

## 5. Evidence used in performance inspections

### 5.1 Principles

Performance inspection evaluations are based on a defined set of “admissible” evidence. This means that SWIA inspectors must be able to demonstrate how they have reached evaluations using information that meets acceptable standards, and is mainly of a public nature.

Overall assessment evaluations are made on the basis of information that has been subject to transparent and robust processes to assure SWIA inspectors of its validity and reliability.

The core task of the SWIA inspection team is to establish and understand the approach to continuous improvement of performance in each council. This is what underpins the improvement discussions as well as assessment. A number of principles are applied in using evidence for assessment.

SWIA will be transparent in its use of evidence. This means that we will:

- be explicit with councils about the evidence we use and give senior managers an opportunity to comment on its factual accuracy;
- explain how we have used evidence to reach our evaluations and publish that explanation in an accessible form; and
- specify the categories and types of data and information we use in support of evaluations.

We will use robust evidence. This means that we will:

- be rigorous in our processes of collecting data and information and checking the accuracy, validity and reliability;
- give weight to information in relation to:
  - its derivation from primary or secondary sources
  - its measurability in quantitative or qualitative terms
  - how contemporary it is
- weight information as evidence where it can be corroborated to support the meaning we have attributed to it. We will give most weight where there are two or more sources of evidence that corroborate an evaluation and where one of the sources is based on direct observation. We will use, but attribute less weight, where

there is a single source of admissible evidence available, for example, from direct observation;

- be disciplined in recording, using and presenting data; and
- use evidence from other national inspection and audit organisations where it is in the public domain and we can be assured that it meets our principles and criteria set out here.

## 5.2 The evidence to be used

The evidence used to inform assessments and to reach the evaluations that lead to performance evaluations is comprised of the following:

- a) This evidence is admissible where it is beyond challenge. Care is taken that the evidence can still be regarded as current. Services change at different speeds and are subject to different influences.

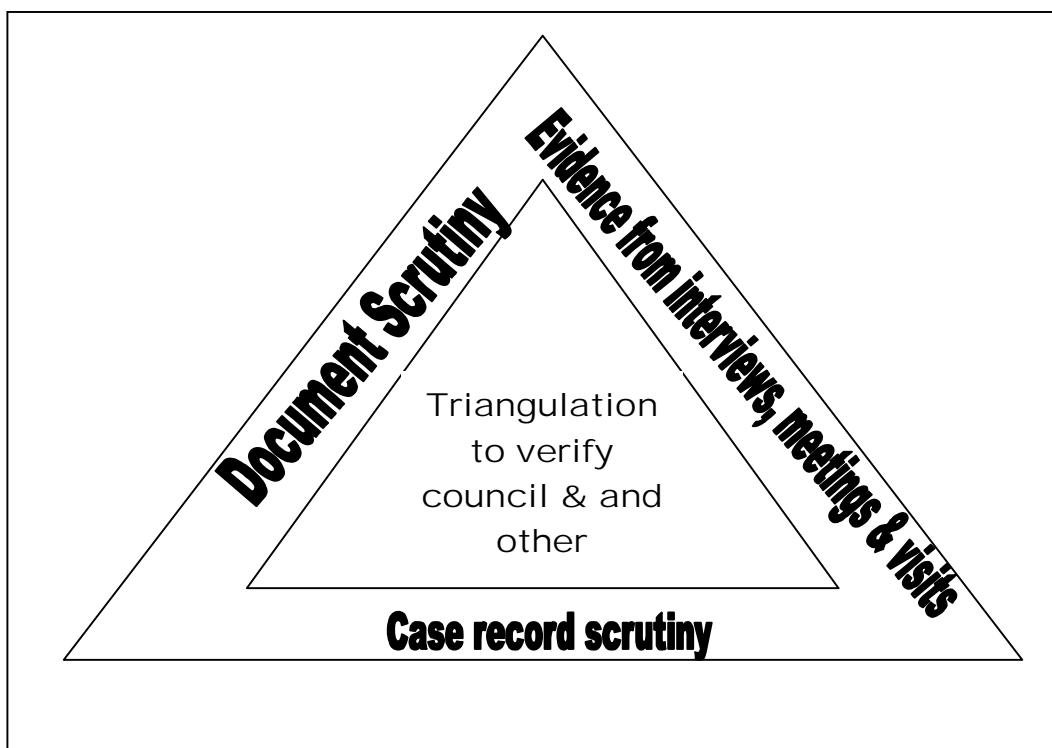
However, as a general rule:

- evidence from inspection or regulatory activities more than one year old will be scrutinised very carefully against relating supporting evidence;
  - evidence from inspections more than two years old will only be considered as baseline information;
  - where other evidence suggest that services covered by a specific inspection have changed substantially since fieldwork was completed, this will be taken into account; and
  - evidence from inspections conducted jointly by SWIA under formal arrangements with other inspectorates will be used. Public reports of other inspectorates which are relevant to council performance on social work will also be used.
- b) Performance indicators and other national data validated for publication by the Scottish Executive.
- c) Monitoring information, as validated by the Scottish Executive, and covering:
- progress in achieving national objectives and targets;
  - implementation of key Scottish Executive policies and the activity or outcomes resulting from grants;
  - progress in achieving local improvement targets or objectives; and
  - progress updates and forecasts.
- d) Published council plans will be considered.

- e) Monitoring data on delayed transfers of care based on data returned from NHS Boards and agreed with the councils.
- f) Where an NHS Board provides social care services, the component elements of NHS evidence that feed into the NHS performance rating may be taken into account in determining the council's social work services performance rating, if:
  - they are relevant to social care provision and/or partnerships and
  - if they meet our evidence criteria as set out in these operating policies.
- g) Information from appointed auditors, including:
  - published reports and documents such as Best Value reviews issued by Audit Scotland based on scrutiny of an individual council's services and performance.
- h) Information from the Care Commission's regulatory inspection activities and registrations and reports on service quality.
- i) Account may be taken of information from serious case reviews, other critical incidents or casework. Where these are of a serious nature, they will be part of the on-going dialogue with a council. Examples include action on recommendations of investigations, inquiries or reports.
- j) Intelligence from other government departments and government offices may also be considered.

The total evidence base for each council will vary, depending on each council's recent history of inspections and regulatory activity.

### 5.3 Verification methodology



We will verify evidence using the triangulation methodology. Evidence of services and progress will be verified from:

- documents provided
- case records scrutinised
- interviews with people who use services, carers, staff, managers, partners and stakeholders, from surveys, meetings and visits.

### 5.4 Conclusion

At all stages, discussions between the lead inspector and lead local authority manager can be held to clarify any issues around evidence used in performance inspections.

## Overlap between performance inspections and other inspections – Implications for surveys and case file analysis

### Background

As the programme of performance inspection continues to be rolled out, and as more multi agency, thematic and other inspections are carried out, inevitably some authorities may be subject to more than one inspection within a relatively short period of time.

### Principles

SWIA will follow five general principles when scheduling and conducting inspections.

1. We will schedule SWIA inspections relating to the same authority more than 12 months apart, where possible, and will also take into account the inspection schedules of other inspectorates.
2. We will minimise the burden of inspections on service users, carers, and other stakeholders.
3. We will minimise the burden of inspection on the authority.
4. We will run inspections as efficiently as possible, making use of any information gathered in one inspection to inform another where appropriate, and minimising duplication of effort.
5. We will collect a minimum amount of information necessary to allow a robust and fair assessment of performance.

### Implications

We conduct various surveys to provide evidence for inspections. We also undertake case file analysis. We will choose sample sizes, and draw appropriate samples, in line with the above principles. These translate into the following actions.

1. Inspections more than 12 months apart (measured from the start of fieldwork in each case) will be treated completely independently.
2. Otherwise, we will follow the appropriate performance inspection or multi agency methodology, but adapted to avoid duplication where possible.
3. Where possible, files that have been read in one inspection within the last 12 months will not be re-read in another inspection.
4. Where possible, service users, carers and staff who have already been sent a questionnaire within the last 12 months (where they can be identified) will not be re-sampled.
5. Stakeholders and partners will be re-sampled, even if they have been sent a questionnaire within the last 12 months.
6. Case file analysis, service user, carer and staff questionnaire sample sizes for inspections will be chosen to try to ensure results are based on a minimum of 70 responses per authority.