



**Report of the Director of Neighbourhoods and Housing Department**

**Executive Board**

**Date: 13<sup>th</sup> December 2006**

**Subject: Updated Supporting People Strategy**

**Electoral Wards Affected:**

  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  

**Specific Implications For:**

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

Eligible for Call In

Not Eligible for Call In  
(Details contained in the report)

**1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Supporting People is the national programme for funding and commissioning supported housing services for vulnerable people. The programme aims to assist vulnerable people to ultimately live independently in the wider community through the provision of high quality, strategically planned, complementary housing support services. The programme also aims to ensure that such services deliver value for money. The Leeds Supporting People team, which sits within the Neighbourhoods and Housing Department, is responsible for the day to day management of the programme. The work of the Supporting People team is overseen by the Supporting People partnership, through a Commissioning Body, which comprises of representatives from the Council, Health and Probation. All recommendations made by the Supporting People team relating to the review, tendering and commissioning of housing support services need to be ratified by the Commissioning Body.

The Supporting People programme in Leeds is operating in very challenging circumstances, most notably because of cuts in the grant allocation that have been made by the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) to the Leeds Supporting People partnership. In 2003/04 the grant allocation was £35.9 million; by 2006/07 this had been cut to £32.9 million.

A decision has been taken to update the existing Supporting People strategy to ensure that it responds effectively to the challenges facing the programme. A copy of the full strategy is available on the Council's intranet. Despite the tight financial environment, the Supporting People partnership has protected the quality of services provided and seeks

to develop new services to meet unmet need. This will be done by ensuring that currently commissioned services are operating effectively and that the partnership has established firm foundations to the programme so that service providers can deliver quality services at an operational level.

## **2.0 Purpose Of This Report**

2.1 This report will seek Executive Board approval for the updated Supporting People Strategy.

## **3.0 Background Information**

- 3.1 Supporting People is the national programme for funding and commissioning supported housing services for vulnerable people. The programme aims to assist vulnerable people to ultimately live independently in the wider community through the provision of high quality, strategically planned, complementary housing support services. The programme also aims to ensure that such services deliver value for money.
- 3.2 The programme covers a wide range of supported housing services: ranging from the provision of a warden service in sheltered housing schemes to the provision of permanently staffed direct access hostel accommodation for homeless households.
- 3.3 Leeds City Council has been designated by the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) to be an administering authority for the Supporting People programme. The Leeds Supporting People Team, which administers the programme on a day to day basis, sits within the Neighbourhoods and Housing Department.
- 3.4 An underlying principle of the Supporting People programme is the partnering relationship between the administering authority and other key stakeholders. The Leeds Supporting People Partnership was established in 2003 to coincide with the implementation of the programme. The partnership comprises representatives from the Local Authority (Neighbourhoods and Housing and Adult Social Care), Health and Probation. The Partnership manages the fund, on behalf of the administering authority, through a Commissioning Body.
- 3.5 All decisions relating to the review, commissioning and funding of services need to be considered and ratified by the Commissioning Body. Decisions made by the Commissioning Body need to be unanimously agreed by the three partner representatives. Each Commissioning Body partner has an equal voting right: the two Council representatives share a vote.
- 3.6 Funding for the Supporting People programme is paid in two parts: programme grant which is used to fund the provision of services and administration grant which is used to fund the provision of the Leeds Supporting People team. The programme grant allocation for 2006/07 awarded to the Leeds Supporting People partnership is £32.9 million. The programme has been subject to significant cuts in grant allocation in recent years: in 2003/04 the Leeds Supporting People partnership

received £35.9 million in programme grant allocation. The reduction of grant has put pressure on the programme. In response the partnership has achieved the requisite savings through the decommissioning of non-strategically relevant services, subjecting services to competitive tender and negotiating revised contract values based on accepted value for money tests such as a cap on the proportion of overhead costs to total expenditure, and ensuring that no services could be commissioned where the unit cost was placed within the upper quartile of regional or national costed services for a particular client group.

