

EUROPEAN SOCIAL NETWORK PROMOTES QUALITY SOCIAL SERVICES



european social network
réseau social européen
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Membership of the European Social Network (ESN) is enabling SWIA to contribute to the drive for quality public social services across Europe and to measure performance in Scotland against that of our European neighbours.

As the independent umbrella organisation for social services in Europe, the network's membership includes directors of social work and others (such as SWIA) who play a key role in the care, support and protection of vulnerable people. It is a forum where members can exchange good practice and it provides a platform for representing social services in European policy-making.

The organisation has grown over the years, with new member states being keen to have contact with western countries. The ESN receives a network grant from the European Commission that funds its activities. Its work currently involves three main areas – social activation and employment, child welfare, and long-term care of older people.

Alexis Jay, Chief Social Work Inspector, is a member of the working group for long-term care of older people. She told *Inspection Matters*:

“The wide interest in this group from across Europe shows how every country from west to east shares similar concerns. Major issues include our ageing populations, procurement and commissioning, quality of services and the shifting balance of care from large institutions into the community. Services may be at different stages of development in central and eastern Europe, but sharing our experience can help smooth the way for these countries.

“The other members of the working group come from Belgium, Italy, Germany, England

(represented separately from Scotland), Poland, Romania and Bulgaria. A non-EU country, Iceland, has also been able to join, and brings an extra perspective to the issues.

“Interesting similarities across all the countries include tackling the question – as we've had to do here – of the balance of services provided by councils and provided by others. The working group has also been looking at the means of funding care, with increasing numbers of older people and problems of dementia dramatically raising the cost of care. The group is due to report on current work in the autumn, but is expected to carry on from there.”

- SWIA's inspectors have been involved in a number of ESN sessions, and Alexis Jay is due to address a seminar on 'commissioning for quality' in Brussels in November. She will be speaking about SWIA's model which is unique in Europe in inspecting the commissioning function of social care in local authorities.

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Social work services – strengths and areas for improvement



SWIA's recently-published *Annual Report for 2007-2008* presents a comprehensive view of the findings to date from performance inspections of Scotland's social work services.

The annual report reflects on the performance inspections carried out in 20 councils. The remaining 12 are scheduled throughout 2008-2009. On balance, the findings to date are positive, and Chief Social Work Inspector Alexis Jay is confident that the councils and SWIA together can successfully tackle the areas identified for improvement.

SWIA's programme of follow-up inspections is now well underway (see the following article, 'Improvement from Performance Inspection'). Alexis Jay comments in the annual report: "Encouragingly, the follow-up visits that we have completed have all shown that councils have made significant progress in acting on

recommendations contained in our performance inspection reports."

The outcome of inspections completed so far has already been the subject of a successful stakeholder conference held in January. The conference reviewed key themes identified by the inspections, and these are highlighted in the annual report. They include:

- **Organisational structure and leadership**, with inspections showing a substantially good picture overall. The challenge for everyone is to make sure leadership of social work services never falls below 'good' and that the current good leadership becomes 'excellent'. Working with COSLA, ADSW and others, SWIA is developing a range of materials to support improvement and to help meet that challenge.
- **Management and support of staff**. Where there is a clear vision, good communication, meaningful participation and clear leadership, staff show themselves to be adaptable, innovative, resilient and onboard.
- **Performance management and outcome measurement**. SWIA's surveys have found that people who use social work services appreciate them very much and feel safer, more independent and included as a result. However, many local authorities lack a system to measure and monitor outcomes. SWIA and partners are developing supported self-evaluation to bring real improvements for everyone using social work services.
- **Risk management and accountability**. Inspections have revealed a number of strengths, including strong strategic partnerships and good examples of inter-agency training, policy and procedure. Local authorities and their partners need to be more consistent here and to show how their approach is making people safe.

The annual report also shows progress in different aspects of SWIA's work. Performance has exceeded expectation in a number of areas, including:

- reports on two multi-agency inspections of older people's services (across Tayside and Forth Valley);
- following up a governance review of Turning Point Scotland with a conference on governance for voluntary sector bodies, held jointly with Community Care Providers Scotland; and

- SWIA's pivotal role in linking analysis from inspections and increasing knowledge of social work services with current and emerging social work issues.

Looking ahead, Alexis Jay writes: "We will make best use of inspection evaluations to target our future inspection activity and to provide assurance through the lightest possible touch... Our evaluations should be a catalyst to support the raising of standards, the continuous improvement of services and improving people's lives."

Young lay inspectors make a difference

Two young peer educators from the national organisation Move On have played an important part in two of SWIA's most recent performance inspections.

The inspections of social work services in Aberdeen City and Clackmannanshire both featured a pilot project with young lay inspectors who had been 'accommodated' by a local authority away from their own home. Their role was to lead focus groups in the two council areas with young people who had received throughcare and aftercare services and others who had been accommodated. They also led the interview with the children's rights officer in both inspections.

