

SOCIAL WORK INSPECTION AGENCY

EXECUTIVE AGENCY FRAMEWORK DOCUMENT

April 2005

FOREWORD

The Scottish Parliament and Ministers are committed to identifying best practice in social work services, identifying areas for improvement and improving the quality of social work services across Scotland. Rigorous independent inspections and reviews of all social work services, to help ensure continuous improvement and improve the quality of lives for people who use services, are a vital part of achieving these aims.

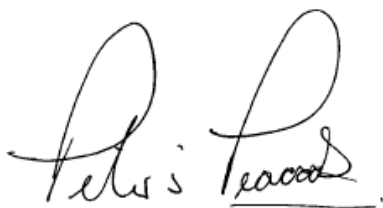
Inspections and evaluations inform people who use services, staff and managers, councillors, the public, Members of the Scottish Parliament and Scottish Ministers about standards and quality of services. Importantly, the reports identify key strengths, indicate where improvement is needed and offer suggestions on the scope for drawing on best practice elsewhere.

The functions of social work services inspection can best be achieved through operating as an Executive Agency. This arrangement enables Social Work Inspectors to carry out their work independently and impartially. It remains important that the evidence deriving from inspections and reviews continues to inform social work policy and practice. As an Executive Agency, the Social Work Inspection Agency (SWIA) will have access to relevant Departments of the Scottish Executive to assist in policy formulation.

This Framework Document sets out in clear terms the vision, objectives, functions and responsibilities Scottish Ministers have delegated to the Chief Social Work Inspector as Chief Executive of SWIA. Scottish Ministers are fully accountable to the Scottish Parliament for the activities of SWIA and the standards of its work. In turn, the Chief Social Work Inspector has direct access to Scottish Ministers and is answerable to them for the Agency's operation and performance.

Each year, Scottish Ministers will set challenging performance targets relating to the key objectives of the Agency and our strategic objectives for social work services. Scottish Ministers will ensure that SWIA receives appropriate support in order to help the Chief Social Work Inspector meet these targets.

Executive Agency status will further strengthen the independence of inspection, review and report of social work inspection. It also clarifies the relationship between SWIA, the core of the Scottish Executive and Scottish Ministers. We are confident that it will lead to improvements in the development of social work practice and formulation of policy in Scotland, and we wish all those involved well for the future.



Peter Peacock



Euan Robson

Minister for Education and Young People

Deputy Minister for Education and
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1. STATUS, ROLE AND FUNCTIONS

The Agency

- 1.1 The Social Work Inspection Agency (SWIA) is an Executive Agency of the Scottish Ministers under the terms of the Scotland Act 1998. As an Executive Agency, SWIA operates independently and impartially whilst remaining directly accountable to Scottish Ministers for the standards of its work. This status guarantees the independence of inspection, review and reporting within the overall context of Scottish Ministers' strategic objectives for social work and social care services.
- 1.2 The Chief Social Work Inspector (CSWI) is responsible for ensuring that a systematic programme of inspections is carried out, and that the results are reported. The CSWI is also responsible for providing professional advice to Scottish Ministers and relevant Departments of the Scottish Executive based on the evidence obtained during that inspection programme and on Social Work Inspectors wider knowledge of social work and social care services.
- 1.3 The Chief Social Work Inspector is the Chief Executive of the Agency. The CSWI has right of direct access to appropriate Ministers. The CSWI, who acts as the Agency's Accountable Officer, is responsible within the terms of this Framework Document for SWIA's management, performance and future development.
- 1.4 The Social Work Inspection Agency undertakes the following functions:
 - Inspection, review and reporting across social work and social care services.
 - Sectoral and aspect evaluations of social work and social care services.
 - Commissions from the Scottish Ministers, relevant Departments of the Scottish Executive and other bodies.
 - Provision of professional advice to Scottish Ministers and others.
- 1.5 The Agency's role and functions are set out in detail in Annex A.
- 1.6 As an Executive Agency of the Scottish Executive Education Department SWIA operates within the Scottish Executive's Aim, Vision and Values and has identified its own statements to underpin its specific role and functions.

