this recommendation.

Conclusion:

East Ayrshire Council was committed to delivering improvement in services through the European Foundation of Quality Management model (EFQM). The council had made a formal commitment, approved by cabinet, to using the SWIA self evaluation activity, which is based on EFQM, within social work services. The heads of service and other senior managers were leading the improvement process. The new heads of service had taken the time to increase confidence levels, and build trust and relationships with social work services staff. The positive impact of their leadership was evident in discussion with community care and children and families staff and others.

Social work services staff at all levels of the service had provided evidence to show that they had made progress on all of the recommendations in our performance inspection report. We saw a marked improvement in children and families social work services, where managers had demonstrated a clear focus on priority areas for improvement. They had successfully brought staff with them to improve performance.

Achievements:

Social work services had met eight of the recommendations in full:

- they had further developed ways of improving communication with staff;
- introduced a more systematic workload management process;
- substantially increased the number of reports submitted the children's reporter within expected timescales with robust management monitoring arrangements;
- carried out more detailed review records for looked after children;
- developed systems to audit, review and update their policies, procedures and guidance documents for staff
- prepared an action plan to monitor and review the national standards for mental health officer services;
- ensured each service area had a training plan; and
- progressed a substantial programme of work around ensuring sustainability of its social work services for the future.

Substantial progress had been made in:

- engagement with children and young people in planning their care and conducting reviews;
- improving the time taken to make decisions for children being considered for permanency;
- improving the quality and consistency of assessments and care plans for children and families; and
- providing leadership training and development for managers.

While some progress had been made, senior managers recognised that further improvements were still needed, particularly in relation to:

- improving the range, quality and consistency of the information they collect about outcomes for all people who use services and their carers;
- increasing the number of carers assessments and achieving the outcomes for carers which result from these assessments; and
- submitting appropriate financial data for all partnership arrangements on a regular basis to elected members for scrutiny.

Ongoing contact between SWIA and the local authority.

We welcome the positive engagement we had with staff from social work services in East Ayrshire to address the recommendations in our performance report and in the follow up inspection process. SWIA recognises that there will be variations in the scale of action, time, capacity and resources needed to fully address all of the recommendations. East Ayrshire social work services are on target to fully deliver a number of recommendations in the near future. We will review progress through our programme of performance improvement and ongoing regular liaison with the council.

Link inspector activity has included discussions with senior managers in social work services on self evaluation activity, including supporting case file audit work. The future level of link inspector involvement will be determined by the already stated commitment from the council to adopt the SWIA self evaluation model and positive engagement with supported self evaluation.

Margaret Anne Gilbert

Lead Inspector

06.08.2010

Appendix 1

Sessions involved in the follow up inspection during May-June 2010

File reading

SWIA read 30 children and families files prior to fieldwork. These included reading:

- ten permanency planning files;
- ten files of looked after and accommodated young people; and
- ten files from the initial response teams.

Fieldwork

We carried out 12 sessions during the fieldwork period. These included:

Focus groups

07 June	Children & families managers
07 June	Community care managers
08 June	Informal carers of people who used services
08 June	Looked after and accommodated young people
08 June	Community care main grade staff
09 June	Children & families main grade staff

Interviews

08 June	Authority children's reporter
08 June	Chairs of the permanency panel
09 June	Finance, planning, commissioning and contracting officers

Observed practice:

07 June	Children & families initial response team
10 June	Permanency planning workshop for children and families staff.

Management/ social work resources meetings:

09 June	Senior managers, community care & children & families
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