



PE1418/B

PUBLIC PETITIONS COMMITTEE PETITION PE1418 – RESPONSE FROM THE CARE INSPECTORATE

The petitioner’s issue

“Petition by Katherine Alexander calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to compel all local authorities to ensure that all social work management posts are held by professionally trained and accountable registered social workers”.

The Care Inspectorate does not consider it appropriate to compel all local authorities to ensure that all social work management posts are held by professionally trained and accountable registered social workers. Social workers currently work across a range of sectors and in many different settings including children’s services, adult services or criminal justice social work services and may be managed by people with a range of different qualifications. The Inspectorate considers the key considerations are clear accountability, good supervision and high professional standards and it comments on these below. It is a matter for each local authority to determine the operational and strategic management arrangements for its social workers. The recruitment of managers within social work services is governed by each local authority’s human resource procedures. The Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) Code of Practice for social service workers and the Code of Practice for Employers set out the responsibilities of employers in the regulation of social service workers. Scottish Government Guidance determines the responsibilities of the Chief Social Work Officer to promote values and standards.

Accountability of social work managers

All social work managers, irrespective of their qualifications and professional background, are fully accountable to their employer the local authority, in respect of carrying out their managerial duties.

Supervision of social workers

The Care Inspectorate considers that good quality supervision by the immediate line manager is a critical element for the effective management and support of social workers. The Care Inspectorate scrutinises a local authority’s arrangements for the supervision of social workers by:

- Checking there is an up-to-date supervision policy and procedure in place.

- Reviewing the supervision policy and procedure documentation submitted by the local authority.
- Scrutinising the records of people who use social work services for evidence contained in the record of the impact of supervision on the work carried out with the person using the service.
- Obtaining the views of front-line social workers (face-to-face in focus groups) about the effectiveness of their supervision arrangements.
- Asking the line managers of front-line social workers (face-to-face in focus groups) about how they supervise the social workers they manage.
- Where relevant, asking people who use social work services (face-to-face in focus groups) for their views on the operational management arrangements for social workers.
- Commenting on how well the SSSC's Codes of Practice are met.

If the Care Inspectorate finds there are deficits in any of a local authority's arrangements for the supervision of social workers, it will make recommendations for improvement and carry out follow-up work to verify that the recommendations have been implemented.

Maintaining professional standards - the role of the Chief Social Work Officer

There is a statutory requirement that each local authority appoints a Chief Social Work Officer. Chief Social Work Officers are required to hold a professional social work qualification. The role of the Chief Social Work Officer is set out in Scottish Government Guidance. Among other things Chief Social Work Officers have an overall responsibility for the professional development of social workers within their local authorities. Chief Social Work Officers should promote high standards of social work practice within their local authorities. The Guidance charges them with supporting and advising managers in maintaining and developing high standards of practice and supervision.

When the Care Inspectorate inspects a local authority's delivery of social work services, it examines whether the Chief Social Work Officer is carrying out the role effectively. If it considers there are any deficits it will make recommendations for improvement and carry out follow-up work to verify that recommendations have been implemented.