Scope

- 1.7 SWIA operates within statutory powers of inspection in the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 (as amended). The scope of our inspections will extend to all duties and functions of local authorities and other bodies under the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 and related legislation. Where services provided by a local authority (or agent commissioned by them) in fulfilment of any of these duties or functions are inspected by another regulator, such as the Care Commission, we will take into account the findings of the inspection of that regulator and not duplicate it. The Chief Social Work Inspector is

authorised by Scottish Ministers to exercise these powers and he/she authorises Inspectors as they are appointed. We will not investigate individual complaints about social work services from members of the public as we are not a complaints body.

Mission

- 1.8 SWIA's mission is to continuously improve social work services by driving up standards through partnership working, identifying areas for improvement where they need to be addressed and identifying and sharing best practice.

Vision

- 1.9 "Throughout Scotland, people are able to rely on excellent social work services that improve the quality of their lives."

Values

- 1.10 SWIA will exemplify the values of integrity, honesty and objectivity and ensure that its activities are:
- always improving/evolving;
 - based on the highest standards and best practice;
 - respected for the focus on the needs of people who use services; and
 - backed up by informed analysis and intelligence.

Objectives

- 1.11 The key objectives of SWIA are to:
- Deliver a rolling programme of in-depth inspection of all social work services provided by local authorities to help ensure continuous improvement and to improve the wellbeing and quality of lives for people who use services and their carers;
 - Follow up its published reports on social work provision;
 - Investigate key aspects of social work and publish reports which will identify strengths and indicate where improvement is needed;
 - Complete inspections and investigations commissioned by Scottish Ministers and the relevant Departments of the Scottish Executive, working in collaboration with others as appropriate;
 - Carry out inspection, review, investigative and other activities commissioned by bodies responsible for the quality of social work and social care services in the UK and beyond;
 - Collate and analyse evidence from evaluations and promote public accountability by publishing on a regular cycle clear and concise reports on standards and quality in key sectors and aspects of social work services;
 - Promote best practice in improving the quality of social work and social care services;
 - Share expertise with others in the UK and beyond;

- Maintain constructive relationships with key local, national and international bodies, to ensure that SWIA has current detailed knowledge of social work services;
- Draw on the results of evaluations from inspections and reviews, and overall knowledge of the system, to provide independent professional advice and information to the Scottish Ministers, relevant Departments of the Scottish Executive and key national bodies;
- Create and maintain an Inspection-led knowledgebase of social work and social care services in Scotland to inform practice and policy;
- Draw on the results of evaluations, and overall knowledge of the system, to provide professional advice and guidance to bodies responsible for the funding, management, quality and delivery of social work;
- Ensure high quality, efficient services in line with the Agency's Charter;
- Monitor standards over time; and
- Ensure the continuous development and improvement of our staff and the quality of our activities.

Aims

1.12 SWIA aims to:

- provide excellent services that are prompt, reliable and responsive to meet our stakeholders needs;
- manage ourselves well, work with respect for others, build the talent of our staff and value diversity;
- share knowledge, build on best practice and work in effective partnership;
- operate objectively, consistently and fairly in all our working practices; and
- Be an excellent organisation.

Freedom of Information

- 1.13 SWIA's Publication scheme has been approved by the Office of Scottish Information Commissioner and will be available on the SWIA web-site: www.swia.gov.uk.

2. RESPONSIBILITIES AND RELATIONSHIPS

Scottish Ministers

- 2.1 Scottish Ministers are responsible for setting the policy and resources framework within which SWIA operates. Scottish Ministers set the strategic objectives for social work and social care services and also:
- Approve the Framework Document and any revisions to it;
 - Approve the Agency's Corporate and Business Plans; and
 - Set targets and monitor SWIA's performance.
- 2.2 It is the responsibility of the CSWI to ensure that Scottish Ministers receive sound professional advice drawn from inspection and review evidence and to manage effectively the work of the Agency.
- 2.3 The appointment of the CSWI is approved by the Scottish Ministers.

