

# Performance Inspection Summary

Midlothian Council

November 2008

## What is a performance inspection?

The Social Work Inspection Agency (SWIA) is carrying out performance inspections of all local authority social work services in Scotland.

SWIA gathers and analyses a wide selection of information about a local authority and the social work services it provides or is responsible for. The inspection findings are published in a report that identifies strengths as well as areas for improvement.

This leaflet summarises some key findings of the inspection of Midlothian Council's social work services, which are set out in the full report published in November 2008.

Midlothian Council will produce an action plan in response to the inspection report. The plan will set out how any necessary changes are to be made. Once the plan is agreed, SWIA and the council will monitor the implementation of the plan together.

### **If you would like a copy of the full report or would like to know more about SWIA, please contact:**

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## Inspection findings

Overall, Midlothian Council social work division performed to an adequate standard in delivering positive outcomes for people who used services. We found performance was good in relation to service users who had mental health problems, throughcare and aftercare services for care leavers and educational attainment of looked after children. People who used the services were mainly positive about the difference these had made to their lives.

The council was investing significant resources to upgrade its social work information system. In the meantime there were information gaps and limitations.

We found that most social work staff in Midlothian were motivated and committed. Following the publication of a critical child protection report in 2007, the social work division had faced a severe test of capacity and leadership. The response by elected members and senior officers had been one of significant effort. This led to improvement and a return of confidence across the social work division.

Six of our 17 recommendations are contained in the key processes section of our report. The social work division will have to give particular attention to improving this area. For example, we considered that urgent action was required to ensure:

- all front line staff were appropriately trained in risk assessment and the effectiveness of risk assessment evaluated; and
- the threshold for identifying and responding to child protection risks was consistent across front line staff and team leaders.

We have also stated that immediate action was required in other sections of our report to ensure:

- permanency planning was improved for looked after and accommodated children and young people; and
- adult service users assessed as having critical or substantial levels of need received the required level of home care and other community care services.

In the 18 months prior to our inspection much had been achieved in terms of planning and restructuring of service delivery. Further work was needed to ensure sufficient resources were in place to realise the ambitious vision for social work services in Midlothian.

### **Some examples of good services delivered by social work services and partner agencies**

There was effective joint working in the substance misuse multi-agency screening group. It allowed agencies to share relevant information about families where children were living with carers or parents who had substance misuse problems.

Social work commissioning, procurement and contracting guidelines were well written, clear and comprehensive.

The welfare approach taken by the integration teams had played an important role in increasing school attendance rates. The integrated team managers told us that school attendance rates in Midlothian had risen. Work was done in partnership with social workers in relation to looked after children. We concluded that this approach provided a good basis for improving outcomes for children, including looked after children.

A principal teacher had been appointed to work with looked after and accommodated children. This was part of a project to improve educational achievement. The looked after children's nurse also saw every young person on admission. Project staff were committed and motivated and they received good support from managers.

People attending the Orchard Centre in Bonnyrigg praised the staff's holistic approach to care and support and the accessibility of mental health services. We heard that the centre promoted individuals' self confidence and involvement in a range of activities which reduced stigma. Older people using day care valued the support and the range of activities and outings offered.

In relation to mental health services in Midlothian:

- joint planning and management provided effective services with resource transfer funds following the closure of hospital beds;
- the Midlothian wellbeing intervention network brought together all the organisations which supported people with mental health problems;
- a co-located joint team included mental health social workers who were not mental health officers. They supported people with mental health problems who were not subject to statutory measures;
- the intensive home support and the continuing recovery teams had achieved positive outcomes such as reduced admissions to psychiatric hospital; and
- service users had been active in the development of services.

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