



**Governance for
quality social care
in Scotland**



Background

In line with legislative changes, social care services are moving towards greater integration with health. In addition, there is closer joint working with education departments in the delivery of children's services.

New, agreed care governance arrangements are essential within this more complex environment to ensure quality services and statutory responsibilities are effectively discharged.

Clinical governance responsibilities and the corporate role of the health board, Chief Executive and other staff are defined in NHS documents but no similar document exists for social care in Scotland.

This paper aims to set out the principles of effective care governance and how this is delivered. It is the first stage in a process that will aid the consideration of a joint position on governance involving both health and social care.

What is care governance?

“A robust system for assuring high standards in the delivery of safe, personalised and effective health and social care services.”

National Clinical & Care Governance Integration Working Group.

The search for quality is the driving force behind governance arrangements and success requires the involvement of all levels from frontline staff to corporate boards.

Achieving good governance requires a framework to be built around the search for quality- one that identifies the organisational and individual activities that result in good and better outcomes. The ultimate goal is better outcomes for individuals who use services and for the public who may need support and services. We know, however, that to deliver the best services and support we must also strive for best outcomes from our organisational and staff development endeavours.

What is the quality that we seek?

Social care has traditionally been underpinned by many of the values and beliefs that other professions have more recently adopted. It takes a holistic view of the individual and crafts a socially constructed understanding of the presenting problem - attempting to understand the complexities of how the individual interfaces with their wider environment and the relevance of different elements of the person's whole life. It is an approach that holds great promise for effective prevention and early



intervention and for finding lasting solutions. The principles provide the backbone for public health developments, for example.

Human rights and social justice principles underpin social care interventions. Social care aims to promote the empowerment, inclusion and liberation of people and enhance quality of life- not just through direct intervention- but also through increasing capacity to self-help at the individual and community level.

More recently in our history, we learned the importance of individuals shaping their own support and services. This goes beyond listening. Changes to our organisational systems, backed up with new policy and legislation, are now enabling people, not professionals, to have power and control over what support they receive and how it is delivered.

This creative environment brings issues around the balance of rights, duties and responsibilities into focus. There is an even greater requirement for the expert application of professional judgement rather than an automatic adherence to procedures so people are enabled to manage risks appropriately, not put at risk. However, deviation from procedures must be reported to the organisation to enable a full consideration of relevant issues.

Staff at all levels within the organisation are responsible for creating the optimal working environment that produces the highest quality interactions with people seeking support.

The quality that we seek, therefore, is -

- to establish a system for social care governance that is designed to produce best outcomes for people who use, or may need services.
- for service users and carers to be involved in identifying their individual outcomes; shaping individual care plans, services & organisational practices.
- for people who use services and the staff who provide them to be as safe as possible.
- for organisational development and professional practice to be evidence based and continuously improve- supported by a culture of learning and high performance.



Key Principles of Care Governance

These include:

- to involving service users/ carers and the wider public in the development of quality care services
- ensuring safe and effective services; appropriate staff support and training.
- striving for continuous improvement with effective policies and processes in place
- ensuring accountability and management of risk

How do we ensure quality outcomes through social care governance?

1. Establish a culture that focuses on systems for social care governance leading to best outcomes for people who use, or may need services.

- Adopt a whole system approach to social care one that links local social governance plans to the organisations overall governance strategy and implementation plans. It should be clearly articulated how individual practice is connected to organisational objectives, ensuring staff are able to contribute more widely to the organisation's capacity to improve services.
- Internal systems need to be in place to progress and monitor social care governance arrangements. Each local authority is required by law to appoint a Chief Social Work Officer (CSWO), who must hold a social work qualification¹ and has a key role in ensuring components are in place for developing good governance – culture, systems, practices, performance, vision and leadership and in overseeing compliance with these arrangements. All staff are responsible for contributing to the delivery of social care governance arrangements.

¹(Section 3 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 requires local authorities to appoint a professionally qualified CSWO (see The Qualification of CSWOs (Regs.) 1996. National guidance on the role of CSWOs was published in Feb 2009 (link).)



CSWOs have overall responsibility for social work practice and standards– whether provided directly by the local authority or in partnership with other agencies. They are accountable to the Chief Executive (CE) and elected members, providing professional advice on the discharge of statutory duties including corporate parenting; child protection; adult protection; managing high risk offenders. They take the final decision on behalf of the local authority on a range of statutory social work matters – including adoption, secure accommodation and Guardianship.

CSWOs are responsible for ensuring only registered social workers undertake functions that are reserved in legislation for these grades- e.g. the duties of Mental Health Officers² and for setting standards on the allocation of complex cases- e.g. within child protection; vulnerable adults assessments³; the assessment and management of offenders (including sex/ violent offenders).

The CSWO ensures there are effective governance arrangements for the management of the complex issues involving the balance of need, risk and civil liberties- working with the CE to ensure corporate policy on risk reflects this balance.

More generally, the CSWO ensures strong links exist between social care services and the corporate business of the organisation- clarifying responsibilities, formalising reporting lines, accountability arrangements and performance management processes including internal audit programmes.

2. Ensure service users and carers are involved in identifying their individual outcomes; shaping individual care plans, services & organisational practices.

- A clear articulation is required of the organisation's values and purpose so that staff, service users and the public are aware of the opportunities for self –direction. Leaders and wider organisational systems must support the application of personalised & self-directed support approaches that are outcome focused, flexible, creative and responsive.