The Head of SEED

- 2.4 The Permanent Secretary, who is the Permanent Head of the Scottish Executive, is the Principal Accountable Officer. The Head of the Scottish Executive Education Department, SEED is appointed by the Permanent Secretary as Departmental Accountable Officer for the Departmental Budget. The Head of SEED, in consultation as necessary with the Permanent Secretary, has the following responsibilities in respect of the Agency:
- To advise the Scottish Ministers in the exercise of their responsibilities in relation to SWIA;
 - To exercise duties and responsibilities as the Departmental Accountable Officer for the relevant Departmental Budget;
 - To ensure that the evidence and professional advice from SWIA is used to inform policy formulation and development;
 - To recommend the appointment of the Agency Accountable Officer; and
 - On behalf of the Permanent Secretary, to act as a focal point within the Scottish Executive for ensuring that services are available to support and facilitate the work of the Chief Social Work Inspector in meeting the Agency's objectives and targets.
- 2.5 The Head of SEED advises the Scottish Ministers on how SWIA's proposed Corporate Plan fits into the wider departmental objectives and on the level of resources for SWIA.
- 2.6 The Head of SEED will consult as necessary with the Heads of SEJD, SEHD and SEDD to ensure that all Department's interests are fully reflected in discussions with the CSWI. The Head of SEED will formally discuss with the CSWI each year, in the course of preparation of the Business Plan, new issues of policy relating to social work services. The Head of SEED will also offer advice, when requested by the CSWI, on any major policy issues arising during the year which are not covered in the Corporate or Business Plans.

The Head of SEED will discuss and agree specific commissions for inspections and investigations requested by Scottish Ministers and the relevant Departments of the Scottish Executive to be undertaken by the Agency.

- 2.7 In exercising these functions on behalf of Scottish Ministers, the Head of SEED may seek relevant business information from the CSWI but will not normally intervene in the day-to-day management of the Agency.

CSWI (Chief Executive)

- 2.8 The CSWI, as Chief Executive, is accountable to Scottish Ministers for the overall quality of the Agency's work, including the quality of professional advice provided; for the day-to-day management of the Agency; and for planning its future development. These responsibilities include:

- Providing leadership and direction to SWIA;
- Acting as Agency Accountable Officer;
- Ensuring that SWIA meets its aims and objectives as set out in this Framework document;
- Ensuring that the programme of evaluations, through inspections and reviews, takes full account of Scottish Executive policy to bring about improvements in standards and quality and accountability, across social work services, and helps the Scottish Ministers to meet their strategic objectives;
- Drawing on the results of evaluations from inspections and reviews, and overall knowledge of the system, to provide independent professional advice and information to Scottish Ministers, relevant Departments of the Scottish Executive and key national bodies;
- Drawing on the results of evaluations, and overall knowledge of the system, to provide independent professional advice to bodies responsible for the funding, management, quality and delivery of social work services;
- Determining SWIA's organisation and management structure;
- Preparing and agreeing with the Scottish Ministers a Corporate Plan and an annual Business Plan, and reporting on progress made towards the targets set;
- Ensuring that agreed performance targets (see Annex B) are met;
- Preparing and agreeing with the Scottish Ministers and the Auditor General for Scotland, and publishing, SWIA's Annual Report and Accounts;
- Monitoring SWIA's overall financial performance, its efficiency and effectiveness and taking relevant action;
- Taking responsibility for those personnel management responsibilities delegated to SWIA, including recruitment, motivation of staff development, promotion and maintenance of good employee relations;
- Ensuring SWIA's actions are conducted in accordance with the ethical standards on the Civil Service Code, the precepts of the Code on Access to Government Information, the Race Relations Amendment Act and other statutory or general obligations on public bodies;

- Acting as the final internal adjudicator in SWIA's formal complaints procedure; and
- Keeping under review the policy and resources set out in the Framework Document and advising Scottish Ministers of any desirable changes.

3. RESOURCE PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT

- 3.1 The CSWI is supported by four Depute Chief Social Work Inspectors and a Corporate Services Manager who together form the core of the SWIA Management Board which meets under the chairmanship of the CSWI. The SWIA Management Board has responsibility for overseeing the work of the Agency. It comprises senior managers and other key Agency personnel as determined by the CSWI. In addition, two external independent advisers are invited to attend meetings of the Management Board to provide an independent perspective on SWIA's work. A number of other groups, comprising key personnel, are concerned with managing and improving the work of the Agency.

