Inquiry into regulation of care for older people

Shetland Islands Council

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

Essentially I do not think we can be confident about the current regulatory system. It appears cumbersome and over bureaucratic and there are sometimes delays in receiving the written report following an inspection.

Care services have both an announced inspection and one that is not. The announced inspection gives services the chance to prepare and put their ‘house in order’ and inspectors will only see the prepared service.

Are there any particular weaknesses in the current system?

In my experience inspections tend to concentrate on the systems, rather than the content of such things as care plans.

It appears more important that the care plan exists and although inspectors audit the plans there is limited contact with service users about what is contained in it.

Inspections are also only as good as the information that is provided to inspectors, not only from staff but service users and their families (see below).

Does the system adequately take into account the views of service users?

Given the comments above regarding information, I know that some service users and their families are reticent about giving information to inspectors. Questionnaires are sent out, but it is felt that this is not the best way to gain information. It is hard for some to commit words to paper. More personal interviews should be conducted.

Staff views are also sought, but unless the culture in the service is open and honest, the information obtained by inspectors may not be as accurate as it could be.

The system also relies on the interpretation of comments made to them by the inspector.

Does the registration and regulatory system provide an appropriate basis for the regulation, inspection and enforcement of integrated social and NHS care in the community?

National Care Standards attempt to provide an holistic approach to a person’s care and should provide an appropriate basis for inspection purposes. The
same should also be true of the standards set by other inspection agencies. National Care Standards inspect against access to healthcare services but not the quality or content of that service.

Although there are integrated social and NHS services within communities there are separate agencies carrying out the inspection function.

The Care Commission and SWIA (now Social Care Social Work Improvement Scotland) inspect local authority, private and third sector services, whilst healthcare services are inspected by Healthcare Improvement Scotland (formerly Quality Improvement Scotland).

Experience suggests that HIS inspection reports are not seen by local authority, private and third sector providers and SCSWIS reports are not seen by healthcare services.

In the light of this, the current system is not seen as ideal as the inspection regime is not integrated. It is suggested that if inspection of integrated services is required an integrated inspection agency is required.

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