

## Young people bring new dimension to performance inspections teams

**SWIA has a record of making the inspection process as inclusive as possible. From the start, it has involved people who use social work services and their carers, not only through questionnaires or in focus groups, but also as part of the inspection team itself, as lay inspectors.**

The recent performance inspection in Aberdeen City saw an extension of this involvement, with the inclusion in the inspection team of two young people with experience of being 'accommodated', or looked after by a local authority away from their own home. These two young people were peer educators with Move On, a national organisation which supports homeless people and also aims to prevent homelessness.

SWIA Inspector Jo Harrison explained: "We're piloting this approach, first in Aberdeen City and then in Clackmannanshire. The same two young people will be in both inspection teams. Once the inspections are completed, we'll be able to evaluate the process."

Jo has been involved in recruiting and training for the project. SWIA approached a number of voluntary organisations working with young people who have been looked after. Move On, which is based in Glasgow and Edinburgh, was able to fit in with the timing of the two inspections earmarked for the pilot.

Biddy Donald, Housing Education Manager with Move On, has been working with Jo on the project. "We're really excited by it," she said. "As peer educators, the two young people involved in the inspections are experienced in helping others to

make better informed choices which prevent them from becoming homeless and to make a positive transition to independence and adulthood. As part of the SWIA inspection team, they know that their work will inform the decision-makers and help young people as a whole."

Training sessions in advance of the Aberdeen City fieldwork gave the young people background information about SWIA inspections and enabled them to plan their own sessions in the fieldwork phase. For Aberdeen, these have involved an interview with the children's rights officer and two separate focus groups (one of looked after children and young people, and the other of young people receiving throughcare and aftercare services). Although a SWIA Inspector was there, too, it was two young people who ran these sessions.

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# REVIEW HIGHLIGHTS IMPORTANCE OF GOOD GOVERNANCE

**SWIA's recent review of governance of Turning Point Scotland has produced overall findings which are very positive and which are likely to benefit others delivering social care services in the voluntary sector.**

Turning Point Scotland provides person-centred support to adults with a range of complex needs. It took the initiative in approaching SWIA to request a review of how its organisation was run. This falls within SWIA's remit, as the majority of services are purchased by local authorities, and the people who use the services are likely to use other social work services, too. Now, with the review completed and the report published, SWIA is convening a day conference for voluntary sector board members and senior managers to come together to look at the findings and to use them to develop a self-assessment process for voluntary organisations.

Netta Maciver, Chief Executive of Turning Point Scotland, told *Inspection Matters* that when the organisation first approached SWIA to review its governance, it had been looking for three things. "First of all, we wanted an external review of our governance," she said. "Secondly, we wanted to demonstrate that it was robust with regards to particular financial issues. Thirdly, we wanted the process to be conducted by an organisation that was credible to our purchasers."

The review took place during the summer, led by SWIA Inspector Jennifer Crowson. Speaking after the publication of the report, she said that overall it was 'very positive'. "It shows that the organisation has a lot

of strengths and that many of their systems could be replicated elsewhere. There are some areas for improvement, and Turning Point Scotland had identified some of these themselves and already begun to address them."

The review was structured in a similar way to performance inspections of local authority social work services, with initial questionnaires being followed by fieldwork and compilation of the report. The review team looked first of all at a number of reports about good governance – for example, the Cadbury Report on corporate governance. Although this originated in the private sector, it applies equally to the public and voluntary sectors. The team studied relevant guidance from OSCR, the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator, and reference material from Governance Hub, an organisation linked to NCVO which supports good governance in the voluntary and community sector in England. SWIA inspectors pulled out four broad areas of governance – openness, integrity, accountability and leadership.

Inspectors looked particularly at the importance of governance in relation to a decision made by the board of Turning Point Scotland in 2005, which involved the cancellation of a significant local authority contract. This was chosen for the way in which it illustrated the importance of strong governance in a voluntary sector organisation.

Copies of the report *Governance Review of Turning Point Scotland* are available at [www.swia.gov.uk](http://www.swia.gov.uk).