Finance

- 3.2 SWIA is funded by the Scottish Ministers through SEED's Departmental Budget. This Budget covers all capital and current programme expenditure by the Agency, together with direct administration costs. Sales and other income arising from the Agency's normal operations are treated as Budget Income.
- 3.3 SWIA may, with Scottish Ministers' agreement, undertake additional work on a repayment basis.
- 3.4 The financial regime agreed for the Agency recognises that its income will vary in line with the extent of its operations and contracts with other bodies. Accordingly, within the Scottish Parliament's approval of the Scottish Ministers' annual decision on the distribution of public expenditure block resources, SWIA has authority to deploy its own income towards its programme of running costs expenditure in implementation of Corporate Plan objectives. Where budget levels reflected in the Budget Documents or Budget Revisions are not fully utilised, SWIA may qualify for end year flexibility (EYF) subject to Ministerial approval.

Delegations to the CSWI

- 3.5 The financial delegations to the CSWI are set out in Annex C. The delegated limits will be reviewed regularly and amended where this would assist in achieving the Agency's agreed objectives.
- 3.6 The CSWI will be responsible for ensuring that relevant financial procedures are followed, and may delegate functions in writing within the limits set in guidance issued by the Scottish Ministers.

Corporate and Business Plans

- 3.7 SWIA will develop Corporate and Business Plans, which will be agreed with Scottish Ministers. The Corporate Plan will set out the strategic management priorities for the Agency over a period of time and will be made public. It will provide the framework for a more detailed Business Plan which will form the basis for day-to-day management of the Agency and the main basis for judging performance. The Business Plan will set out the Agency's priorities,

targets and outputs for the year ahead and be used as an aid to internal management. A summary will normally be published along with the Annual Report.

- 3.8 Exceptionally, if policy or circumstances change significantly in the course of the year, the Scottish Ministers or the CSWI may propose revisions to the Corporate or Business Plans, including changes to targets and financial resources. Any revisions will be subject to approval by Scottish Ministers after consultation with the CSWI.

Annual Report and Accounts

- 3.9 The CSWI will sign and present annually to the Scottish Ministers an Annual Report and Accounts. The Annual Report will review the Agency's performance over the previous year against the financial objectives and performance targets set in the Corporate and Business Plans and how SWIA has responded to unforeseen circumstances. The Agency will keep proper accounts and proper records in relation to the accounts and will prepare in respect of each financial year a statement of account. The Agency will prepare its accounts in accordance with the Resource Accounting Manual. The Annual Report and Accounts, which are audited by the Auditor General for Scotland, will be laid before the Scottish Parliament before the Summer Recess.

- 3.10 SWIA will operate financial and management accounting systems which enable performance against budgets and targets to be reviewed.

Risk Management

- 3.11 The CSWI will ensure that a formal assessment of business risks is undertaken and periodically reviewed.

Internal Audit

- 3.12 The CSWI will ensure that a system of internal audit is provided which accords with HM Treasury's Government Internal Audit Standards. As part of this system, an audit committee will assist the CSWI in evaluating the effectiveness of the financial and management controls within the Agency, as determined by the CSWI and other non-Executive or independent members as appropriate. This audit committee will comprise the CSWI, DCSWIs and other key Agency personnel as determined by the CSWI and will function in line with the principles set out in <http://intranet/content/departments/fcsd/divisions/finance%20group/standards/SPFM/AuditComms/index.htm>. The Head of Internal Audit and a representative of Audit Scotland will normally be present at meetings.
- 3.13 The FSCD:AASD will have the right of access to the Agency if necessary and, after consultation with the CSWI, give independent assurance to the SEED Accountable Officer in discharging his responsibilities.

External Audit

- 3.14 The Agency will be subject to external audit by the Auditor General for Scotland.

4. WIDER ACCOUNTABILITY

Scottish Ministers

- 4.1 Scottish Ministers will answer to the Scottish Parliament for the functions of the Agency.
- 4.2 Scottish Ministers will reply to correspondence from Members of the Scottish Parliament on policy issues and the CSWI will reply to Members' correspondence on operational matters. Where a Parliamentary Question relates to operational matters, the CSWI will prepare the substance of the response in accordance with guidance for officials on answering Scottish Parliamentary Questions.

