

Dumfries and Galloway Council Scrutiny Report

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On 1 April 2011 the Social Work Inspection Agency merged with the Care Commission and the section of HMIE responsible for inspecting Services to Protect Children to form a new scrutiny body, Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (SCSWIS). The following report has emerged from assessment and scrutiny activity carried out by SWIA and completed by SCSWIS.

1. Introduction

The Social Work Inspection Agency (SWIA) undertook performance inspections of all of Scotland's local authority social work services between 2005 and 2009. SWIA published an overview report in 2010, which summarised the key issues and messages arising for social work services across Scotland. The initial performance inspections established a baseline from which improvement could be measured. SWIA developed its work to take account of the need to apply more targeted and proportionate inspection. It also published a self-evaluation guide and a suite of companion guides on specific topics to assist local authorities in developing their approach to self-evaluating social work services.

There are assigned link senior inspectors to each local authority. It is the link inspector's role to build up knowledge of the local authority and to facilitate local authority social work in its work to improve the services that it delivers to people at risk.

2. Purpose of report

SWIA completed an initial scrutiny level assessment (ISLA) in Dumfries and Galloway Social Work services in 2009. Dumfries and Galloway was one of the first authorities to undergo this risk assessment. Findings from the ISLA contributed to Shared Risk Assessment and were included in the Assurance and Improvement Plan (AIP) for Dumfries and Galloway for 2010-11. The local area network (LAN) who produces the AIP assessed Dumfries and Galloway as medium risk in both 2010 and 2011, but noted improvements in the plan for 2011.

The LAN concluded in the AIP Update 2011-14:

'Over the past year (the second year of the AIP) the council has been proactive in ensuring improvements and has introduced a significant programme of planned change. There is now a clearer vision and direction and political and corporate leadership has improved. While we have highlighted a number of on-going areas of risk and uncertainty, mainly within areas of corporate activity rather than service delivery, we note the positive action taken by the council to date to drive forward necessary improvements...' (Page 1)

SWIA determined the amount of social work scrutiny required in the local authority's social work service by using an assessment of risk (the ISLA). This considers risk at the strategic and service levels, as well as the risk for individuals. To assess the degree of risk for social work services we scrutinise case records, analyse documents provided by the local authority review reports from other scrutiny and improvement bodies and analyse published national performance data.¹

This report sets out the reasons for the SWIA's targeted and proportionate scrutiny of Dumfries and Galloway social work services. We undertook some scrutiny in August 2010 and in November 2010 and this report, therefore, covers the scrutiny undertaken to date. The timing of the scrutiny was at the request of the local authority. They were moving into a locality structure and wanted the findings of the scrutiny to contribute to their development of the new structure.

We also make recommendations for improvement arising from our scrutiny activity.

3. Initial scrutiny level assessment

SWIA undertook an initial scrutiny level assessment (ISLA) of Dumfries and Galloway social work services between June 2009 and September 2009. Our analysis of risk is based on nine questions that are used to analyse information and data gathered on the local authority. The questions relate to SWIA's Performance Improvement Model. As part of this process we consider how social work services are identifying and actively managing risk. To assess the possible risks for social work services in Dumfries and Galloway we scrutinised and analysed a range of information and data, including the following:

- Published national key performance and statistical data.
- Read 100 case records across all care groups. This exercise included input from four local social work file readers who joined the file reading team.
- 139 documents provided by the local authority or sourced by SWIA relating to the ISLA questions.
- SWIA's performance inspection report (2006) and the follow up report (2008)
- HMIE's report on the joint inspection of child protection (2008) and (2010).

¹ 30 children and family case files ; 50 community care case files; and 20 criminal justice cases. 50 case files of people with a learning disability were also read at the same time as part of a multi-agency inspection.

- Audit Scotland Best Value (2009).
- Information provided by the Mental Welfare Commission (MWC) and the Care Commission.
- Information drawn from Information drawn from SWIA's participation in the Dumfries and Galloway local area network (LAN).

For the past three years the local authority and social work services had been undergoing significant change in terms of the redirection of services and the move to a locality based model.

The Social Work Services Business Plan 2011- 2012 set out the direction for service development in the local authority, *'personalised, preventive, early intervention and re-enablement approach based within a locality model of delivery.'*

The Change programme is based on ten key principles which originate in the 21st Century Changing Lives Review. The Front Line Improvement Team has a key role in supporting the overall change programme in partnership with locality based staff and Head of Service.