The February 2008 issue of *Inspection Matters* highlighted the pilot project following the Aberdeen inspection. Now SWIA Inspector Jo Harrison is reporting that the second stage of the pilot – in Clackmannanshire – has been successfully completed, with a full evaluation report currently being drafted.

"Feedback from both inspections was very good," said Jo. "The same two young people, May and Ruby, were involved in both. With the experience gained in Aberdeen City, things went even better in Clackmannanshire. In between, we had all been able to reflect on what had happened, and the young people put in a huge amount of work at that stage.

They were able to practise how best to start the sessions, and role-played so that they could confidently put across that they, too, had been accommodated. They understood better what was wanted from the sessions and worked hard on follow-up questions, so that they could probe for answers."

Move On supports homeless people and aims to prevent homelessness. As peer educators there, May and Ruby are experienced in helping others to make a positive transition to independence. Ruby told *Inspection Matters*: "I felt that our part in the inspections was important, because we knew what the young people in the groups were talking about. One example of where we made a positive difference was in Aberdeen, when we picked up that the young people hadn't seen a care plan. That's been changed now.

"If anyone else gets the chance to take part in something like this, I'd say 'Do it!' The experience has really built up my confidence in speaking to people I don't know."

May added: "I was unsure to start with, and the Aberdeen inspection was a learning experience. We were more prepared for Clackmannanshire." She now works as a carer for people with dementia, and said: "The inspection experience has helped make me the person I am today."

IMPROVEMENT FROM PERFORMANCE INSPECTION



Marc Hendrikson, Acting Depute Chief Social Work Inspector, writes here about SWIA's programme of follow-up inspections.

Performance inspection is leading to significant improvements in social work services and outcomes for service users.

This is the key finding to emerge from SWIA's programme of follow-up inspections – 13 have been completed at the time of writing.

A follow-up inspection is normally carried out 12 months after publication of the performance inspection report. The extent and make-up of the follow-up is based upon a number of factors, beginning with performance inspection evaluations and the number of recommendations contained in the original report. In agreeing a follow-up programme with the local authority, inspectors also take account

of progress in addressing recommendations since publication of the performance inspection report, plus information obtained from other inspection or regulatory activity.

Adopting this approach, follow-up inspections have varied from one to four days in duration, involving between two and four inspectors. Follow-up programmes have included a range of inspection activity, including interviews and focus groups with staff, meetings with service users and stakeholders and observed practice.

Each follow-up is designed to address a unique set of circumstances within the local authority. Consequently, it is unwise to make simple comparisons between one follow-up inspection and another, or to interpret the number of days or sessions allocated to a follow-up as an indicator of performance.

The results are encouraging. Although SWIA does not re-evaluate local authorities' performance, progress made in relation to each recommendation is considered carefully and commented on in the follow-up report (available on the SWIA website www.swia.gov.uk). Evidence amply demonstrates progress in response to the overwhelming majority of recommendations made. In a small number of instances, inspectors have reported less progress than originally anticipated – usually due to unforeseen circumstances. However, there is no lack of will amongst local authority colleagues in driving forward improvements identified in performance inspection.

Local authorities have approached performance inspection with purpose and determination. The need for improvement to be sustained and built upon is clearly acknowledged. SWIA will maintain an interest in these matters in the course of its ongoing links with local authorities, with a growing emphasis on self-evaluation, coupled with a proportionate level of external scrutiny.

GOVERNANCE TRAINING EVENT FOR VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS

Over the past few months, SWIA has been developing a framework to help voluntary organisations carry out self-evaluation on their governance arrangements. This work builds on the inspection agency's skills and experience and in particular the recent review of governance of Turning Point Scotland.

Voluntary organisation chief executives and board members were invited to find out about the framework at a **training event** held in Edinburgh on 10 November. The aim of the day was for delegates not only to learn about the framework, but to learn from each other, too.

INDEPENDENT VOICES ON SWIA'S MANAGEMENT BOARD

Independent, informed and challenging. That is the perspective brought to SWIA's management board by its two non-executive members, Hamish Hamill CB, retired senior civil servant, and Sandra Nutley, Professor of Public Management at the University of Edinburgh.

The management board oversees the work of SWIA, and the presence of these two independent, external advisors at its quarterly meetings helps to ensure that the inspection process is fair and open. It is a role that both of them have fulfilled since SWIA's early days in 2005.

Hamish took time out to speak to *Inspection Matters* about his role on the board. Now he is retired, he can divide his time between home in Fife and Gosport, where his daughter and grandchildren live. His career spanned 35 years in a variety of central government departments, latterly as Head of the Scottish Executive Justice Department. Retiring in 2000, he went on to become a part-time Civil Service Commissioner, stepping down last year.

Such wide-ranging experience within central government was valuable to the board of SWIA in its early days. "I saw the advertisement for external advisors, applied and, after interview, was appointed," said Hamish. "My appointment was initially for two years – since then extended – and the 15-days-a-year required did not put too great a

demand on time. Coming from quite different backgrounds, Sandra and I have been able to provide different perspectives, challenging policies or proposals when that's needed."