Accountable Officer Arrangements

- 4.3 The Permanent Secretary of the Scottish Executive is the Principal Accountable Officer for the Scottish Administration. He/she designates the Head of SEED as the Departmental Accountable Officer and the CSWI as the Agency Accountable Officer.
- 4.4 The CSWI will provide SEED with the information necessary to enable the Scottish Executive's consolidated resource accounts to be prepared. The CSWI will also report regularly to the Head of SEED (who acts on behalf of the Scottish Ministers), on a basis agreed between them, on progress towards achieving the targets set in the Business Plan for each of the performance measures.
- 4.5 The CSWI is responsible for ensuring that the Agency complies with the guidance and requirements issued by the Scottish Ministers and for putting into effect any recommendations of the Auditor General or the Scottish Parliament that are accepted by the Scottish Ministers. The CSWI is responsible for ensuring that proper procedures are followed for securing propriety and regularity of public funds for which the CSWI is accountable. The CSWI's accountability is subject to the respective overall responsibilities of the Permanent Secretary of the Scottish Executive as the Principal Accountable Officer and the Head of SEED as Departmental Accountable Officer.
- 4.6 The Chief Executive of SWIA as Accountable Officer has a duty to secure Best Value, which includes the concepts of good corporate governance, performance management and continuous improvement. Guidance to Accountable Officers on what their organisations should be able to demonstrate in fulfilment of the duties which make up a Best Value regime is included in the Best Value section of the Scottish Public Finance Manual (SPFM).'
- 4.7 The Memorandum setting out these responsibilities is reproduced in the Scottish Public Finance Manual at Annex 1 to the section on Accountability. The manual is published on the Scottish Executive website at www.scotland.gov.uk/library5/finance/spfm/spf-00.asp.

- 4.8 The CSWI will report regularly to the Head of SEED (who acts on behalf of Scottish Ministers), on a basis agreed between them, on progress towards achieving the targets set in the Business Plan for each of the performance measures. As a key feature of the Agency model, the CSWI also retains the right of direct access to the Scottish Ministers.

External Accountability and Consultation

- 4.9 In order to assist the CSWI in evaluating the effectiveness of the Agency, two independent external advisers will be appointed by the CSWI, in consultation with the Head of SEED, from outwith the set of bodies currently subject to inspection. These advisers will be invited to attend meetings of the Management Board. They will provide the CSWI with an independent perspective on the Agency's work.
- 4.10 The Corporate Plan is published and provides the framework for more detailed annual Business Plans. The Business Plan will be the main basis for judging the performance of the Agency. A summary of the Business Plan will be published along with the Annual Report and accounts for the previous year.
- 4.11 SWIA is also accountable to its stakeholders through the quality of its published reports and through written evaluations of inspections and reviews. The SWIA Charter sets out the minimum standards of service the Agency will provide and details of its performance targets. The Charter also includes a clear customer complaint procedure. SWIA will maintain a regular programme of consultation on its current operation and on planned changes to its procedures. In addition, the Agency will maintain a regular programme of consultation on its current operation and on planned changes to its procedures with organisations or individuals, and key user groups.
- 4.12 The CSWI and the Head of SEED in their respective Accountable Officer roles may appear before the Audit Committee of the Scottish Parliament on the discharge of the responsibilities allocated to them.
- 4.13 It will be for the Scottish Ministers to decide who should represent them at other Parliamentary Committee hearings. In practice, where a Committee's interest is confined to the day-to-day operations of the Agency, the Ministers will normally regard the CSWI, who will call on such specialist or technical support as he/she may require, as the person best placed to appear on their behalf.

Scottish Public Sector Ombudsman

- 4.14 The activities of SWIA are subject to investigation by the Scottish Public Sector Ombudsman who will deal directly with the CSWI on any case where a complaint is made.

5. STAFFING MATTERS

Status of Staff and Conditions of Service

- 5.1 SWIA employs professional and administrative staff and is open to the secondment of staff out of and into the Agency.
- 5.2 Social Work Inspectors are Non-Ministerial Office Holders under the terms of the Scotland Act 1998, which guarantees their independence. This status is not effected by the arrangements establishing SWIA as an Agency. All Agency staff are Civil Servants within the Scottish Executive, and will continue to be employed on Civil Service terms and conditions of service. Agency staff are also covered by the Principal Civil Service Pensions Scheme, except where an individual opts otherwise.
- 5.3 The CSWI may review the terms and conditions of service of SWIA staff in the business interests of the Agency and in so doing may seek advice from the Executive's Change and Corporate Services. Variations to suit the Agency's particular circumstances may be introduced in terms and conditions of service with the approval of the Scottish Ministers and after full consultation with the Principal Establishment Officer, and the Agency's staff and their representatives.

