

SOUTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL RECOGNISES THE CHALLENGE TO MODERNISE ITS SOCIAL WORK SERVICE

South Ayrshire Council is delivering good outcomes for many people who use its social work services, but it must modernise these services if they are to be fit for meeting future needs, according to a report published today by the Social Work Inspection Agency (SWIA).

The report, which covers all aspects of South Ayrshire Council's social work services, evaluated seven areas as adequate, and three areas – relating to the impact and outcomes on those who rely on its services, and the council's capacity for improvement – as good.

Inspectors highlighted that people who use services were generally positive about the help they received and the way they were treated. There had been considerable change during 2008, with an ambitious, but necessary, improvement agenda launched by seniors managers in areas such as home care and resources for accommodated children, in a climate of significant financial pressures.

The main findings of the inspection, carried out between November 2008 and March 2009, were:

- The directorate of children and community delivered good outcomes for many people;
- Key strengths in partnership working were identified;
- The majority of services were provided on time, though managers need to ensure that systems of prioritisation were consistent across the whole council area;
- Improvement was needed in the assessment and management of risk to vulnerable children;
- Staff remained motivated and committed, however morale was affected by uncertainties about the future direction of services;
- Gaps in service delivery were identified, caused by the absence of strategic service plans and commissioning arrangements, however new structures were in place to improve this; and

- Senior managers were committed to improving their use of information to manage performance

The inspection report contains 16 recommendations to help the directorate progress the improvement process.

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

“Today’s report highlights the areas of social work service delivery that need to be addressed by senior managers to achieve improvement in quality.

“Although the directorate has undergone considerable change in the past year, inspectors noted that clearer leadership was now in place and the capacity for improvement was good.

“It is essential that the progress to date is sustained, and that staff are fully involved in the changes.

“We will now work with the directorate to agree an action plan in response to this report, addressing the 16 recommendations for the further improvement of its social work services.”

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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 South Ayrshire Council in the ten areas of evaluation were:
 - Outcomes for people who use services – good
 - Impact on people who use services - good
 - 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 – adequate
 - Resources and capacity building – adequate
 - Leadership and direction – adequate
 - Capacity for improvement – good
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- 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