

Inquiry into regulation of care for older people

Fife Council Social Work Service

The purpose of the report was to investigate whether there were any areas in the regulatory regime which need to be strengthened, this was following the death of a resident at Elsie Inglis Nursing Home and the issues in relation to Southern Cross and whether safeguards were sufficiently robust.

Risk Based Assessment

Fife Council Social Work Service has through the Social Work contracts Section implemented a **Care Home Monitoring Toolkit** and a **Care at Home Monitoring Toolkit**. It is intended that these toolkits will, in addition to providing the appropriate level of contract monitoring and compliance from a local authority perspective (funding); augment the regulatory inspection regime, strengthen any weak points, and flag up any issues which can be passed to the Care Inspectorate.

The Care Inspectorate in Fife has expressed some reservations about some of their perception that this may result in duplication of efforts. However Fife Council, in common with a number of other local authorities have implemented this model of monitoring contractual compliance.

Furthermore the Committee believes that corroboration of the content of any self-assessment information should be circulated to health professionals, service users, friends and relatives for comment. If this information was also made available to the SW Service, it could be cross-referenced against the findings from the contractual monitoring undertaken.

Complaints

The focus on the use of complaints and feedback as a method of driving up standards is welcomed. One of the challenges identified by Fife Council is the weakness in the complaint process to highlight patterns of poor practice as it appears that each complaint is dealt with in isolation and there does not appear to be a process for taking an overview of persistent failings.

The Monitoring process developed by Fife Council will address this issue.

Frequency and types of inspection

Fife Council also welcomes the Cabinet secretary's announcement of an **increase in the frequency of inspections for care home and personal support services** and agrees that until implemented, a **potential weakness in the regulatory system remains**.

Service Monitoring (Monitoring toolkits) is more crucial than ever during this period. Fife Council Social Work Service will continue with this

approach in order to ensure that the highest standards of care possible are delivered.

Engagement with Healthcare Professionals

We agree that under the SSSC code of practice, social work professionals have a responsibility to raise concerns where concerns are identified. Issues raised from care home monitoring or client reviews will be shared with the Regulator as they arise.

Regular meetings between the Social Work Service and the Care Inspectorate (at a local level) will continue to be held to discuss issues and recurring themes promptly.

Involving Service users, friends and relatives

Fife Council Social Work Service, in common with the Scottish Government recognises that the views of people accessing the services (together with their carers) should be reflected in the Care Inspectorate self-evaluation model. Accordingly service user and carer feedback from individual care reviews by operational staff, or from the contractual monitoring exercises will be collated and made available to the Care Inspectorate as necessary. Adverse Comments or recurring themes will also be fed back to the providers to enable them to improve practice and address any issues.

This fits with the recognition by the Committee that service user engagement could be encouraged and enhanced. Furthermore the Care Inspectorate recognises that Health and social work-care professionals have an important role in supporting people using services to raise concerns about the quality of care.

Lay Inspections

The value of lay inspectors is recognised by Fife Council and is being adopted as part of our Quality Assurance process.

Publication and dissemination of inspection reports

The time elapsing between inspections being undertaken and reports being available has caused difficulties for Fife Council Social Work Service. This is a particular issue for the Social Work Contracts Section where price may be linked to the QAF grading. We welcome any steps taken to address this.

Support and investment in the workforce

With regard to care homes, by 31 December 2010, the target for care homes was that 65% of care staff excluding registered nurses listed on the Care Commission staffing notice, would be qualified to the level of SVQ2 or above in care. While the formal link between staff qualification has been removed

from the 'payment for quality' model; this target will continue to be monitored annually as part of the contract monitoring arrangements for Fife care homes.

National Care Standards

Fife Council welcomes the recommendation to review the National Care Standards and supports an integration with the Dementia Standards.

Commissioning and Procurement

Fife Council Social Work Service will consider a number of factors when commissioning care services and will consider (*where they are available and up to date*) Care Inspectorate reports as part of this process.

Much of the tendering work is re-tendering; thus many of the tenderers for framework agreements are known to Fife Council already. In these circumstances, the robust 'toolkit' monitoring could also be drawn on to focus the questions asked of potential providers as decisions are being made.

In Fife, the weighting of quality against price has always and will continue to place a heavier emphasis on quality rather than price.

Monitoring Financial Viability

Fife Council Social Work Service would welcome any arrangement with partners in CoSLA, the Care Inspectorate and the Scottish Government which will assist with contingency arrangements for events such as the recent collapse of Southern Cross.

Rona Laing
Head of Service
Older People's Service