
SSI INSPECTION OF SOCIAL CARE SERVICES FOR DISABLED ADULTS

Responsible Cabinet Member(s) – Cllr Eleanor Lister, Social Services Portfolio

Responsible Director(s) – Margaret Asquith, Director of Social Services

Purpose of Report

1. To present a summary of the Social Services Inspectorate's Report of the Inspection of Social Care Services for Disabled Adults and to advise Members of actions planned to meet the recommendations made in the report

Background

2. The Social Services Inspectorate (SSI) undertook an inspection of Darlington's services for disabled adults between 2 February 2004 and 13 February 2004. The inspection was conducted by two inspectors, a lay assessor, and a Commission for Health Improvement (CHI) reviewer. The inspection was part of a national programme of inspections of services for Disabled Adults 2003/04.
3. A draft report was made available on 26 March 2004 and the final report is being presented by the Lead Inspector to Council on 22nd July 2004 (attached at **Appendix A**).
4. The Inspectors used 6 national standards and criteria and the services were assessed against these standards.
5. The overall judgement for Social Care Services for Disabled Adults was
 - a) Most people were being served well; and
 - b) Prospects for improvement were promising
6. The Inspectors noted strengths and areas for development against each standard. The areas for development generally consist of completion of developments that were currently in progress. A summary of the findings against each standard is detailed below.

Summary of Standards

7. Standard 1 - National Priorities and Strategic Objectives

The Council is working with health and other agencies to ensure delivery of priorities for social care, the national personal social services objectives and their own local strategic objectives.

The Inspectors noted strengths in the following areas of practice:

Improvements in community equipment services; awareness of national objectives and appropriate planning; the Council's good links with Darlington Action on Disability; the Social Service Department's Carers Strategy; and the positive examples of service user involvement in planning service developments.

The Inspectors noted the work areas for further development in the following areas of practice:

Completion of the draft strategic Physically Disabled and Sensory Impairment Services (PSI) Plan; further improvement in levels of disability awareness across the Council; further development of the PSI user action network; opportunities for integrated teams; and improvements in the communication arrangements for deaf service users.

One recommendation was made with respect to standard one that:

The Council needs to work with partners to progress plans for integrated services. These plans should clearly identify accountabilities for tasks within agreed timescales and be actively managed to completion.

8. Standard 2 - Effectiveness of Service delivery and Outcomes for the Service Users and Carers

Service Users and people who support them experience social care services, which promote inclusion, choice and independence.

The Inspectors noted strengths in the following areas of practice;

Two thirds of service users were satisfied with the support they receive, Dimensions service is highly regarded, services for visually impaired people were described very positively, deaf and people with hearing loss were positive about care management involvement, many people described social service staff as reliable and responsive, support for carers was positive and the council has positively promoted Direct Payments.

The Inspectors noted the work areas for further development in the following areas of practice:

Criticism regarding the quality of independently provided home-care services; limited provision for younger disabled people; waiting times for occupational therapy service; delay in the planned integration of Occupational Therapy services; and limited provision for people with traumatic brain injury and development of transitions arrangements.

One recommendation was made with respect to standard two that:

The Council must address the waiting list for occupational therapy services strategically and operationally, to achieve a streamlined and responsive service. This work needs to involve stakeholders from the outset.

9. Standard 3 - Quality of services for service users and carers

Social services have clear procedures for referral, assessment, care planning and review,

which involve relevant professionals, service users and those who support them, which are widely known and the outcomes of which are clearly recorded.

The Inspectors noted strengths in the following areas of practice:

Assessments for people with sensory impairment were dealt with quickly; service users and carers felt they were involved in the development of care plans; reviews were conducted in a timely manner; the Council was monitoring the performance of commissioned services and challenging poor practice; and good examples of work with other agencies and appropriate vulnerable adults processes.

The Inspectors noted the work areas for further development in the following areas of practice:

Deaf people felt access to information created difficulties; there was limited evidence of risk assessment; the assessment of carers' needs was not transparent; case files did not reflect the users' pathway of involvement through services; people placed out of Darlington did not experience the same review process as those placed in Darlington; and that there were unacceptable delays in passing some referrals between the information and assessment team and occupational therapy.

Three recommendations were made with respect to standard three that:

The Council should ensure that there is consistency in the quality and content of assessments of disabled people and those with sensory impairments. Particular attention should be given to ensuring that the assessment of both risk and the needs of carers are demonstrated and recorded.

The Council must ensure that the system for managing initial referrals and specifically timely recording and transfer of referrals to the specialist teams is closely monitored and managed.

The Council should take action to ensure that service users placed in out of borough resources experience the same quality of review process as those placed closer to their home area.