Personnel Management

- 5.4 The CSWI is responsible for ensuring that there are adequate personnel management arrangements with the Agency for Band C staff and below. Initially, the Agency will continue to use some services of Scottish Executive Personnel. The Principal Establishment Officer will continue to have overall responsibility for members of the Senior Civil Service.
- 5.5 The CSWI is responsible for determining the number and levels of staff up to and including C3 level employed by the Agency, and its management structure. Scottish Executive Personnel is responsible for recruiting all staff to the Agency, in line with standard Scottish Executive procedures and in full consultation with the CSWI. The CSWI will be directly involved in appointments in the Senior Civil Service.
- 5.6 SWIA aims to offer its staff good and satisfying career opportunities and is committed to fostering career development, diversity and equal opportunities. Agency staff will remain eligible for posts elsewhere in the Scottish Executive, and may apply to be considered for promotion. They will retain the right to career development advice from Scottish Executive Personnel should they wish it. Professional staff will retain access to their head of profession where located elsewhere in the Scottish Executive. The CSWI is responsible for line management of staff and for job-related professional training and continuing professional development. Scottish Executive Corporate Learning Services is responsible for the generic training and development of staff as Scottish Executive Civil Servants.

- 5.7 The CSWI, in consultation with Scottish Executive Personnel, will at least every 3 years review the extent of the Agency's personnel responsibilities for Band C staff and below, with a view to maximising delegation while increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the service to management and staff.

Staff Relations

- 5.8 The CSWI will determine, after consultation with staff and their representatives, arrangements to foster good staff relations. The Agency is committed to effective communication with its entire staff and their representatives, and will adhere to the principles of the Scottish Executive Main (SEM) Management and Trade Union Side Partnership Agreement.

Training and Staff Development

- 5.9 SWIA has a training and development strategy for all staff. The strategy supports the delivery of the Agency's commitment, as an integral part of the Scottish Executive, to the principles of Investors in People in maintaining and improving the effectiveness of its work. The strategy pays particular attention to the Agency's own priorities, as set out in the Corporate Plan, and to the development needs of individual members of staff.

Pay and Performance Incentives

- 5.10 The Scottish Executive determines the pay of the Chief Social Work Inspector and other members of the Senior Civil Service. For staff below the Senior Civil Service, the Agency is part of the SEM bargaining unit and, as such, staff are subject to SEM pay rules and policies which are determined centrally by Scottish Executive Corporate Services.

Flexible Working Arrangements

- 5.11 SWIA is free to develop new working arrangements for all staff, subject to consultation with staff representatives and with the Principal Establishment Officer as appropriate.

Health and Safety

- 5.12 The CSWI is responsible for Health and Safety and will aim to achieve the highest standards of Health and Safety in the Agency.

Welfare

- 5.13 SWIA will continue to have access to arrangements made by the Scottish Executive for staff welfare. The welfare of staff in terms of their physical working environment will be the responsibility of the CSWI who may call upon the services of the Scottish Executive's Directorate of Administrative Services Accommodation Division.

6. SUPPORT SERVICES

- 6.1 SWIA is responsible for budgetary management outlined in Section 3 above, for managing the aspects of staffing matters outlined in Section 5 above, for corporate planning, and for public relations. In addition, subject only to the requirement not to exceed the total budget, the CSWI may switch expenditure among a range of services and obtain these services from the source which offers the best value for money.
- 6.2 SWIA has responsibility for a wide range of additional support services relating to the management, maintenance and day-to-day running of its offices as well as management and financial responsibility for its information systems within the framework of the Scottish Executive's Information Systems Policy.
- 6.3 SWIA will continue to draw on specialist support from the Scottish Executive. Responsibility for accommodation will be undertaken by Accommodation Division pending a full review of this Framework Agreement at the end of the overarching review of social work, 21st Century Social Work. Initially, the Agency will also draw on the support of: property management; library services; Communications and Information Services Division; legal advice; certain financial services; PCSD for procurement services; certain personnel services; some external statistical support; certain Education Department ISU services; and security. For certain services, consideration will be given to the merits of direct provision internally.
- 6.4 The CSWI and relevant Scottish Executive Directors will review at least every 3 years the provision of Scottish Executive support services, to maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of the Agency and the Scottish Executive as a whole. Either party shall, on giving six months notice, and after consultation, be entitled to withdraw from arrangements.