4. Initial risk assessment findings

SWIA's overall initial assessment completed in September 2009 was that Dumfries and Galloway social work services demonstrated moderate risk, adequate performance and with moderate activity on improvement work.

Our risk assessment was based on three categories:

- areas of significant risk
- areas of uncertainty
- areas where there were no significant risks indicated.

4.1 Significant risk

We assessed one area having significant risk:

- staff management and support.

There was limited evidence of staff supervision from the file reading, and the results of a staff survey conducted in 2008-09 indicated significant areas of staff concern about the process of change in the local authority as a whole and in social work services. We found limited evidence of regular staff supervision and training plans. Reports by the Care Commission into specific resources for children and adults reported a lack of consistency in staff support and supervision.

4.2 Uncertainty

We assessed three areas as areas of uncertainty:

- assessment and care management
- risk assessment and management
- governance and financial management.

There were significant differences between care groups in both assessment and care management and in risk assessment and management.

In the files, which we read in the summer of 2009, we found that the most consistently good assessments were for people who used criminal justice services, and least consistently good assessments were in work with children and their families.

The HMIE child protection inspection in 2008 concluded that *'recognising and assessing risk was adequate. There was no standard approach for jointly assessing risks and needs.'*

At 31 March 2010 the local authority was still carrying an accumulated underspend on resource transfer funding of £2.3 million. This was to be addressed in 2010-11 through a Change Fund set up to support the personalisation agenda and the promotion of early intervention.

4.3 No significant risks indicated

We considered that four areas presented no significant concerns:

- There was evidence of positive outcomes for people who use services and evidence that for most people their circumstances had generally improved.
- Partnership working between social work services and people who used services was appropriate for most people. Partnership between agencies was working well for most care groups. People who use services and carers involved in the personalisation project were very positive about the local aspect and direct contact with the local manager.
- There had been self-evaluation of services for young people leaving care and for people who used mental health services in 2009-10. Self-evaluation was beginning to have an impact on the quality of services and plans were in place for further work by the Front Line Improvement Team.
- The local authority's equality policies were in place and up to date. We found evidence of social work services looking to consult and involve people who used services and their carers and that work with the individual had adequately addressed many of potential barriers to access to services.

We did not identify any systemic and urgent risk during the course of the ISLA. There were no areas that needed urgent attention due to unsatisfactory or weak performance.

The areas of risk uncertainty outlined above, formed the focus for our scrutiny, which we carried out during August 2010 and November 2010. Scrutiny sessions were targeted at assessing the areas of risk we had identified and did not constitute a full assessment of all social work services.

5. Scrutiny findings

The key areas identified for scrutiny were:

- management and support of staff
- assessment and care management
- risk assessment and risk management
- governance and financial management
- the impact of the move to a locality structure.

Due to the newness of the locality structure social work services asked if our scrutiny could occur a year after the implementation date of the four localities. Therefore, the scrutiny of children services took place in August 2010 and staff support and management in November 2010.

The scrutiny consisted of meetings with:

- social work staff
- social work managers
- health staff
- staff in social work resources, youth justice, leaving care and learning and achievement
- looked after young people
- elected members
- contracts commissioning and finance staff
- four adults and young people were using services.

5.1 Staff management and support

Our initial work found that some staff were unclear of the vision for social work services and were not sure whether the locality structure was a local authority rather than social work led decision. Together with limited evidence of staff support and supervision this led to the area being identified as a significant risk.

By the time we started the scrutiny of this area in November 2010 there had been an up to date survey of staff views which was beginning to inform developments.

We visited localities in both Stranraer and Dumfries and met staff and people who use services and carers. We also attended a staff information event conducted by the Director of Social Work, which was intended to develop understanding of plans for the locality structure. This was one of a series of these events and we heard positive comments from staff about them.

We heard mixed opinions from the staff we met. On the whole they were supportive of the introduction and recognised that it would take time for plans to settle. Some staff were not clear about how specialised services were going to be delivered.

Some staff we met were concerned that the move to localities might impact on the newly introduced plans for staff supervision support and management. Managers were clear that the new structure would enable these plans to be consolidated but the new way of working would bring challenges to staff and may not be welcomed at once by all.

The Front Line Improvement Team and staff in the training team were taking forward staff development and performance measurement. Their work was recognised by staff in the localities as helping to improve communication and standards of staff management and support.

The AIP concluded that:

'There have been meetings between management and staff about the new locality structure and the process is on-going. Progress has been made in locality working but some aspects are still being developed.'

At the end of our scrutiny it was too early to assess the full impact of the changes and risks to service delivery but due to extent of progress made, we assessed this to be a remaining area of uncertainty instead of a significant risk.

