EDUCATION, LIFELONG LEARNING AND CULTURE COMMITTEE

AGENDA

21st Meeting, 2008 (Session 3)

Wednesday 17 September 2008

The Committee will meet at 10.00 am in Committee Room 2.

1. Decision on taking business in private: The Committee will decide whether to take item 3 in private.

2. Social work The Committee will take evidence from—

   Ian Davidson, Acting Deputy Director, Workforce and Capacity Issues Division, and Andy Bruce, Acting Team Leader, Improving Delivery Team, Children, Young People and Social Care Directorate, Scottish Government;


3. Work programme: The Committee will consider its work programme.

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The papers for this meeting are as follows—

**Agenda item 2**

Social work cover note  
ELLC/S3/08/21/1

**Agenda item 3**

Work programme  
ELLC/S3/08/21/2 (P)
Social work

Background

1. At its meeting of 18 June 2008, the Committee agreed to extend the information gathering evidence sessions it has conducted on areas of its remit to include social work.

2. The Committee agreed to undertake a broad overview of the current issues facing the social work sector in Scotland before deciding whether to examine any of the issues in more depth through a formal inquiry.


4. At that meeting the Committee also agreed to take further evidence from a wide range of other witnesses at future meetings of the Committee.

Evidence session on 17 September

5. At its meeting on 17 September 2008, the Committee will take evidence from—

- Ian Davidson, Acting Deputy Director, Workforce and Capacity Issues Division, and Andy Bruce, Acting Team Leader, Improving Delivery Team, Children, Young People and Social Care Directorate, Scottish Government;


6. Written submissions from the witnesses are attached at Annexe A.

Future sessions

7. The Committee will hold a roundtable discussion session exploring a wide range of social work issues at a future meeting. Those invited to attend will include the Association of Directors of Social Work (ADSW); UNISON (for a trade union perspective); The Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services (IRISS); The Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE); The

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Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC); Universities Scotland (to examine qualification issues) and SCVO (for a voluntary sector perspective).

8. Following the roundtable discussion session, the Committee will take evidence at a subsequent meeting from the Minister for Children and Early Years, who has responsibility for social work issues.

Nick Hawthorne  
Senior Assistant Clerk  
Education, Lifelong Learning and Culture Committee
Annexe A

Written submission from the Scottish Government's Workforce and Capacity Issues Division, Children, Young People and Social Care Directorate

Policy development in relation to social work services in Scotland

Introduction

Policy development in relation to social work services is undertaken across three distinct service areas with the respective policy and ministerial responsibility located across the Scottish Government as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service area</th>
<th>Policy responsibility</th>
<th>Lead minister</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children and families</td>
<td>Children, young people and social care</td>
<td>Minister for Children and Early Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community care</td>
<td>Primary and community care</td>
<td>Minister for Public Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminal justice social work</td>
<td>Criminal justice</td>
<td>Cabinet Secretary for Justice</td>
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</tbody>
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Within this broad context, Workforce and Capacity Issues Division has responsibility for general capacity building and workforce development. The division also supports Ministers in responding to the findings from performance inspections of local authority social work services undertaken by the Social Work Inspection Agency (SWIA).

**Changing Lives**

The primary focus for general capacity building is implementation of *Changing Lives, the Report of the 21st Century Review of Social Work*, which was published in 2006. As the Committee is aware, this report set out a vision for social work in Scotland, based around building capacity to deliver personalised social work services; and developing a confident, competent, valued workforce of the workforce to deliver personalised and sustainable services to meet future need.

Implementation of *Changing Lives* is being led by representatives from the sector in five change programmes. With the support of Scottish Government and key national agencies like SWIA and the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC), the change programmes are working on a suite of key strategic products to support the sector to realise the aspirations of *Changing Lives*. The Government is also supporting the sector at a local level, for example, through promoting the development of local practitioner forums and local leadership communities and by providing additional resources to the Association of Directors of Social Work (ADSW) to champion action at a local and regional level.
This strategic approach, whereby responsibility for change rests at a local level and Government provides appropriate strategic input, has been a feature of *Changing Lives* from its inception and is in keeping with the new relationship between local and national government signalled by the concordat.

Further detail about the work of the change programmes is set out in SPICe briefing ELLCC/S3/08/20/2 Annexe A.

**Progress under Changing Lives**

There is substantial anecdotal evidence that, through the recognition it gave to the values and skills of social workers and the contribution they make as well as the challenges they face, *Changing Lives* has had a significant energising effect on the sector. Social services continue of course to operate in challenging circumstances and relying on this effect alone would not secure the changes required to meet the aspirations of *Changing Lives*. However, the Government remains confident that, through the products being developed under the change programmes, the renewed commitment of ADSW to champion the agenda and the increasing vigour of associated local networks (together with the broader contribution made by SWIA as outlined below), the current approach will make a major contribution to meeting these aspirations.

