

## **SOCIAL WORK INSPECTION AGENCY (SWIA) CHARTER**

This document sets out what the Social Work Inspection Agency does. It describes the values that inform how it works, how SWIA undertakes tasks and tells you what to do if you have a comment about the Agency.

### **What SWIA does**

SWIA works with others to continually improve social work services, so that they meet people's needs; and the public has confidence in them.

**SWIA's main task** is to evaluate the quality of social work services in Scotland. SWIA undertakes this task by:

- Undertaking inspections or reviews of different aspects of social work services; and
- Providing advice about social work services to the First Minister of the Scottish Parliament and the Scottish Executive.

SWIA seeks to undertake these tasks in a manner which values and manages diversity and does not discriminate unlawfully against any groups.

### **Who SWIA are**

SWIA was established as an executive agency of the Scottish Ministers under the terms of the Scotland Act 1998.

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 inspectorate or a regulator, such as the Care Commission, we will take into account the findings of the inspection of that body and not duplicate it.

The Chief Social Work Inspector is authorised by Scottish Ministers to exercise these powers and authorises Inspectors as they are appointed. The Chief Social Work Inspector answers directly and reports on inspections to the Scottish Ministers and provides advice on the quality of social work services. The Scottish Ministers publish the Agency's reports.

Whilst SWIA is an independent Agency, we work closely with all relevant departments in the Scottish Executive. Much of SWIA's professional advice is given to the Children and Young Persons Division in the Education Department, the Community Care Division in the Department of Health and the Adult Offenders and Victims' Issues Division in the Department of Justice.

### **SWIA works independently of policy divisions when carrying out an inspection.**

SWIA also works closely with other inspectorates within the Scottish Executive, with Audit Scotland and the Care Commission.

SWIA's powers of inspection are contained within Joint Inspection of Children's Services and Inspection of Social Work Services (Scotland) Act 2006; Children (Scotland) Act 1995; and Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001. Proposals for modernising these powers have been developed. In practice much of the Agency's work is conducted on the basis of co-operation with local authorities, other inspectorates and regulators.

## **OUR VALUES**

### **Integrity**

- SWIA will maintain our independence of service providers, and of individuals or groups associated with specific investigations.
- SWIA will provide an impartial view of the quality of social work services.
- SWIA will reach our conclusions, based on the evidence we collect, independently of Scottish Ministers.

### **Honesty, openness & communication**

- SWIA will carry out our tasks openly and will encourage informed comment and criticism from those affected by our work.
- SWIA will explain the purpose of any inspection or review.
- SWIA will report our findings and recommendations clearly and in formats that are accessible to those wishing to use our reports.
- SWIA will make clear the indicators and criteria on which our findings are based.
- SWIA will encourage, where appropriate, the involvement of lay people in our work to evaluate services.

### **Objective judgement and respect for evidence**

- SWIA findings and recommendations will be reached on the basis of systematic analysis and the evaluation of available evidence.
- SWIA will report honestly and fairly, and where appropriate, will highlight clearly areas of good performance and where improvements are needed.

## **HOW SWIA UNDERTAKES ITS MAIN TASKS**

### **Inspections and reviews**

A performance inspection may include a systematic and in-depth evaluation of one or more local authority's provision of social work services, whether purchased or provided. The performance inspection may include some or all of the authority's social work services.

Another type of inspection may be on a national theme (for example, the provision of home care), or may be directed at the provision of services in a particular geographical area. An inspection may take the form of an investigation requested by the Scottish Ministers, or part of SWIA's long-term programme of work.

SWIA consults the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities on the way in which we conduct inspections which have a national theme.

SWIA consults, when appropriate, individual local authorities on the way in which we conduct a performance inspection in their area.

All inspections will normally involve an inspection team:

- Talking with people who use social work services;
- Interviewing social work service staff;
- Questioning those who work with social work services staff;
- Scrutinising relevant strategic plans;
- Examining statistical evidence; and
- Investigating records and case files.

A **review** may take a number of different forms appropriate to the task. For example, the Learning Disability Review made extensive use of consultative tools, such as an interactive website. While a review will be developed according to the needs of the subject, it is likely to have many of the characteristics of an inspection.

Inspection and review teams will include professional and administrative staff. The teams may commission consultants to undertake part of the work of an inspection. The teams will also include lay inspectors. Consultants and lay members will work to the principles outlined above.

Inspection and review teams are frequently formed jointly with other inspectorates, regulators or audit bodies. Teams may include sessional inspectors drawn from a pool, associate inspectors from other local authorities or other organisations for specific projects.

### **Lay inspectors**

Lay inspectors are drawn from the general public for their ability to provide an independent view of services. Lay inspectors must be seen to be independent of the social work provider and professional interests. Lay inspectors may be people who use services or carers.

Lay inspectors are asked to bring a fresh approach to the examination of services. SWIA welcomes lay inspectors becoming involved in all aspects of the inspection. They have a special role in:

- Talking with people who use social work services, and;
- Helping with the interviewing of front-line staff.

Lay inspectors report to the lead inspector, and may have direct access to the Chief Inspector. Lay inspectors may contribute to the report by indicating consent with the contents and, if desired, by contributing a separate section to the report.

Lay inspectors are not employees of the Agency. However, they can expect:

- To receive an induction to the work of inspections and reviews;
- A job description;
- Training for agreed tasks within the inspection;
- To be treated as a full member of the inspection team;
- An agreed timetable and notice of required tasks; and

- Full expenses, promptly paid.

## **Comments**

SWIA welcomes comments about our activities and we will keep a record of all such communications.

If you have a comment about the way SWIA has undertaken work we seek to:

1. Address your comment quickly, and where appropriate, informally;
2. Investigate your comment promptly and fairly.

If you wish to make a comment you should write to:

The Corporate Manager  
Room 2/1/1  
Ladywell House  
Ladywell Road  
Edinburgh EH12 7TB.