

AG/JH/501

8 February 2005

Angus Skinner
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Dear Angus

SOCIAL WORK INSPECTION AGENCY

Many thanks for your letter of 21 December, with enclosures. On behalf of CCPS may I offer some brief comments on the proposals for SWIA, as follows.

First, on a point of clarification, it is not entirely clear from the draft framework document which agencies will be the subject of inspection, and consequently how far the work of SWIA will relate to CCPS members. At various points throughout, the document refers widely to social care provision and providers (1.10); more narrowly to all social work services *provided by local authorities* (1.11, my italics); and then specifically to voluntary organisations in receipt of Scottish Executive grants (Appendix A). It would be helpful if the document were clearer about the scope of SWIA in this respect.

If voluntary sector service providers are indeed to be the subject of inspection by SWIA, then CCPS would want to warmly endorse the comment in your accompanying letter stating that the new agency will work very closely with other Inspectorates and regulatory bodies in such a way as to minimise the burdens on service providers. The requirements of the various regulatory bodies (and quasi-regulatory processes such as contract compliance) are currently placing a very significant burden on providers and this needs to be alleviated rather than added to. In this respect, then, it is disappointing to note that the draft framework document contains no details about regulatory co-operation or avoidance of duplication.

On this same theme, we would want to refer to one of the key objectives of SWIA (1.11), namely the promotion of best practice in improving the quality of social work and social care services. You may be aware that the Care Commission is currently working to develop a Quality Assessment Framework by which care services will be given a quality rating. This rating will relate not only to the service's performance against the national care standards, but also to factors relating to statutory regulations, complaints received, service user feedback and a range of other elements. CCPS is a member of the working party looking at this new framework and it would be fair to say that at this stage we have some misgivings about how appropriate it is for a regulator to rate quality (as opposed to compliance); however in any case, we would very much hope that any work that SWIA might carry out in relation to the quality of services would be co-ordinated with this initiative.

We would be /cont.

We would be very happy to amplify any of these points, should you find it helpful. Meanwhile, on a more personal note, your letter ends with the news that you yourself will be standing down once the new agency comes into being.

On behalf of CCPS and its members, can I say that we were very sorry to hear this: I would like to thank you for the valuable support you have given to CCPS over the years, and to wish you all the very best for the future.

With kind regards.

Yours sincerely

ANNIE GUNNER
Director