**The current state of social work services**

Alongside this activity, SWIA’s programme of performance inspections of local authority social work services and themed inspections is an important mechanism for driving change and improvement. Whilst the picture varies across the country, SWIA states in its 2007-08 annual report\(^2\) published on 2 September that the evidence of inspection so far highlights some very positive messages about the impact of social services. The report states that services are very much appreciated by those who use them and people feel safer, more independent and included as a result. Inspections have also revealed strong strategic partnerships (particularly in relation to child protection), good examples of inter-agency training, policy and procedure and clear lines of accountability. However, as would be anticipated, there are areas where improvement is required, including the critical importance of effective leadership and the need to have performance management systems in place that adequately measures and monitors outcomes.

The programme of inspection of local authority social work services is due to complete by March 2009.

**The policy agenda looking ahead**

As noted above, the focus for *Changing Lives* continues to be on development and implementation. As part of this the change programmes are

starting to focus on how to build on the substantial involvement of the sector to date to ensure that the products realise their full potential in practice. Government will support this work and, in partnership with the sector, will be considering how best to evaluate the impact of the products.

As part of the changes which are being initiated by Changing Lives, Government expects the sector to respond to the opportunities presented through the new relationship established between central and local government and that social work services will be seen to be at the heart of delivery of the Government's purpose and strategic objectives. The contribution of social work services as outward facing, skilled services committed to partnership working in this changed environment will be at the heart of our strategic dialogue with the sector.
Written submission from the Social Work Inspection Agency

Performance inspections in relation to social work services in Scotland

Introduction

Independent scrutiny of social work services in Scotland was put in place when the Social Work Inspection Agency (SWIA) was set up in 2005. This followed a series of significant service failures, highlighted in separate independent inquiries into the abuse of several children and also the abuse of a young woman with learning disabilities. In all cases the victims had been known to some or all public services. These events also led to the setting up of the 21st Century Review of Social Work, and its report Changing Lives. Social work was at extremely low ebb at that time – a profession under severe pressure and significantly lacking in confidence, with questions asked about its quality assurance, performance management and leadership both in the press and in Parliament.

SWIA was set a challenging schedule of completing a comprehensive performance inspection of every council’s social work services within a three year period. We are on target to achieve this, with the publication of 23 performance inspection reports to date. An inspection programme of criminal justice social work services was completed in 2007, and four multi-agency inspections of learning disabilities, substance misuse and older people (2) were undertaken between 2006-08.

We have found that in many instances the scrutiny process in itself has been the catalyst for systematic performance management to be initiated. The SWIA performance inspection model, with its detailed quality indicators and key factors, has become the basis for continuous improvement of many councils’ social work services across Scotland. The EFQM-based SWIA process also fits with many corporate systems in councils as well as with other scrutiny bodies including HMIE.

SWIA is now in the final phase of these initial performance inspections and this is already acting as a platform for service improvements by councils. We are now moving forward on developing models of supported self-evaluation, and are currently working with 21 councils who have volunteered to participate in the piloting of materials, the production of a general guide to self-evaluation of social work services, and specific guides to performance management, leadership and commissioning.

The current configuration of councils in Scotland means that for 28 out of 32 authorities, social work is operated as an integrated service including children and families, community care and criminal justice services, operating in specialist teams for the most part. There are four children’s services departments, which combine children and families’ social work and education.
Principles

The present scrutiny role of social work has some underpinning principles which include:

- robust and rigorous assurance to the public and to Parliament about care and support to vulnerable children and adults;
- better support for improvement and sharing of good practice;
- being proportionate and risk-based;
- role of Chief Professional Social Work Adviser to the Minister and advice to Scottish Government policy colleagues so that policy development can benefit from inspection findings;
- building on the successful outcomes already delivered by the Changing Lives agenda and the achievements of government in supporting its recommendations;
- coherence with delivery organisations, in particular local authorities;
- strengthening the social work profession and enhancing professional leadership; and
- social work as an integrated activity, reflecting the way it is delivered by the majority of local authorities in Scotland.

Analysis of published reports

Evaluations, recommendations and good practice examples

1. Evaluations

The distribution of evaluations overall to date is skewed towards higher evaluations. 57% of evaluations have been good or better (including 8% which were very good or better). 33% of the evaluations have been adequate, with a further 11% weak or unsatisfactory.

2. Recommendations

384 recommendations have been made in total, an average of just under 17 per authority. The lowest number of recommendations made to an authority is seven, the highest 24.

The content of these includes:

- systems to measure and monitor outcomes for people who use services, including carers;
- paid employment opportunities for those with disabilities;
- educational attainment or access to education by looked after children;
- development of workforce strategies including training;
- commissioning strategies;
- improved financial information to elected members;
- risk management; and
- developing a vision for social work services.
3. Good practice examples

A total of 242 good practice examples have been quoted in the 23 reports to date, an average of just under 11 per report.

The most common topics relate to partnership working, carers’ support, services for older people, and looked after and accommodated children.

In most instances good multi-agency/partnership working has been a characteristic of good practice and significant in influencing service improvement.

At the end of the full round of performance inspections in September 2009, SWIA will have a unique and comprehensive baseline assessment of the state of social work services in Scotland on which to base improvement activity. Already, SWIA inspectors are working closely with councils to support delivery of their resulting action plans. Follow up visits already completed have all shown that councils have made significant progress in acting on report recommendations.