I have always found the Inspections by the Care Commission to be thorough; I am aware that the intentions of SCSWIS are to undertake more unannounced visits which makes more sense, although difficult to plan in a domiciliary service. I do have concerns that the rate of inspections might decrease, and believe that an annual inspection should be the minimum for all social care services. I also believe that each individual service should be inspected separately rather than an organisation centrally. Financial impacts on Local Authorities mean that there is less rigour in monitoring of service providers.

The Care Commission Inspections did place weight on service user feedback and comments. However service providers were too often given the opportunity to select the service users to approach. It would be better if all service users and their families/advocates were invited to comment confidentially, although this might create a logistics problem. Our own service conducts an annual set of Social Accounts which are independently audited and provided to the SCSWIS officer and the Local Authority. If this was a requirement of all social care providers, it would assist with a more thorough look at each service.

There remains a need to have an independent Inspection & Regulation system but it will have to be broadened to consider all aspects of health & social care provision in an integrated service; some linkage with reviewing systems within local authorities might assist.

Stephen Pennington
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