RECOMMENDATION 1

Social work services should continue to work to inform all staff involved in the process of change. The work of the Front Line Improvement Team in promoting engagement and participation of staff in the development of services should continue and this should include developing ways of evaluating progress in staff support and management.

5.2 Assessment and care management

We saw up dated plans to improve this area and we read a small number of additional files (ten) to look for improvement in children and family files. In the files which we read newly completed assessments were of a good quality. The implementation of GIRFEC was beginning to impact positively on services for children. Work was being undertaken to roll out integrated assessments for children as part of the implementation of GIRFEC. Staff training on the use of chronologies was planned.

The HMIE follow up child protection inspection in 2010 concluded that:

'Senior managers encourage staff to review their practice to improve outcomes for children. Within and across services, managers and staff have identified strengths and priorities for improvement and action plans have been produced. Although staff are increasingly involved more needs to be done to include children and their families in these processes.'

Staff we met were able to tell us about a more focussed approach to assessment and care management in both children and families and adult services.

RECOMMENDATION 2

Social work services should make sure that all staff who work with children and adults who are at risk have training soon in the use of chronologies and that this informs their overall approach to comprehensive assessment.

5.3 Risk assessment and risk management

Social work services were responding to the outcomes of the child protection inspection by developing a consistent approach to assessment in line with implementation of GIRFEC. Staff were aware of plans to implement the integrated assessment framework and that work was being undertaken to develop an evaluation of this approach. Managers told us

that they were working with staff to coordinate approaches to risk assessment and management.

A workshop for Social Work team managers and senior social workers had been organised to examine the application of thresholds and consistency of decision making across fieldwork teams. A development day involving 40 professionals from Health and Social Work, had taken place to explore issues of risk management, thresholds and joint working.

The HMIE follow child protection inspection in 2010 concluded that:

'Training and guidance is helping improve staff's understanding of risk and how best to respond to it. A new approach is being introduced which is beginning to help staff consider risks to children more effectively.'

The local authority has few residential resources for children and young people and some were placed with the local small providers. Some resources were of good quality and the local authority senior managers told us that they were in discussion with these providers to provide more commissioned services to enable more looked after children to live locally rather than be placed outwith the authority.

The local authority had a significant number (between 30 and 40) of children and young people from other local authorities, including England, placed with small providers in the local authority area. Dumfries and Galloway staff were not always informed of placements by these other local authorities and one member of staff had to phone round to find out which children were placed in which unit each Monday morning.

The health staff we met raised concerns about the resource implications for CAMHS and schools of children from outwith the area who were resident in Dumfries and Galloway. We discussed these concerns with senior managers in the local authority who recognised that there were risks to the provision of services by health, education, social work and police.

RECOMMENDATION 3

Social work services should seek to make sure that providers, staff in all agencies and elected members are aware of the risks created by the presence of children and young people placed outwith their home areas in many small units in Dumfries and Galloway.

5.4 Governance and financial management

The LAN met regularly and there were joint meetings between the team and the Chief Executive of Dumfries and Galloway and the local authority senior management team and with Audit and Risk Committee of the local authority.

The issue of financial management identified by Audit Scotland and our scrutiny was the underspend on resource transfer from NHS Dumfries and Galloway. This had been addressed through the local change fund plan.

A report dated 14 February 2011 to the Social Work Committee by Director of Social Work recommended a local Change Fund of £1.9 million available on a non-recurring basis to support transformational change in Social Work and to support a shift to more community based services for the people the Council support. They planned to resource the local

Change Fund from underspends of £1.6 million Resource Transfer from NHS Dumfries and Galloway and £304,000 from the Social Work budgets savings achieved in 2008-09. The Finance Sub-Finance Committee of June 2010 agreed to support change in service.

5.5 The impact on service delivery and staff management of the move into localities

The locality plan was ambitious and would take some time to be implemented fully. The overall aim was to redesign services to make them more responsive to local need and to enhance the involvement of local community organisations in the support and delivery of services. Some specialised services, for example, fostering and adoption services would remain centralised, but the majority of services would be delivered locally. The managers for the two localities we met were enthusiastic about the opportunities for reconfiguring services based in local communities.

The local authority's new Area Management Framework was agreed by full council October 2010. There were significant changes proposed to role of Area Committees in decision making and performance management. The new approach was to be fully implemented by April 2011. Within social work services the move into localities was developing.