- 3.7 The administration grant allocation for 2006/07 is £523,000. The grant contributes to the cost of the Supporting People team. This grant has not been increased over the term of the programme and therefore does not cover pay inflation or other increased costs of administering the programme such as the costs associated with competitive tendering.
- 3.8 The DCLG obliges each Supporting People Partnership to set out how it intends to spend the fund, what client groups will receive support and how improvements will be made to current service delivery. The Supporting People Strategy for each partnership needs to set out how these actions will be taken.
- 3.9 The first Supporting People Strategy was developed in 2005 and was ratified by the Executive Board in June of that year. As a first strategy, the document was widely consulted on. In light of the feedback and the shifting context, Commissioning Body decided in October 2006, to update the first strategy
- 3.10 The Commissioning Body was anxious to ensure that the Supporting People Strategy reflected the current reality in which the programme is operating and that the strategy sets out the plans of the partnership to respond to these challenges.

#### **4.0 The aims of the strategy**

- 4.1 The updated strategy sets out the five core aims of the partnership: to deliver greater choice for vulnerable people in relation to service delivery; to promote greater opportunities for vulnerable people to live independently; to deliver value for money; to build effective partnerships and to use supported housing provision as a means of promoting social inclusion.
- 4.2 The final aim recognises that the Supporting People programme does not exist in isolation but is linked to wider strategic priorities with the 'Vision for Leeds' being the key local strategic driver. The updated strategy demonstrates the contribution made by the supported housing sector to meeting the 'Vision for Leeds' aim of 'narrowing the gap' by providing services that help vulnerable people to maintain independent living or to help others to be reintegrated back into the wider community after a period of residence in supported housing or institution such as a hospital or local authority care.
- 4.3 The updated strategy will contribute to the objectives set out in the Homelessness strategy 2006-2010 such as maximising opportunities to prevent homelessness wherever that is possible and reducing the incidence of repeat homelessness. The

updated strategy will support the aims and objectives of the Older Persons Housing strategy and most notably the aim of promoting opportunities for older people to live independently if that is their choice. The updated strategy is firmly linked to the Leeds Valuing People strategy and its core aims of assisting people with learning disabilities to live in accommodation of their own choice in the wider community. The updated strategy also recognises that there is a correlation between housing need and criminal behaviour/fear of crime and therefore makes the links with the priorities set out in the Safer Leeds strategy 2005-2008.

- 4.4 The cuts in grant allocation have placed additional pressure on the partnership to maintain the existing level of service provision. The reduction in the number of social housing units that are available to let in the city is making it increasingly difficult for supported housing providers to help vulnerable people to move out of supported housing into a settled housing solution. This inevitably has placed a greater strain on the finite number of supported housing units that the partnership can commission.
- 4.5 The updated strategy recognises that there is limited scope for the partnership to commission additional units of supported housing. Therefore it is imperative that the strategy sets out the partnership's plans to maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of current services. For example, if housing support services do not deliver a sustained resolution to the person's housing issues, then it is likely that there will be no resolution and the person is likely to re-approach for assistance. It is essential that commissioning recommendations can be robustly evidenced in terms of strategic relevance. The strategy in recognising unmet need, will ensure that decisions to commission new services is dovetailed with decisions that will free up available funding.
- 4.6 The updated strategy also establishes the links between the supported housing sector and other key strategic priorities. It is recognised that the Supporting People strategy must not solely be a plan for spending the programme grant allocation within the Leeds district but must also set out the partnership's approach to delivering supported housing within the city. Recognising and implementing the strategic links with other related service areas is therefore of crucial importance to delivering holistic supported housing services.
- 4.7 The updated strategy also establishes the link with other policy initiatives such as the Leeds City Council Lettings Policy. The most common route out of supported housing, in terms of securing a settled housing solution, is the offer of a permanent tenancy managed by one of the Leeds ALMOs. It is acknowledged that supply and demand issues will impact on the supported housing sector in terms of capacity to move customers on in a timely way.
- 4.8 It is therefore crucial that the existing supply of commissioned units are used as effectively as possible and that supported housing providers have a clear understanding of the provisions of the lettings policy so that they can better assist their customers to secure settled housing of their own choice. The Leeds Supporting People team will, in conjunction with other service areas such as the Strategic Landlord, be carrying out a series of briefing sessions for supported

housing providers on policy areas such as homeless and allocations law. This priority for action is a recognition that effective supported housing services need to be firmly linked to housing advice and housing management services.

