

**Date:** Wednesday 14 March 2001

**Venue:** Committee Room 3 , National Assembly Building, 2.00 pm to 5.15 pm

**Title:** SOCIAL SERVICES IN WALES 1999/2000

**REPORT OF THE CHIEF INSPECTOR: SOCIAL SERVICES INSPECTORATE FOR WALES AND SOCIAL SERVICES INSPECTORATE'S PROGRAMMES FOR 2001-2**

**Purpose**

1. To report to the Committee on the performance of social services in Wales and the work of SSIW.
2. To provide an opportunity to discuss major themes arising for the Assembly and Social Services in Wales.

**Summary and Recommendations**

3. To note and comment on:
  - A. the report of the Chief Inspector, SSIW "Social Services in Wales 1999-2000";
  - B. the Inspection Programme 2001-2;
  - C. the SSIW Development Programme 2001-2 and beyond.

**Background**

**A. THE CHIEF INSPECTORS REPORT: SOCIAL SERVICES IN WALES 1999-2000**

4. This report sets out challenges that the Social Services Inspectorate is addressing and identifies changes in the budgetary position, trends and issues for the Personal Social Services as follows:

- The £48 million increase announced by the Assembly for the year 2000-1 is welcomed. Until this year, in real terms, taking account of inflation and demand, social services budgets have been at a standstill or even reduced.
- There is wide variation in expenditure between authorities (Figure 2.3) which reflects wide variation in local policies as well as local demography and needs.
- 1999-2000 marked continued progress in social services training with over 900 specified qualifications gained and levels of attainment 50% up on the previous year (para 2.10). However, much is yet to be achieved with still only 13.7% of all staff working in residential settings in Wales having a formal qualification (para 2.13). In children's services some authorities have had difficulty recruiting or retaining staff.

- In child protection in 1999-2000 there has been a 9% decrease in the numbers of children included on registers in Wales (para 6.14). Rates of registration vary across authorities. The Inspectorate has commissioned a survey of patterns of registration in Wales and plans to disseminate the findings to promote understanding about the use and management of child protection registers.
- The proportion of people over 85 in residential homes increased in line with demographic change; 70% of all people in residential homes are now supported by local authorities.
- This year has seen a further reduction in the number of people receiving packages of domiciliary care. This reflects a tightening of eligibility criteria.
- The report on the first six Joint Reviews in Wales "Learning the Lessons" was published in October: it highlighted the need for continued attention to improvement for social services.
- New guidance for planning in social services has been published. In addition, extensive research and consultation has taken place into the development of an improved management information system and a new performance management framework (para 3.2).

5. The report describes the plans for the Commission for Care Standards in Wales, and the Care Council for Wales which were included in the Care Standards Act 2000. It also describes the work of SSIW and includes findings from inspection work and the results of monitoring and other development work. The report summarises the results of the inspections and joint reviews. The first chapter of the report is my Overview in which I take stock of the current provision and the main challenges facing social services in Wales. In this, I emphasise that local authorities face sensitive management issues in balancing the social services agenda with reforms to modernise local government. The report also covers a broad agenda of development work, to support the implementation of the Looked After Children system, and new policies or initiatives such as Sure Start, Youth Justice work and the protection of vulnerable adults. It also highlights action to implement the findings of the North Wales Tribunal report "Lost in Care".

## **B. INSPECTION PROGRAMME 2001-2**

SSIW's inspection programme for 2001-2, agreed by the Minister, is attached. This has been drawn up within the previously agreed framework, following consultation with interested parties. The framework means that, within a five-year period, each authority receives a joint review, a major inspection of children's services and a major inspection of adult services. The specific subjects are varied so that the inspection programme covers the range of service areas within children's and adult services. All these inspections result in published reports on individual authorities. SSIW also carries out thematic inspections. These result in a single report for Wales as a whole.

The consultation provoked considerable comment on the relationship between the published inspection programme and Best Value inspections. SSIW's programme is planned and proactive, working systematically across authorities and subject areas. Best Value inspections are carried out in response to local authorities' own reviews. SSIW is responsible for Best Value inspections of social services; whenever possible, SSIW carries these out alongside other inspections. SSIW works, with other inspectorates, to achieve maximum co-ordination of inspections. SSIW will also adopt the practice of expressing overall judgements in a two-dimensional grid, similar to that used by the joint reviews and in Best Value inspections.

SSIW's inspection programme plays an important part in monitoring performance of local social services, in promoting good practice and in informing the public about social services. SSIW follows up inspections to check on the implementation of recommendations.

## **C. DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME 2001-2 AND BEYOND**

The Social Services Inspectorate runs a development programme which has the following objectives:

- promoting and disseminating the development of good practice;
- supporting the implementation of policy;
- monitoring performance and promoting the results of inspection, research or other service review or evaluation.

The attached programme sets out streams of work under the themes of:

- promoting quality;
- promoting independence and meeting dependency needs;
- safeguarding vulnerable people.

This includes a series of specific initiatives to address quality, management and performance across social services generally as well as services for adults and children.

It will be noted that the Inspectorate is presenting its development programme in a new format this year to give a more comprehensive and strategic approach to its work and setting it in a longer time period. Directors of Social Services and interests in the Assembly have been consulted. Further work will be undertaken in consultation with relevant interests to shape this approach for future years. The Committee's views on the approach taken to date would be welcome.

### **Financial Implications**

The preparation of the Chief Inspector's report has been accommodated within existing administration costs budgets. The costs of printing the report and arranging for it to be made available for people with sensory impairments are £4,690 which will be met from the 2000-2001 SSIW Development Programme Budget.

The inspection and development programme are carried out under the delegated running costs and programme budgets of the Inspectorate. Financial Planning Division has been consulted about this submission and noted that there are no additional financial implications for the Assembly.

### **Compliance**

The work of the Inspectorate is carried out - and the Chief Inspector's report is published - under powers contained within Section 7 of the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970. These powers have been transferred to the Assembly and delegated to the Minister for Health and Social Services. There are no issues of regularity or propriety. The Assembly Compliance Office has seen this submission and is content.

### **Contact**

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