A stronger performance management culture was evident at senior management level mainly through a new approach by the chief executive and monthly one to one meetings which were cascading to middle management. Performance reporting to committee, however, remained under-developed. This limited the ability of elected members to scrutinise the local authority's performance including its progress with improvement.

Service Plans were beginning to identify clearer strategic priorities that linked to the Single Outcome Agreement (SOA). This was not yet, however, fully in place and local authority aimed to have updated service plans by March 2011 along with improved performance reporting to committee.

The introduction of the new computer programme 'Framework I' to develop the use of a consistent tool across the authority was taking time to be established.

RECOMMENDATION 4

Social Work Services should make sure that their Framework I system is able to capture the full range of data to help them to evaluate services.

5.5 Wider scrutiny findings

Our scrutiny was undertaken on a targeted basis and did not constitute a full assessment of all social work services. However, in the course of our scrutiny work we heard about a range of important matters, some of which we report on below.

The successful development of the corporate parenting strategy and the strong commitment to this by elected members. Corporate parenting was making a difference to some looked after young people. The local authority had six work experience placements for looked after children. This was impressive as in many areas corporate parenting had not been translated into direct services for young people.

Aspects of services for people with a learning disability were included in a wider review of learning disability services in four local authorities. In the multi-disciplinary inspection of

learning disability services where the focus was on transition, employment, lifelong learning and leisure, Dumfries and Galloway achieved adequate grades in the seven areas of evaluation.

The Summer Activity Scheme run by Dumfries and Galloway Council for children between the ages of 5-18 was identified as a good practice example in this report. The scheme was for children who could not attend activities without the help of a support worker and who may have limited or no access to suitable social activities due to their disability or circumstances. It ran for four weeks in six schools. Outcomes for the project were identified, measured and recorded in an annual report using qualitative and quantitative methods.

The inspection of prison based social work services found good working relationships between social work and prison staff but also significant staff shortages which affected the delivery of key services to prisoners. A comprehensive action plan was developed by the local authority to address these issues.

Social work services were monitoring their performance against the SOA.

The inspection of the regulated services had not raised any serious risks.

6. Recommendations

In addition to the range of improvement work social work services already had underway, we identified areas for improvement from our scrutiny activity. We will ask the local authority to draw up a SMART action plan, based on our recommendations.

RECOMMENDATION 1

Social work services should continue to work to inform all staff in the process of change. The work of the Front Line Improvement Team in promoting engagement and participation of staff in the development of services should continue and develop ways on evaluating progress in staff support and management.

RECOMMENDATION 2

Social work services should make sure that all staff who work with children and adults who are at risk have training soon in the use of chronologies and that this informs their overall approach to comprehensive assessment.

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7. Next steps

As part of our commitment to actively promote and encourage self-evaluation on the part of local authorities (through the role of the link inspector and the use of SWIA self-evaluation guide, there will be an option of supported self-evaluation available to the local authority.

The link inspector will maintain regular contact with the social work services. We will monitor the performance of the service, including progress made with the recommendations for improvement identified above. Information from the scrutiny report will be fed into the review of the local authority's AIP, by the link inspector, as part of the shared risk assessment process.

18 August.2011

<p>1. Is there evidence of effective governance including financial management?</p>
<p>2. Is there effective management and support of staff?</p>
<p>3. Is there evidence of positive outcomes for people who use services and carers across the care groups?</p>
<p>4. Is there evidence of good quality assessment and care management?</p>
<p>5. Is there evidence of effective risk assessment and risk management for individual service users, both in terms of risk to self and public protection?</p>
<p>6. Does the social work service undertake effective self-evaluation resulting in improvement planning and delivery?</p>
<p>7. Is there effective partnership working?</p>
<p>8. Do policies, procedures and practices comply with equality and human rights legislation and are there services, which seek to remove obstacles in society that exclude people?</p>
<p>9. Are there any areas which require urgent attention and improvement?</p>

Scrutiny – Sessions List
Covering both August and November 2010

Appendix 2

Scrutiny Activity	Number of sessions undertaken
Case file audit and analysis	7
Focus groups with people who use services	2
Focus groups with Carers	1
Focus group of front line staff and team leaders– child care and community care	7
Meeting with senior social work managers (locality)	3
Meeting with Director of Social work	1
Meeting with practitioners forum	1
Observation of Meetings – local open forum Facing the future	1
Focus group learning and partner agencies	1
Meeting with learning and development manager	1
Interviews with people who use services	2
Focus group finance and commissioning staff	1
Focus group elected members	1
Interview regional reporter	1
Focus group with health partners	1
Focus group with specialist team managers	1
Total	32 sessions

