

## **23. Handover and follow-up**

### **Introduction**

Performance inspections have a significant role to play within the range of improvement and evaluative work undertaken by SWIA and other agencies in relation to local authority social work services. However, they must link effectively with all the other elements within this overall range of activity. This section of the handbook describes how responsibility for follow-up is managed by SWIA and the local authority after the report has been published and presented to elected members.

### **Purpose**

The main purpose of performance inspection follow-up is to check the progress of the authority in acting on the findings of the inspection. Priorities for action and recommendations are set out in the inspection report. The report itself does not contain an action plan; the authority is expected to produce this within twelve weeks after the date of publication of the report.

### **Serious concerns**

An evaluation of 'unsatisfactory' will trigger consideration of whether there are grounds for serious concerns and whether there is a need to put into effect more serious actions (such as an investigation). Otherwise the processes described below will be carried out.

### **Handover meeting**

After the publication of the report, the SWIA inspection support manager will arrange a handover meeting between the local authority, the inspection team and the SWIA link inspector. At this meeting the link inspector takes responsibility for working with the local authority. This meeting must take place within 12 weeks of the date of publication of the report. Its timing will be determined by the time needed by the local authority to develop an action plan. In the meeting, the action plan and progress to date will be considered and agreement reached about:

- the action plan;
- routine monitoring arrangements; and
- the precise role of SWIA in following up progress.

The timing and nature of the formal follow-up (see below) will be determined at this meeting. In normal circumstances, the parties agree to meet a year after the publication of the report to sign off the follow-up process.

## **Responsibility**

At the point of the handover meeting, responsibility will pass from the lead inspector to the link inspector. This may, in some cases, be the same inspector. The link inspector is required to liaise with the SWIA Management Team in organising follow-up and monitoring work.

## **Scope**

The scope and nature of the follow-up work will be agreed in the light of:

- the inspection findings, especially in relation to outcomes for and the impact upon people, who use services, and carers;
- areas identified in the report as being in need of development;
- the discussion at the handover meeting;
- the effectiveness of the local authority's own arrangements for monitoring progress and
- the level of political concern.

In accordance with the principle that the scale of inspection is in proportion to risk, more time will be spent in follow-up on services that give cause for concern and less on those where it is possible to be confident of a positive response and/or there is not serious cause for concern.

In authorities where risk is regarded as being low, it is likely that SWIA will want to spend up to two days in the local authority carrying out a follow up inspection one year after the report has been published. It will consider the implementation of the action plan and the outcomes for people who use services, and carers. In authorities where the concerns are serious, there will normally be a follow-up inspection of three or more days.

## **Process**

### Confirmation of agreement

Following the handover meeting, the link inspector will write to the Director of Social Work Services (with copies to the other parties and to other regulators or improvement agencies), to summarise the discussion at the handover meeting and to confirm the agreed arrangements for monitoring progress. This will include details of any written progress reports to be

provided by the authority, follow up meetings, and details of any activities planned by SWIA over the next year. Progress reports and follow up meetings with the link inspector will normally be required quarterly.

### Progress reports

The link inspector will consider the progress reports submitted by the authority and agree with the SWIA Management Team a written response to the local authority, commenting on progress and requesting any further information needed to verify progress.

In exceptional cases, Ministers may request a special inspection to follow up a performance inspection. The scale and scope of this inspection will be determined by SWIA in the light of the Minister's concerns and other considerations.

### Monitoring visits by SWIA

A monitoring visit by SWIA may be necessary during the year after the publication of the report to check progress if :

- the performance inspection described key areas as in need of considerable development;
- progress reports are inadequate;
- these reports indicate that insufficient improvement has been achieved in the key areas.

### End of inspection

A follow-up inspection or visit by SWIA will normally be held one year after the date of publication of the report. It will normally be for two days. The focus of the inspection or visit will depend on the key issues raised in the inspection and on the agreed areas for monitoring progress. It will normally have two elements:

1. Selective monitoring to see that the progress report is accurate and that there has been a real impact on service delivery. This part can be based in a service setting, such as a fieldwork office. It may include reading some case files. It may involve interviews with practitioners and local managers. There will be interviews or meetings with people who use services. Inspectors may also wish to check documents, such as committee reports, procedure manuals, management information reports or new forms.

2. Discussion with managers on the progress in implementing the action plan, in the light of the written report and the subsequent monitoring.

#### Ending the inspection process

After the follow-up inspection or visit, a letter is sent to the Director of Social Work Services, setting out the results of the follow-up.

The link inspector will usually arrange a signing-off meeting about a year after the publication of the report. SWIA will provide a record of this meeting and formal confirmation that the performance inspection process has ended.