## Fundraiser

**SWIA HQ staff raised a total of £375 for Children in Need in November when they entertained Ladywell House neighbours from General Register Office and the Insolvency Service with coffee, tombola, raffle and quizzes.**



# Inspecting the financial side of social work services

November 2007 saw the change-over of a key member of the SWIA inspection teams – the Audit Senior on a year's secondment from Audit Scotland. The part played by the Audit Senior, as an Inspector in performance inspections, is an important one. New secondee Susan Blyth will be working with Sessional Inspector Eric Walker and together they will provide the expertise for inspecting the financial management of local authority social work departments.

Susan has replaced Peter Lindsay after completion of his year's secondment with SWIA. Peter himself had followed in the footsteps of Paul Craig, the first secondee from Audit Scotland. All three have benefited from having Eric as their mentor in SWIA. He has tackled the finance side of performance inspections since the first three pilots in Angus, Fife and South Lanarkshire.

Eric explained: "Our role in inspections is to look at the financial management and related areas, such as risk management and asset management planning. We don't carry out an audit, because we don't drill down into a lot of detail, but we do get the flavour of how well or otherwise the authority manages its social work finances."

Eric is a Chartered Accountant with many years' experience in local government, and with a broad spectrum of interests. When he was appointed Sessional Inspector for SWIA in 2005 with special responsibility for the financial aspect of inspections, he had recently retired as Director of Corporate Services with West Dunbartonshire Council.

The link with Audit Scotland is important. Through the secondment arrangement, SWIA keeps up to date with Audit Scotland's work, and tries to avoid unnecessary duplication.

Eric and his colleague from Audit Scotland work as a team within the wider inspection team. In the first phase of an inspection, they examine all the

advance information, then for the fieldwork phase they agree before the interviews the questions that each will ask. "We try to get a 360-degree view of things," said Eric. "As well as interviewing the senior finance officers, we will also speak to budget holders in the field. We check if plans are properly resourced, and how well or otherwise the authority manages its budgetary control on a month-to-month basis. We look at the sufficiency and skills of the finance officers involved in the financial management of social work and whether they are embedded within the department or are based within the corporate finance department."

Although not undertaking a detailed audit, the inspectors will concentrate on certain areas and 'drill down' where appropriate. Sometimes the operational side of social work can be good in an authority but the finance side requires improvement, and sometimes it is the other way around. "As background, we check the council's level of budget for social work against other Scottish councils," said Eric. "We also see how they measure up to the Government's Grant Aided Expenditure figures. Are they spending higher or lower than the Government thinks they should? If they are spending lower, it may not be a problem if the level and quality of service provision is reasonable.

"We also check relevant work such as Audit Scotland's Best Value reports and other internal or external audit reports relating to social work. And because social work is a department within each overall council organisation, we look at the corporate context within which the department operates.

"Our aim is to provide balanced input to the final report that goes to each inspected body. We endeavour not to only criticise, but to provide recommendations and, where appropriate, examples of good practice that will assist councils and others to improve their social work service management and delivery."

# Final inspection report draws four-year programme together

SWIA's final report into Criminal Justice Social Work Services draws together the strands of the four-year programme of inspections which has covered all Scotland's unitary authorities and groupings of authorities providing criminal justice social work services – a total of 14 reports.

Launched by Chief Inspector Alexis Jay at an Association of Directors of Social Work conference in October, the final report gives a valuable insight into the overall quality of local authority criminal justice social work services in Scotland.

SWIA Inspector John Waterhouse told *Inspection Matters*: "The inspection programme, which ran from 2003-2007, focused on critical, higher volume services, including court reports, probation, community service and the statutory supervision of released prisoners.

"The final report summarises the main findings of the programme. It reveals that, although there is evidence of good practice, there is a need for more consistency in performance across the range of social work with offenders."

A study of the findings of all 14 reports gave inspectors the opportunity to look at their significance in the context of the wider agenda of improvement and change, including the national strategy for offender management and the creation of community justice authorities. Local authorities, community justice authorities and the Scottish Government each have a stake in driving improvement and change. To be effective, the change must be driven by all three working closely together. Inspectors highlighted the need for better local management and more concerted national action to lead improvements.

These are the main findings of the final report.