7. QUALITY ASSURANCE AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT WITHIN THE AGENCY.

7.1 SWIA is committed to rigorous evaluation of the quality of its own work to improve efficiency and effectiveness of its services to people who use services, and to ensure the highest standards of professionalism and integrity. It will report annually on how well it has met identified standards and performance targets. The Agency will evaluate its activities against the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) excellence model, and operates to the principles of Investors in People and the Plain English campaign.

7.2 The effectiveness, responsiveness and impact of inspection is evaluated in a number of ways. SWIA:

- Issues questionnaires after inspections to seek the views of people who use services, their carers, staff and managers on the effectiveness of the inspection;
- Seeks the views of staff on the inspection process and people who use services and their carers' views on the clarity and accuracy of the published report in a sample of services;
- Commissions independent evaluations; and
- Holds a regular cycle of liaison meetings with local authority managers, professional associations and representative service user bodies in Scotland about new inspection procedures and about issues arising in the course of inspections.

7.3 In addition, SWIA undertakes rigorous internal quality assurance using data from inspection programmes to ensure reliability and consistency in the inspection process. Policies and procedures are regularly reviewed in the light of this evidence from self-evaluation, and feedback from providers of social work services evaluated and users of reports. SWIA monitors closely progress towards its targets identified in the annual Business Plan and regularly reviews management effectiveness.

8. REVIEWING THE OPERATING FRAMEWORK

- 8.1 This Framework Document will be reviewed by Scottish Ministers, advised by the Head of SEED, and the CSWI, as required by the Scottish Executive as part of the overall review of social work in Scotland. Changes will be proposed in the light of experience or changed circumstances.
- 8.2 Relevant parts of the Scottish Executive will be consulted on any proposed changes before they are submitted to Scottish Ministers for approval.

Publication

- 8.3 Copies of this Framework Document and of any subsequent changes will be placed in the Scottish Parliament Information Centre and on the SWIA website.

Enquiries

- 8.4 All enquiries about this Framework Document should be addressed in the first instance to: the Chief Social Work Inspector, Ladywell House, Ladywell Road, Edinburgh, EH12 7TB. 0131-244-4735.

9. ANNEX A

THE SOCIAL WORK INSPECTION AGENCY (SWIA)

Role

The Social Work Inspection Agency's core business is inspection and review. Successive Scottish Ministers have emphasised the distinctive contribution that the Social Work Services Inspectorate (now SWIA) makes towards improving the quality of all social work and social care services, ensuring continuous improvement and improving the quality of life for people who use services. Inspection of any public service is a means of contributing to continuous improvement and of informing the public of the standards being achieved and those that they are entitled to expect. Inspection and public reporting have been placed at the heart of the Scottish Ministers' drive to improve performance and accountability in the public sector. That approach has been confirmed by the present government's Service First and Best Value policies.

The following functions set out how the Agency undertakes this role and makes use of the evidence from inspections and reviews to identify and encourage the adoption of best practice, and to inform practice developments and policy formulation.

Functions

Inspection, review and reporting across all social work and social care services

SWIA's new programme of inspections of local authority social work services will provide an independent audit to inform policy and practice across all social work services.

Published reports on service provision will identify key strengths and indicate where improvement is needed. This will help to raise standards and improve quality in social work services. Reports will be followed up, normally within two years of publication. Follow-up reports will say how well the main points for action made in the original report have been addressed. All SWIA reports are written clearly and concisely.

We will take a proportionate approach to inspection follow-up in order to minimise burdens and to further develop and enhance the internal capacity of local authorities to improve services.

SWIA recognises the value of sharing expertise with others in the UK and beyond. It works collaboratively with other Inspectorates and agencies to improve quality and ensure that regulatory programmes are customer focussed and effectively integrated.

Sectoral and aspect evaluations of social work services

SWIA ensures that inspectors maintain knowledge of best practice in social work services and effective evaluation within the UK and beyond in their specialist areas. Their knowledge enables the Agency to make objective evaluations and synthesise the evidence effectively.

Each year the Agency inspects key aspects of social work and social care services and publishes national reports based on the evidence of evaluations, and knowledge of the system. These reports describe the overall quality of aspects of social work services, identify strengths and indicate where improvement is needed.

