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Speech: ADSW ANNUAL CONFERENCE: CRIEFF HYDRO

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INTRODUCTION

Good morning and thank you for the opportunity to speak today. I am really pleased to be here and to discuss with you the many important changes over the last 12 months and more importantly to talk to you about where we go from here and the contribution that Social Work Services can make to the Government's agenda.

WHERE WE CAME FROM

Before the election we said that it was now a time to move forward. We campaigned on a manifesto of optimism; an agenda that sought to highlight all that is good in Scotland; and why we, as a nation, deserve better. We put our trust in the Scottish people.

In the past year we have worked hard to provide better government, move our country forward and improve the standard of living for people throughout Scotland.

We have continued to pursue a three-fold approach to governing Scotland, based on competence, trust and offering a vision for the country.

The title of this year's conference "Engage, Change and Deliver" is an apt one and reflects the approach that we in Government are taking to improve the outcomes delivered by all of our public services.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

We are working in a fast moving environment, in a period of extensive and fundamental change. Our intentions as Government have been clear from the outset. We intend to transform the public sector landscape and want quality public services that continuously improve, are efficient and respond to local people's needs.

Our overall purpose is to focus government and public services on creating a more successful country, with opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish, through increasing sustainable economic growth.

Underpinning this are the 5 strategic objectives we articulated early in our tenure, where we want:

- ◆ a Scotland that is Wealthier & Fairer – enabling businesses and people to increase their wealth and more people to share fairly in that wealth;

- ◆ A Scotland that is Smarter – expanding opportunities for Scots to succeed from nurture through to lifelong learning, ensuring higher and more widely shared achievements;
- ◆ A Scotland that is Healthier – helping people sustain and improve their health, especially in disadvantaged communities, ensuring better, local and faster access to health care;
- ◆ A Scotland that is Safer & Stronger – helping local communities to flourish, becoming stronger, safer places to live, offering improved opportunities and an better quality of life; and
- ◆ A Scotland that is Greener – improving our natural and built environment and the sustainable use and enjoyment of it.

I think it is self evident that to successfully achieve these objectives, there is a significant role for social work and social care services – whether delivered by the statutory, voluntary or private sectors.

SINGLE OUTCOME AGREEMENTS

A key part of our strategy for delivering improved outcomes for the people of Scotland is the introduction of Single Outcome Agreements. The move to Single Outcome Agreements marks

a significant shift in the Scottish Government's relationships, not only with local authorities, but also with our other key partners from across the statutory and third sector. However, it is a move that is based on the belief that local authorities and their Community Planning Partners are in the best position to judge what is needed to improve outcomes for people living in their communities.

The Single Outcome Agreements between the Scottish Government and each of the 32 councils will set out the contribution a council will make to the 15 national outcomes, based on local priorities in each council area, and expressed as specific local outcomes. It is clear that successful delivery of the national outcomes cannot be achieved by the councils alone and that continued strengthening of partnership working will be necessary. Indeed, it is intended that the pending agreements with the councils will be extended to include Community Planning Partners from 1 April 2009.

I am absolutely clear that several of the national outcomes commit us to improving outcomes for the vulnerable members of our society.

Responding to these needs will require continued effort and commitment from everyone who works with vulnerable groups.

WHAT WE HAVE DONE AND WHERE WE ARE NOW

Whilst Single Outcome Agreements will help embed the outcome-focussed approach in the way we plan and deliver services in the future, much has been achieved in our first year of Government that also contributes to this objective.

We have:

- Launched a process to develop a long term early years strategy covering child care, development and education
- We set out a new Skills strategy, Skills for Scotland, with a vision for the development and utilisation of skills
- We have made a commitment to providing additional funding for a phased 50% increase in free nursery provision.
- Started consulting on how to bring decisions about health services closer to the people of Scotland
- Committed to abolishing prescription charges by 2011 – one year early – ending the tax on the sick and vulnerable
- In Justice we have begun the process of developing a national consensus around a new drugs strategy by publishing 5 significant reports on methadone and other key aspects of drugs policy.