The two external advisors have been closely involved in developing SWIA's communication policy, risk management framework and the shape of future inspections. In addition, Hamish chairs SWIA's Audit Committee. "I remember that when audit committees were originally set up in government departments, each head of department became chairman, to show they were serious about it," he said. "Now, of course, the benefits of external chairmanship are recognised. We are about to make further change, at the prompting of Audit Scotland, so that all the members will be external, and the permanent staff will attend by invitation.

"Chairing the Audit Committee has not been a major burden. SWIA staff have worked hard to develop and maintain good relations with both internal and external auditors, and this co-operation has paid dividends in terms of getting through the necessary work on time and in good order."

After a career that spanned services from criminal justice and prisons to health, police and fire, Hamish is still involving himself in other areas of public life. Currently, he chairs the Fire Service Research and Training Trust and is a public member of Network

Rail. The Trust supports projects throughout Great Britain, such as part-funding research studies to help scope a new graduate entry scheme for the service in England and Wales, and to reduce physiological stress in firefighters. Public members of Network Rail play a role similar to that of shareholders in a PLC, being able to call senior management to account.

After three years on the board of SWIA, Hamish's assessment is that "SWIA is doing a good job" and that this is very much to the credit of both its permanent and its sessional staff.

"SWIA was set up with a clear plan of what it had to do, with the full programme of 32 performance inspections," he said, "and it is well through that now."

Along the way, there has been a constant refining of the process rather than any dramatic changes in direction. It had always been expected that SWIA would also be given *ad hoc* tasks by Ministers, and staff have responded well to these additional demands on their resources.

"This is a time of uncertainty for staff in the many bodies involved in the processes of inspection and regulation. But SWIA's functions are more important than its precise structure. A degree of flexibility will be necessary across the sector as the Scottish Government's plans are revealed, but I am confident in the ability of SWIA's staff to meet the challenges to come."

SWIA people

Social Work Inspector **Irene Scullion** has returned to SWIA following her secondment to City of Edinburgh Council. The council had requested assistance with its improvement action plan, and Irene's professional experience was well suited to contributing to the task. Also returning to SWIA is Social Work Inspector **Clare Wilson**, following maternity leave. Clare and Irene are based in our Glasgow office.

Christina Naismith and **Paolo Mazzoncini** joined SWIA in August as Social Work Inspectors, with Christina based at Ladywell House and Paolo in Glasgow.

Before joining SWIA, Christina was Joint Programme Manager for Mental Health, a jointly-funded, managed and accountable post across the City of Edinburgh Council and NHS Lothian. She had responsibility for strategic planning and commissioning of mental health services in Edinburgh on behalf of both agencies.

Paolo joins from Glasgow City Council, although for the past three-and-a-half years he has been on secondment with the Scottish Government Community Justice Services Division. His experience includes pre-qualifying work with disabled people and post-qualifying in child care and community care. Most of his latter experience has been in criminal justice.



SWIA Inspections 2008-2009

Performance inspection	Inspection dates	Publication date
Midlothian	February 2008 – July 2008	October 2008
Falkirk	March 2008 – August 2008	November 2008
Scottish Borders	April 2008 – October 2008	January 2009
North Lanarkshire	May 2008 – November 2008	February 2009
West Dunbartonshire	June 2008 – December 2008	March 2009
East Ayrshire	July 2008 – January 2009	April 2009
Stirling	August 2008 – February 2009	May 2009
Renfrewshire	September 2008 – March 2009	June 2009
South Ayrshire	October 2008 – April 2009	July 2009

Inspection methodology

SWIA is committed to developing an inspection methodology in the future that should be proportionate and risk-based. Further information soon in *Inspection Matters*.

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NEWS ON INSPECTIONS AND PUBLICATIONS

Joint Thematic Inspection of the Management of High Risk of Harm Offenders

As part of this current inspection, SWIA and the Inspectorates of Constabulary (HMICS) and Prisons (HMIP) hosted a national consultation event in Stirling on 3 October. Its aim was to consult key representatives from social work, police, prison service and voluntary sector who had not already been involved in the inspection focus groups, and to gauge their views on the management of high risk.

The inspection, which is due to report within the next few months, will provide a national picture of current strengths and weaknesses in this critical area. It is expected to make an important contribution to future developments. (See 'Managing high-risk offenders' in *Inspection Matters*, April 2008.)

SWIA's self-evaluation guides – progress report

The general self-evaluation guide ... Our partners in local government are currently testing the prototype, with comments due from all 32 local authorities. Expected publication date: January 2009.

The good practice self-evaluation guides ... Our contractors are developing these guides for publication, also in early 2009. In addition, we are developing an e-tool with the local authorities helping us in the project. This will provide a comprehensive system for councils to use for improvement planning.

Recent publications

Performance inspection of Clackmannanshire Council's Social Work Services – Report and Summary (September)

SWIA Annual Report and Accounts 2007-08 (September)

Dumfries and Galloway Performance Inspection Follow-Up Report (August)

Performance Inspection of East Dunbartonshire Council's Social Work Services – Report and Summary (August)