- 4.9 The updated strategy also recognises that any reduction in the availability of social housing requires that other housing options, such as those provided through the private rented sector, will need to be considered. The provision of tenure neutral floating housing support services will assist in making the private rented sector a viable housing option for people with housing support needs.

## **5.0 Priority Themes**

- 5.1 The updated strategy sets out five broad priority themes: reducing the incidence of homelessness, assisting older people to live independently, promoting community safety, giving people with learning disabilities greater choice in their housing options and embedding a performance management framework.

## **6.0 Reducing the incidence of homelessness**

The supported housing sector contributes to tackling homelessness by providing services that respond to emergency housing situations and by helping homeless households to be integrated back into the wider community. The Supporting People partnership has identified that the purpose of specific commissioned services is to prevent homelessness by helping vulnerable people to retain their current homes or secure alternative housing in a planned way. The updated strategy sets out a framework for measuring the effectiveness of such services at preventing homeless.

- 6.2 It has been noted that Leeds has a comparatively high incidence of repeat homelessness and the updated strategy will seek to measure how effective commissioned services are at helping vulnerable people sustain the settled housing options they have secured. The updated strategy supports the development of the Sanctuary Scheme (provision of security measures to create a safer living environment for a person who has encountered violence or hate crime but wish to remain living in their existing home) by commissioning additional units of floating housing support to further complement the provision of the Sanctuary security measures.

## **7.0 Assisting older people to live independently**

- 7.1 The provision of housing support services for older people is of critical importance to meeting wider strategic priorities for this client group in relation to promoting opportunities for independent living and limiting the need for older people to be admitted to hospital or residential care. However, it is recognised that the majority of older people who are in receipt of housing support are resident in ALMO/RSL managed sheltered housing schemes. The Older Peoples Housing Strategy has identified that approximately 67% of older people in the city are home-owners and that this figure is likely to increase to around 80% in the next ten years. The Older Peoples Housing Strategy is clear that whilst these households may be asset-rich many will have limited disposable income and will be anxious to maintain their current homes if at all possible.
- 7.2 The updated Supporting People strategy will respond to this need by commissioning a larger number of tenure neutral floating housing support services that are targeted at vulnerable older people who are home-owners, private tenants or those who are living in generic social housing stock. The Supporting People partnership will work in conjunction with Adult Social Care partners to identify the most vulnerable households as in all likelihood they will already be offering care services to these people. The need to continue to develop complementary housing support, social care and primary health care services is a key priority of the updated strategy.



## **8.0 Promoting Community Safety**

- 8.1 Tackling criminal behaviour and fear of crime is a key priority theme of the updated strategy. The updated strategy recognises that the provision of suitable, settled accommodation is critical to addressing offending behaviour. Feedback from key stakeholders such as West Yorkshire Probation is that offenders often face difficulties in accessing appropriate supported housing and permanent accommodation. A key priority action is therefore to establish the reasons for this and to identify what steps can be taken to balance the need to provide accessible services with wider public protection considerations.
- 8.2 The updated strategy has also recognised that access to drug treatment programmes, to complement the provision of housing support services, is important if offending behaviour is to be effectively addressed.
- 8.3 The Supporting People partnership fully supports the development of the 'Signpost' project as a vehicle for tackling anti-social behaviour that has blighted certain areas of the city. The updated strategy includes the option to consider whether the programme can part fund project activity, if required, in the longer term.
- 8.4 The commissioning of floating housing support services to complement the development of the Sanctuary scheme is a priority action that cuts across the homeless and community safety priority themes.

