Inquiry into regulation of care for older people

Renfrewshire Social Work

Can we be confident that the regulatory system is picking up on care services where quality of care is poor?

Our view is that generally the regulation and inspection process in Scotland does pick up on services providing poor quality care. However, we think the inspection process and grading system is driven more by bureaucracy than service user satisfaction and outcomes. Some services delivering good quality care to individuals care can be marked down by not having evidence of a particular policy or procedure. Conversely we have seen services with high grades gained by having paperwork in place but little evidence of good practice. More direct observation of practice and wider discussion/involvement of service users would indicate as much if not more about the service than a policy.

Are there weaknesses in the current system?

See above.

While welcoming the emphasis on self assessment, we do not believe that inspectors may not always have sufficient time available to test the contents of self assessment evaluations. It is possible for self assessments to be completed in a way that ticks all the procedural boxes, and can mask (either intentionally or otherwise) other aspects of performance.

On a specific point, self assessment questions ask about staff vacancies but not staff turnover which can be another indicator of issues around training, leadership and good practice.

Are service users views taken into account adequately?

Questionnaires are circulated to users. Responses will depend on the person’s ability to complete these. Seeking the views of some service users is challenging where people lack capacity or do not have developed communication skills.

See above for comments in relation to the need for a greater focus on service user satisfaction and outcomes.

Do systems provide appropriate basis for regulation, inspection and enforcement of integrated SW and NHS care in the community?

We don't think the current system lends itself to inspection or regulation of integrated services. Social care and health sometimes have different outcomes and standards.
Current regulatory systems tend to operate in isolation, and inspection of social work services will only consider the SW element of, eg, a multi-disciplinary team. There are few fully integrated services in Renfrewshire.

John Paterson
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