

News release

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EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL TO SUSTAIN MOMENTUM FOR IMPROVEMENT OF SOCIAL WORK SERVICES

Inspection report outlines 15 recommendations for the continued improvement of services

East Ayrshire Council is making good progress in the improvement of its social work services, and services are generally well regarded by those who rely on them, according to a new report published today (24 June 2009) by the Social Work Inspection Agency (SWIA).

The report, which focuses on the council's approach to continuous improvement of services, evaluated five areas as adequate, four areas as good and one area – relating to the impact on the community – as very good.

Inspectors highlighted strengths in the council's multi-agency working, its committed workforce and the progress it had made on performance management and service improvement.

Whilst inspectors acknowledged that trends were moving in the right direction, improvements were required in a number of areas including educational attainment, pathway planning processes, access to employment, further education and suitable accommodation for young people leaving care.

The report contains a total of 15 recommendations for the improvement of services.

The main findings of the inspection, which was carried out between August and November 2008, were:

- Most people who received social work services agreed they were of good quality and they could rely on them
- Social work services had worked hard at shifting the balance of care from residential care to care at home, with good outcomes for older people in particular

- There needed to be sustained improvement in the provision of services for children and young people
- The standard of assessments and care plans was not yet of a consistently high standard
- Staff were committed to their work and well motivated, with a marked improvement in morale since new structures had been introduced
- There were high levels of community involvement in social work activities
- Multi-agency and multi-disciplinary working was a real strength
- Good progress had been made on performance management and service improvement through best value reviews
- A specific plan for social work services needed to be developed and used to inform commissioning and planning
- Budgetary control was generally well managed and the Council was working to resolving budgetary pressures in relation to the provision of services

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

“Today’s report highlights that although East Ayrshire Council continues to face challenges in relation to capacity issues, there is evidence of the council working to improve the quality of its social work services.

“We believe that the council’s strong commitment to partnership working and the positive way in which social work is regarded both within the council and by external agencies, will ensure the momentum for continued improvement will be sustained.

“The council needs to address a number of its processes to help improve the outcomes for those who rely on social work services, and we will work with the management team to agree an action plan in response to this inspection report.”

Copies of the East Ayrshire Council Performance Inspection report are available from the SWIA website at www.swia.gov.uk

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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 East Ayrshire Council in the ten areas of evaluation were:
 - Outcomes for people who use services – adequate
 - Impact on people who use services - good
 - Impact on staff – adequate
 - Impact on the community – very good
 - Delivery of key processes – adequate
 - Policy and services development, planning and performance management – good
 - Management and support of staff – adequate
 - Resources and capacity building – good
 - Leadership and direction – adequate
 - Capacity for improvement – good
- 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