The Agency collates and analyses evidence from the evaluation programme of inspections and reviews. Based on that analysis, and informed by their wider knowledge of social work services, SWIA Inspectors offer professional advice to Scottish Ministers, relevant Departments of the Scottish Executive and other key bodies on current and emerging social work issues. SWIA Inspectors also publish evidence from their analyses in reports, which include a regular cycle of 'state of the nation' summaries of standards and quality in key sectors and aspects of social work services.

In summarising its inspection and review evidence and the conclusions and issues arising from that evidence SWIA identifies and promotes best practice. This work assists those responsible for the funding, management, quality and delivery of social work services to draw on effective approaches to improving the quality of social work services and raising attainment.

SWIA does not make recommendations on what the Scottish Minister's policy should be and does not specify how existing policy should be implemented. It is not a core function of the Agency to collate, evaluate and report on the evidence that arises from sources other than its own, although it may be asked to do so by Ministers on an ad hoc basis in relation to specific issues.

Commissions from Scottish Ministers, relevant Departments of the Scottish Executive and other bodies

The Agency is commissioned by Scottish Ministers, relevant Departments of the Scottish Executive and bodies responsible for the funding of social work services to undertake inspection, reviews and investigations of specific topics and initiatives in social work services. These commissions can include SWIA Inspectors:

- providing advice to the Scottish Ministers on individual cases;
- providing briefing on aspects of social work or social care in all sectors;
- evaluating aspects of the work of certain voluntary organisations in receipt of Scottish Executive grants;

Such work ensures that key developments in social work continue to be informed by evidence from inspections and reviews.

Provision of professional advice to the Scottish Ministers and others

SWIA ensures that all of its professional staff have a thorough current understanding of key policies, issues, trends and developments relevant to their specialist expertise. This involves regular contact with relevant bodies and groups as a means of keeping up-to-date with developments and of enabling the results of evaluations to be taken into account in the deliberations of these bodies. These contacts allied to the inspection programme itself mean that SWIA Inspectors are able to provide soundly-based professional advice to the Scottish Ministers and Scottish Executive. They also provide advice and guidance to a wide range of bodies, including those responsible for the funding, management, quality and delivery of services.

10. ANNEX B

MEASURES OF PERFORMANCE

To ensure that the Agency achieves the key objectives set out in Section 1 of this Framework Document, the Scottish Ministers have set performance measures and associated targets. Each performance measure is concerned with an important aspect of the Agency's work. Targets are set annually, identified in the Business Plan, and monitored during the year. The Agency's annual report records its achievements in relation to them.

Performance will be measured against the targets in the following broad areas:

1. The number of reports published, under normal circumstances, in line with the agreed timetable.
2. In follow-up inspections, the percentage of main points for action arising from the original inspection report which have been met, as a measure of the impact of inspection and an indicator of where further improvement in the social work system may be required.
3. Analysis of customers' experiences of the inspection process and clarity and accuracy of published reports gained through questionnaires, independently commissioned evaluations, and liaison with professional associations and other key bodies.
4. The timeliness and quality of advice provided to the Scottish Ministers, relevant Departments of the Scottish Executive and other key bodies.

11. ANNEX C

Administrative Costs

SWIA has authority, within the limits set out, to:

1. Commit expenditure and authorise payments:	Unlimited, apart from the items below, within the Agency's voted budget levels.
2. Accept receipts:	Unlimited, but receipts in excess of those authorised in a Budget must be surrendered to the Scottish Consolidated Fund as extra receipts.
3. Incur contingent liabilities:	Subject to prior Parliamentary approval for any contingent liabilities outside the normal course of business.
4. Let contracts:	Unlimited apart from the items below.
5. Commission consultants:	Unlimited up to £10,000. Consultancies between £10,000 to £50,000 must be approved by the Minister with responsibility for the Agency. Consultancies above £50,000 must be approved by the First Minister.
6. Authorise losses and special payments	Unlimited, apart from the categories listed below which are subject to a limit of £1,000: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - losses arising from failure to make adequate charges for services / use of property; - claims waived or abandoned; - special or ex gratia payments; - gifts or awards.
7. Authorise capital expenditure:	Unlimited apart from items listed below.
8. Authorise capital expenditure on Information Technology:	1. Up to a limit of £10,000 for:- the basic cost of computer purchases/projects, use of the computer services industry, after which a formal business case must be made.