- Good and very good practice was found across all areas, but there was variation in individual performance.
- Just under 40 per cent of social enquiry reports read by inspectors reached a wholly acceptable standard.
- Over three-quarters of offenders on statutory supervision had a supervision plan and just over half of these plans were routinely reviewed and updated.
- Working with offenders in enforcing their compliance with the conditions of their statutory orders was handled well in just over half of all supervision cases.
- Practitioners were better at dealing with the personal and social problems of offenders relating to their offending than they were with their offending behaviour.
- Work with sex offenders was of a higher standard than work with any other group of offenders.
- Work with other serious violent offenders needed to improve, particularly in the areas of risk assessment and risk management.
- Local authorities needed to improve the way they commissioned and monitored services provided by external agencies.
- Local authorities needed to work closely with other partners to realise the full potential of community service orders.
- Local authorities were not always gaining the full benefits of partnership working and were using relatively little information about how well services were performing.

Copies of *Criminal Justice Social Work Performance Inspection Programme 2003-2007 – Final Report* are available at [www.swia.gov.uk](http://www.swia.gov.uk).

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## NEWS ON INSPECTIONS AND PUBLICATIONS

### Publications in December 2007

Performance Inspection of North Ayrshire's Social Work Services – Report and Summary

Performance Inspection of Moray's Social Work Services – Report and Summary

Governance Review of Turning Point Scotland  
Four Schools Inspection Report

### Other recent publications

Performance Inspection of Dundee City Council's Social Work Services – Report and Summary (November)

Performance Inspection of Argyll and Bute's Social Work Services – Report and Summary (October)

Criminal Justice Social Work Performance Inspection Report 2003-2007 – Final Report (October)

## SWIA people

**Margaret Anne Gilbert** is currently on secondment with SWIA from the Mental Welfare Commission as a Social Work Inspector.

**Samantha Paterson** has joined SWIA from within the Scottish Government as an Inspection Support Manager.

**Clare Wilson**, Social Work Inspector, is currently on maternity leave and recently gave birth to a baby boy, Jacob Wilson Begley.

## SWIA Inspections 2007-2008

Inspection	Inspection dates	Publication date
Forth Valley (Multi-Agency Inspection Older People)	March – June 2007	January 2008 T.B.C.
East Lothian	May 2007 – February 2008	February 2008
Edinburgh	July – October 2007	March 2008
Aberdeen	September – December 2007	May 2008

## SWIA Inspections 2008-2009

Inspection	Inspection dates	Publication date
East Dunbartonshire	December 2007 – May 2008	August 2008
Clackmannanshire	January 2008 – June 2008	September 2008
Midlothian	February 2008 – July 2008	October 2008
Falkirk	March 2008 – August 2008	November 2008
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

## STOP PRESS ... SWIA CONFERENCES

SWIA is hosting (or co-hosting) three events early in 2008.

**Our Stakeholder conference** was held in St Andrews on 22 and 23 January. For local authority chief executive officers, directors of social work and chief social work officers. Providing feedback from social work performance inspections and to discuss emerging themes. Keynote address by Adam Ingram MSP, Minister for Children and Early Years. A full report will appear in the next newsletter.

### Improving care for older people: messages from regulation and inspection

A Joint conference with the Care Commission and Scottish Social Services Council at the Edinburgh International Conference Centre was held on 29 January. Highlighting the collective role of SWIA, the Care Commission and SSSC in improving the lives of older people by drawing together findings from inspection and regulation. The audience included service providers from all sectors, users of services, carers groups, NHS and local authority senior management, service commissioners and academia. Keynote address was by Shona Robison, Minister for Public Health. Again, a full report will appear in the next Newsletter.

Still to come:

**Voluntary sector conference** in Edinburgh on 27 February. The conference is being planned with Community Care Providers Scotland to showcase SWIA's Governance Review of Turning Point Scotland, introduce a draft self-evaluation model of governance for the voluntary social care sector, and to hear from those working in the voluntary sector about the current context of governance. Invited delegates will be at senior level. Speakers will include Adam Ingram, Minister for Children and Early Years, and Netta Maciver, Chief Executive of Turning Point Scotland.

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