² the Adults With Incapacity Act 2000; the Mental Health Care and Treatment (Scotland) Act 2003 and the Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007 state certain duties can only be discharged by a qualified social worker who has undergone appropriate post qualifying training and satisfied the accreditation requirements in the regulations.

³ required in legislation to be a 'council officer'



- The empowerment and development of staff - so they may act more autonomously, confidently and skilfully - is essential if they are to shift power and control to people requiring support. The CSWO has a role, along with professional development staff and others, in creating an organisational culture that supports this approach. This includes ensuring that there are policies and procedures in place that facilitate staff to practice safely and creatively.
- Organisational cultures, structures and practices must encourage user, carer and staff feedback on the support provided and information on gaps in service. This enables informed planning and ongoing improvement.
- Systems and practices for the collection and analysis of useful data on individual and local need and outcomes should be integrated into every-day activities, informing planning activities. Case recording should provide constructive planning information as well as evidence of the impact of interventions.

3. Organisational development and professional practice should be evidence based and continuously improve, supported by a culture of learning and high performance.

- Best organisational development depends on a clear, consistent strategic direction articulated by leaders, including the CSWO, who act on the stated values of the organisation.
- A culture where the use of research and practice based evidence is valued and promoted in daily practice-not just at frontline level - will lead to improved quality. For example, in a whole system approach, HR services contribute to planning knowledge through feedback of information from complaints procedures. Personal improvement through formal and informal learning and the contribution to wider organisational learning is the responsibility of all staff.
- The deployment of the workforce and their skills must be aligned with needs and be fluid to meet changing demands. Skilled workforce planning therefore- to include recruitment and retention issues - depends upon stratifying the needs of the population through the use of wide data sources. It is also dependent upon



a knowledge of the skills required to meet new service approaches. Good governance of the education of social work students is essential.

- Formal systems provide a framework for the communication of knowledge across the organisation on shifting patterns of need. Productive links must be formed between individual learning, service development and organisational goals – including through use of case recording material and data on local need and projected demands. Progress should be monitored against targets and timetables.
- Post registration training & learning is a necessity to ensure continuous improvement, quality assurance and effective succession planning. It is also a requirement of the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) for registration and re-registration. Quality practice placements and effective workplace assessment arrangements- in accordance with the SSSC Code of Practice for Employers of Social Service Workers- promote a supportive learning culture.

4. Ensure people who use services and staff are as safe as possible.

- Clarity is required within organisations of the responsibility and accountability for the care and safety of service users, communities and staff. This includes arrangements for monitoring individual and team performance and adherence to policy and procedures. The CSWO has a key role in setting standards. All staff have responsibilities for their own and other's safety, contributing to effective social governance.
- A culture of openness, support and learning will assist organisations in becoming expert in risk management. Systematically learning from significant case reviews into critical incidents that have/ may have resulted in death or serious harm –and from staff who have been at risk at work- contributes to the efforts to keep the public and staff safe.



- Wider analysis and identification of trends and risks, along with clear monitoring and reporting arrangements for identified improvement activity and proposals for remedial action is important.
- The CSWO has a key role in ensuring learning and progress takes place from the presentation of risk and harm and on outcomes from different approaches. Social work services must continuously balance competing needs, risks and rights –striving for an effective risk-enablement, as opposed to a risk-averse approach.
- Consistent, appropriate and accepted communication systems are essential to support risk management activities, applied within and across organisations, involving service users and the public. Social work has a statutory responsibility to promote partnership working and engage effectively with key stakeholders to prevent and address risk.
- A risk aware organisation adopts a whole system, preventative approach- e.g. through managing environmental risks and safe employment practices. The CSWO has responsibilities to address poor practice internally and also, when appropriate, through the regulatory body, SSSC. Individual staff are responsible for registering with SSSC, adhering to the Code of Practice and for meeting the requirements for post registration training and learning for re- registration.
- Supervision and performance appraisal are essential tools for keeping people safe through learning and development. Reflective supervision encourages critical analysis and constructive evaluation of experiences-critical as a support during complex decision making. More generally, it is the point at which professional and managerial systems meet in the efforts to keep people safe through continuous learning.



Role of Councils and Chief Executives

Each local authority has a corporate plan and performance management framework which incorporates the vision for the council and reflects the importance of social care and social work services. Internal audit arrangements are in place to ensure that key local authority responsibilities are subject to independent scrutiny, monitoring and review arrangements. Elected members have a clear role in this process that includes monitoring of performance, outcomes and risk management.

Summary

The challenge of integration between social care and health and the emergence of new joint governance arrangements requires clarity on the form and function of care governance arrangements. This paper sets out the principles and arrangements for the delivery of social care governance in local authorities.

Social governance offers a framework to support all those working within social services to take responsibility for continuously improving the quality of their services. It connects people, professionals and organisations and binds them in a common enterprise- improving outcomes through better performance and ensuring effective delivery of quality local authority statutory duties.

Relevant reading

SSSC Codes of Practice for Social Service Workers & Employees:
SSSC: 2009

The Role of the Chief Social Work Officer:
guidance for local authorities in Scotland: Scottish Government: 2010

Changing Lives: Report of the 21st Century Social Work Review:
Scottish Executive: 2006

The Practice Governance Framework: responsibility & accountability in
social work practice: Scottish Government: 2011

The Framework for Continuous Learning in Social Services
SSSC & IRISS. 2008

A Candidates Guide to becoming a Councillor:
COSLA/ Improvement Service: 2012

SWIA Guide to Supported self- evaluation: Building excellent social
work services





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