All of these developments will help bring benefits to those who either use or deliver social work services.

CHANGING LIVES

Work has also continued to advance the aspirations of existing policy programmes.

This Government remains committed to the aspirations of Changing Lives. Our work on this area is focussed on delivering 2 key outcomes:

- Developing the capacity to deliver personalised services; and
- Building a confident, competent, valued workforce.

Achieving these will help improve outcomes for individuals and communities.

On personalisation, specific pieces of work are being undertaken such as:

- ◆ Raising awareness of personalisation, what it means, what are the things that need to be considered to achieve it – particularly looking at commissioning.
- ◆ Developing case studies to show people the improvements that can be achieved for people when they are truly engaged in the design and delivery of the supports and services they need.
- ◆ And talking to people about the idea of Citizen Leadership, the contribution it can make to ensuring people have more control and ownership of what happens to them and their families and communities.

Personalised services require a confident, competent and valued workforce to deliver them, and our work in this area includes:

- ◆ A continuous learning framework to help managers and practitioners ensure a well trained and developed workforce.
- ◆ A Practice Governance Framework and guidance on the role of the Chief Social Work Officer to help manage risk ensure safe and professional practice.
- ◆ And a Leadership and Management Framework.

All this is being underpinned with the development of a Research & Development Strategy to make sure we learn from what works – whether here or in other parts of the world.

And finally, overarching all of this is the need to seek continuous performance improvement.

GIRFEC

On Getting it Right for Every Child we are working hard to make sure that policy developments are grounded in the practical realities of delivering children's services. Professional advisers seconded to the Government are using their practice experience to inform the programme. We have taken the deliberate decision to test the Getting it Right approach through the pathfinder model because that involves practitioners from a variety of agencies and disciplines in the re-design and delivery

of children's services. It will allow us consider fully issues like effects on organisations and impact on resources before we roll the approach out nationally.

Early findings in the evaluation of Getting it Right for Every Child indicate that implementing change becomes more problematic the further away you move from the core groups of practitioners who design the change programme. This has strengthened our resolve to improve participation and communication.

So we are setting up a learning community network to support, enable and encourage learning and exchange of experience across all practitioners working with children and young people under the Getting it Right for Every Child banner. We have held a series of roadshows.

WHAT WE PLAN TO DO

This is only the beginning. We now look forward to our second year with optimism and confidence in the competence we show as a Government, determined to face up to challenges with a strong sense of purpose, keeping up the pace of our reforms. We will continue to build consensus and offer our vision for the country.

To achieve all this – particularly in respect of the personalisation of services – we need to do a number of things:

- ◆ Services need to work with people, building a shared approach to decision-making and the supports that will help them and their families to have improved outcomes from any intervention.
- ◆ People need to be encouraged and supported to be able to be more involved in what happens to them. The recent publication on Citizen Leadership from the Users and Carers Forum is an important contribution to that.
- ◆ Getting in early rather than waiting until crisis develops is a hallmark of the aspirations of this Government. Early intervention and prevention can help stop conditions and circumstances from escalating. Helping people to help themselves when they are able to must be of benefit.
- ◆ We need to look at impacts and outcomes for people. Process is important but it is not an end in itself.

- ◆ Our approach must always be focussed on people and communities and how, as this Conference will explore, we engage, change and deliver.

CONCLUSION

I want to finish by thanking you all for the commitment and dedication you are making to improve the lives of people who are often the most vulnerable members of our community. The Scottish Government has a strong vision of the sort of Scotland it wants to create for its people – for all of its people.

I can assure you that we in Government will do all we can to achieve that vision. However, we are only too aware that real, sustainable success can only be delivered by those people who intimately understand the local hopes and needs of the various communities that make up Scotland.

I thank you and your colleagues for your commitment to improving the lives of those individuals and communities.

Thank you

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