

News release

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AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT OUTLINED AS STIRLING COUNCIL SOCIAL WORK SERVICES INSPECTED

Stirling Council needs to improve its social work services to ensure they are being delivered efficiently and effectively, according to a report published today (22 July 2009) by the Social Work Inspection Agency (SWIA).

Inspectors highlighted that there needed to be better outcomes for people who relied on its services, in particular frail older people, those with learning disabilities and young people leaving the care of Children's Services.

The report evaluated seven areas as adequate, two areas as weak, and one area – relating to the management and support of staff – as good. The report contains a total of 20 recommendations for improvement.

Other findings of the inspection, which took place between August 2008 and January 2009, were:

- Many social work staff were working hard to deliver good services
- Services had a clear vision of what they wanted to achieve and were developing ways of monitoring and reporting on performance
- Some aspects of social care had been slow to modernise with a lack of leadership of change and improvement, particularly in community care
- Services needed to be better at assessing how they were performing
- The role of chief social work officer was not being used effectively to provide professional leadership
- Inspectors were not confident that the council had sufficiently thought through the proposed changes to community care services, the impact of these changes and the timescales for delivery

Alexis Jay, Chief Inspector, Social Work Inspection Agency, said:

“Today’s report highlights the important changes which are required to Stirling Council’s social work services in order to provide a better service to the public, particularly older people, people with learning disabilities and children leaving the care of the council.

“Whilst social work staff are hard working and committed, the council needs to ensure there is strong professional and strategic leadership in place to deliver the necessary changes.

“We have made a series of recommendations for the improvement of services, and will work closely with the council to agree an action plan in response to this inspection report.”

- ends -

For further information, please contact Linda McIntyre at Consolidated PR on 0131 240 6420 or email swia@consolidatedpr.com

Notes to editors:

- **Embargoed copies of the report are available – please contact Linda McIntyre on 0131 240 6420**
- SWIA uses a six point scale in its inspection of local authority social work services. The gradings given to Stirling Council in the ten areas of evaluation were:
 - Outcomes for people who use services – adequate
 - Impact on people who use services - adequate
 - Impact on staff – adequate
 - Impact on the community – adequate
 - Delivery of key processes – adequate
 - Policy and services development, planning and performance management – adequate
 - Management and support of staff – good
 - Resources and capacity building – adequate
 - Leadership and direction – weak
 - Capacity for improvement – weak
- SWIA is carrying out performance inspections of all local authority social work services in Scotland
- SWIA, which operates independently and impartially, reports publicly to the Parliament on the quality of these services, locally and nationally

- SWIA gathers and analyses a wide selection of information about a local authority and the social work services it provides or is responsible for. These findings are published in a report that identifies strengths as well as areas for improvement
- For further information on inspections and the timetable of inspections for 2009, log on to www.swia.gov.uk