

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

GOVERNANCE AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: 17 DECEMBER 2010

SWIA INSPECTION OF SOCIAL WORK SERVICES IN HMP KILMARNOCK

Report by Executive Director of Educational and Social Services

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To advise of the outcome of the Social Work Inspection Agency (SWIA) inspection of prison based social work Services in HMP Kilmarnock, which was undertaken in the spring of 2010.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Social Work Inspection Agency (SWIA) embarked on a series of inspections of prison based social work services across Scotland in April and May 2010. This was the first inspection of these services since 1992, the intent being to provide a national thematic report and a local report for each prison based social work service. The former is expected to be published in December 2010, while the latter has been reported and the findings are outlined below.
- 2.2 The local report does not contain gradings due to the small scale nature of prison based services. It is expected that the national report will adopt this approach following data being analysed across the inspection of the 15 prison units in Scotland.

3. CONTEXT

- 3.1 HMP Kilmarnock is operated on behalf of the Scottish Prison Service by SERCO. It was opened in 1999 as Scotland's first privately run prison. The prison has capacity for 500 contracted places, and was holding 546 prisoners at the time of the inspection data collection on 26 February 2010. The prison holds both short and long term prisoners, including young offenders who are on remand.
- 3.2 SERCO has a service level agreement (SLA) in place with East Ayrshire Council for the provision of a prison based social work service. The SLA defines the nature of the service to be purchased, and has a focus on individual work, risk assessment and the provision of reports for certain categories of prisoner.
- 3.3 Operationally, the prison based social work team is part of the wider children, families and criminal justice social work section. The costs of the team (£207,190) are met by SERCO. The team comprises of:

- 1 Team Manager
- 3 Social Workers
- 1 Admin Support Worker (provided by SERCO)

4. INSPECTION METHODOLOGY

4.1 The inspection process included:

- completion of a self evaluation questionnaire
- file sampling (12 files)
- fieldwork activity comprising of :
 - interviews with five prisoners
 - interviews and focus groups with social work staff and managers
 - interviews with prison based staff
 - staff surveys

5. KEY FINDINGS

5.1 The inspection report for the East Ayrshire prison based social work team is positive. It highlights that the service:

- performs well against the requirements of the SLA;
- makes a positive contribution to public protection and prisoner resettlement;
- is valued by other staff groups working within the prison;
- can evidence that effective performance management and quality assurance systems are in place;
- has demonstrated a commitment to development through self evaluation;
- benefits from political leadership and professional leadership at senior, middle and first line management levels;
- ensures that staff are supported and involved in the development of the service.

5.2 SWIA recognises that the prison based social work service, through the service's own self evaluation, had begun to identify ways to improve the service. An action plan is already in place with a focus on continuous improvement of the service, and this was developed in conjunction with other prison based services. Based on this self evaluation and improvement activity and the inspection findings, SWIA have made the following recommendations:

- The council should establish ways to collect routinely information about the impact of services that the prison based social work team delivers;
- The council should find ways to explain risk assessment procedures and practices to prisoners more clearly;
- The council should establish ways to collect feedback from prisoners routinely about the social work service they receive;
- Within the wider context of the Community Justice Authority, the Council together with SERCO, should take forward the work of the family strategy group to improve supports for the children and families of serving prisoners;
- The Council should progress its plans to revise the information about social work services that prisoners receive on induction and consider how best to share it with them. The Council, in collaboration with SERCO, should ensure that this information helps prisoners understand the different roles and remits of various staff;
- The council should develop an outcome-orientated team plan in collaboration with other prison based and community based services;
- In revising the SLA, SERCO and the Council should consider opening up opportunities for the prison based social work service to undertake a wider range of work.

6. NEXT STEPS

- 6.1 The SWIA Inspection report provides a positive summary of the work carried out by the social work service within HMP Kilmarnock, and evidences its effectiveness in working with SERCO and other prison based services.
- 6.2 The service's existing action plan is currently being revised for submission to SWIA which will address the seven recommendations.
- 6.3 The findings of the inspection will now be disseminated to key stakeholders.
- 6.4 The findings of the national thematic report are due to be published in December 2010 and will be reported to the Governance and Scrutiny Committee at a future date.

7. POLICY/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no new legislative or policy issues arising from this report.

8. COMMUNITY PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no specific community planning issues arising from this report, although it should be noted that the work of the prison based inspection relies on effective partnership working with other agencies/services.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no financial implications arising from the inspection findings.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 It is recommended that Governance and Scrutiny Committee: -
- (i) note the positive outcome of the Social Work Inspection Agency (SWIA) inspection of the social work service within HMP Kilmarnock;
 - (ii) request that a further report is prepared highlighting the key findings from the national thematic inspection report which is due to be published in December 2010;
 - (iii) request that the action plan prepared in response to the inspection findings is presented at a future Governance and Scrutiny Committee; and otherwise
 - (iv) note the content of this report.

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BACKGROUND REPORTS:

SWIA Prison Based Social Work Services Inspection Report (2010)

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