

# Performance Inspection Summary

Scottish Borders Council

February 2009

## What is performance inspection?

The Social Work Inspection Agency (SWIA) is undertaking 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 which 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 of the key findings of the inspection of Scottish Borders Council's social work services which are set out in the full report published in February 2009.

Scottish Borders 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:**

Corporate Manager  
Social Work Inspection Agency  
Ladywell House  
Ladywell Road  
Edinburgh  
EH12 7TB

**Tel:** 0131 244 4885

**Fax:** 0131 244 5496

**E-mail:** [info@swia.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:info@swia.gsi.gov.uk)

**Website:** [www.swia.gov.uk](http://www.swia.gov.uk)

# Inspection findings

## Summary

This report gives a positive account of many aspects of social work services provided by Scottish Borders. At the time of our inspection many people were receiving good services. There were areas where services could have been better, for example services for people with mental ill health and people who misused substances.

The department was ambitious for change and we found a formidable array of reviews and plans which involved virtually every service. We were concerned that the energy and time needed by staff to take these forward could detract from day to day service provision. However, we judged the impact on staff and management of staff to be good. The majority of the staff were highly motivated, enthusiastic and well trained.

The work done to improve the impact on the local community was very good. Social work services paid attention to wide involvement of people in service development and genuinely listened to their views. There was strong performance in relation to poverty and maximising benefits and a proactive approach to identifying and addressing the needs of the migrant population.

Elected members, the Chief Executive, the Director of Social Work, the senior management team and managers and staff all contributed to a vision for services and collectively achieved effective leadership. Some people who used services were aware of the range of consultations and plans, many were pleased to have been involved but they were looking for results.

There was evidence that social work services were able to listen and learn from these differing views and that if they continued this approach the range and quality of services in Scottish Borders would continue to improve.

**We identified a number of key areas for improvement, including:**

- ways to make sure that managers gathered information which helped them to know how good services were;
- making sure that respite care for children in foster care was carefully considered and, if at all possible, children were not placed with carers they did not know;
- the needs of young carers should be assessed regularly;
- the range of accommodation for young people leaving care should be increased;
- joint financial management information is seen regularly by elected members;
- social work services and partners should develop joint strategies for commissioning services for all community care groups; and
- prioritising the implementation of plans for different services.

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

- Scottish Borders Night Support Service was operated by teams of home carers, with team members driving themselves round each area every night to the homes of people on their visit schedule, from a base in the local community hospital. The service was managed by Home Care Managers who made sure there was adequate staff to provide a service between 10pm and 7.30am each night of the year. The service was designed as a planned service for people assessed as having long or short term needs for intensive care packages, including night time assistance, to enable them to remain in their own homes or return to them following periods in hospital. Support for family carers was a key aim.
- Supported by Scottish Borders social work services and NHS Borders, the Princess Royal Trust Carers Centre had produced a comprehensive up-to-date and easy to read guide for carers. Not only was it a valuable source for carers of any age it was also widely used by social work and health professionals in their everyday work and contact with service users. The guide was updated regularly and comments and suggestions from carers were invited to inform the next edition.
- The juvenile liaison group (started in 2006) provided a weekly screening of multi-agency referrals. The police referred children who had come to their attention, e.g. for crime, anti-social behaviour, and domestic abuse. The meeting was attended by representatives of the child protection unit, health and education services, youth offending team and intake senior from social work services. The group shared information and quickly identified an appropriate agency response and areas for joint working.

- The intensive outreach team designed individual packages for children and their families. For example the team was asked to explore alternatives for a child who was likely to go to a residential school. The team involved three different workers, one to work with the child, an intake worker, and family support worker to work with the family. All children in the family benefited from the programme.

© Crown copyright 2009

ISBN 978-1-905501-84-7

Social Work Inspection Agency (SWIA)  
Ladywell House  
Ladywell Road  
Edinburgh  
EH12 7TB

Produced for the Social Work Inspection Agency by RR Donnelley B58761 02/09  
Published by the Social Work Inspection Agency, February 2009