10. Standard 4 - Fair Access.

The Council and Social Services act as fairly and consistently in ensuring that disabled people's social care needs are met.

The Inspectors noted strengths in the following areas of practice:

Agreement has been reached for the Council to develop a communications system for service users in their preferred language; eligibility based on Fair Access to Care Services is in place; a joint information strategy is in place; training in disability and deaf awareness is mandatory; and an action plan in response to the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2001 is in place.

The Inspectors noted the work areas for further development in the following areas of practice:

Some service users did not know that files were kept in relation to them or how to access the files; the Council needed to be more proactive in developing a range of complaints formats; public information was not always accessible; and the Council needs to better understand the needs of its black and minority ethnic population.

Two recommendations were made with respect to standard four that:

The Council should develop broader access to the complaints system by encouraging the use of different formats by service users who have difficulty in communicating through more commonly used processes.

The Council should also ensure timely feedback about complaint investigations to service users and case files.

11. **Standard 5 - Cost and Efficiency**

Social Services commission and deliver services to clear standards covering both quality and costs, by the most efficient means available using Best Value principles to achieve continuous improvement.

The Inspectors noted strengths in the following areas of practice:

A Best Value Review of disability services has been undertaken leading to increased profile for services and improved services; there are no significant budgetary pressures and financial management arrangements are clear; business planning activities are well developed; staff had knowledge of unit costs and this information was used in the development of packages of care; and a corporate team was in place to support the use of external funding streams.

The Inspectors noted the work areas for further development in the following areas of practice:

Health Act Flexibilities were not in use for PSI services; commissioning strategies were at an early stage of development; there was limited use of local PSI targets; and reviews of services did not always directly involve service users.

Two recommendations were made with respect to standard five that:

The Council needs to share appropriate information with service users carers and staff about actions taken in relation to commissioned services that demonstrates responsibility for the commitment to ensuring high quality provision.

The Council should create opportunities for greater direct involvement of service users and carers in the review of services.

12. **Standard 6 - Management and Resources**

Policies to support disabled people are delivered through robust planning and commissioning arrangements and appropriate structures and procedures.

The Inspectors noted strengths in the following areas of practice:

A housing strategy addressing needs of disabled people was in place; policies and procedures were in place; case file audits had been completed; staff were regularly supervised and referred to effective line management arrangements; managers had good knowledge of service and related issues; many staff commented on the positive impact of the senior management team; working relationships between corporate departments reflected increasing corporate ownership; there were examples of service users and carers being involved in the delivery of training to staff; staff and managers were positive about the quality and relevance of training provided; and the Council had undertaken work in relation to the employment of disabled people.

The Inspectors noted the work areas for further development in the following areas of practice:

A draft strategy was at an early stage as part of the Supporting People initiative; the Council recognised the need to develop a Quality Assurance Framework but this had not been introduced; management decisions were not recorded in files; service users and families were critical of the lack of flexibility in transport provision; and staff induction experiences differed.

Three recommendations were made with respect to standard six that:

The Council needs to prioritise the introduction of a quality system.

The Council should reconsider the needs of disabled people in the review of its transport plan and seek their views in relation to improving physical access to services.

The Council should measure and evaluate progress made in relation to workforce planning, and use this to inform the process of updating the human resource strategy.

Outcome of Consultation

13. Consultation with service users and staff was an integral part of this inspection and is referred to throughout the report.

Legal Implications

14. This report has been considered by the Borough Solicitor for legal implications in accordance with the Council's approved procedures. There are no issues which the Borough Solicitor considers need to be brought to the specific attention of Members, other than those highlighted in the report.

Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998

15. The contents of this report have been considered in the context of the requirements placed on the Council by Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, namely, the duty on the Council to exercise its functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area. It is not considered that the contents of this report have any such effect.

Council Policy Framework

16. The issues contained within this report are required to be considered by Council.

Conclusion

17. The findings and recommendations confirmed the pre-inspection self-assessment and also confirmed that work in progress in service areas is on target.

18. Twelve recommendations were made as a result of the Inspection. An action plan has been developed (attached at **Appendix B**) to ensure that the recommendations are acted upon, and the plan will be monitored at the Commission for Social Care Inspection, and Social Services Department's regular meetings.

Recommendations

19. Council are requested to note the findings and recommendations of the Inspection Report and the Action Plan.

Reasons

20. This was a statutory inspection of social care services for disabled people provided by the Social Services Department. The inspection report requires an action plan to address the recommendations made in the report. The plan will be monitored through regular contact with the Department's Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) Business Relationship Inspector.

**Margaret Asquith,
Director of Social Services**

Appendix A

SSI Inspection of Social Care Services for Disabled People
Darlington Borough Council February 2004

Appendix B

Action Plan in response to the Inspection Report

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