## **9.0 Giving people with learning disabilities greater choice in their housing options**

- 9.1 The provision of housing support services for people with learning disabilities is a key element of the Supporting People programme. The priorities for action relating to this vulnerable client group have been driven by the Leeds Valuing People strategy and the aims and objectives of the Independent Living Project (ILP). The ILP involves the modernisation of current accommodation based services for people with learning disabilities: out-moded hostel style accommodation will be replaced with a combination of self-contained/smaller shared accommodation units that are dispersed across the city. The updated Supporting People strategy strongly supports this approach as it reflects the aims of the strategy to promote greater choice in the delivery of services, promotes independence, helps a vulnerable client group be integrated into the wider community and ultimately helps promote social inclusion. The challenge for the Supporting People partnership is to commission floating housing support services to complement the new approach to accommodating this vulnerable group.
- 9.2 It is not permissible under grant conditions to fund services which are deemed to not to be offering housing support. The Supporting People partnership has identified that a proportion of spend on learning disability services is funding care rather than housing support. This is permissible within grant conditions only if there is a robust plan in place to bring grant funding in line with regulations. As such, a retraction plan has been agreed with Adult Social Care partners to withdraw this funding over a five year period and to replace the Supporting People grant with care funding. This is an issue for many administering authorities across the country and is a result



of the historic levels of spend at the inception of the Supporting People programme. The updated strategy is clear that the primary concern is the maintenance of services to a vulnerable people and that a swifter withdrawal of funding would in all likelihood result in vulnerable people having to access other services that can not meet their needs, such as homeless services.

## **10.0 Embedding a performance management framework**

- 10.1 The updated strategy recognises that service providers have the expertise to deliver quality services at an operational level. However it is the role of the Supporting People partnership to develop a stable platform to enable providers to deliver such services, for example, by ensuring that the programme grant is effectively managed; that payments to service providers are made in a timely manner; that performance is effectively monitored; and that commissioning decisions are robust and transparent. The strategy sets out a new strategic vision which reflects this approach to 'establish strong foundations to the programme in order to deliver high quality and effective services to vulnerable people'.
- 10.2 The partnership is committed to using accreditation and procurement as a tool for improving the standards of the Supporting People programme. An example of this has been the tendering of the Richmond Court family hostel service which was previously managed by LCC. The tendering of this has not only generated a saving of £1.3m to the Supporting People budget over the contract of period of five years, but the new provider (Carr Gomm Society) also demonstrated a significant commitment and capacity to improve the services offered to homeless families. The service review process, undergone by all providers, has also been a vehicle for service improvement as negotiations have centered on improving quality and sustainment of service.
- 10.3 It is imperative that the Supporting People strategy continues to respond to the challenges facing the programme as they emerge. The Supporting People partnership is also committed to measuring the effectiveness of supported housing services in terms of meeting a wide range of strategic priorities. Developing a performance management framework is therefore of crucial importance. The DCLG have identified a number of Best Value and Social Services Performance Assessment Framework Indicators that are particularly relevant to the Supporting People programme. An example of these indicators is BVPI54 – Older People who are helped to live at home. The Commissioning Body has agreed to introduce a suite of local performance indicators that have been based upon the relevant BV and PAF Indicators. The Supporting People partnership will measure how many older people are helped to live at home through the provision of housing support in the form of residence in a sheltered housing scheme with an attached warden or receipt of floating housing support.
- 10.4 The examination of performance results achieved in the Leeds district against this suite of performance indicators has also helped inform the priorities for action that are set out in the updated strategy. For example, Leeds has a high incidence (in 2004/05 Leeds was ranked 139<sup>th</sup> out of 145 authorities who submitted performance results against this measure) of repeat admissions to psychiatric hospital wards

within a twenty-eight day period of a previous psychiatric discharge. The Supporting People partnership are anxious to identify how commissioned services, where the primary client group is mental health, are contributing to preventing, where appropriate, repeat admissions to psychiatric hospital care. This measure will be built in ongoing contract management arrangements with commissioned services. It is proposed that two key performance indicators relating to the Supporting People programme will be included within the 2007 Comprehensive Performance Assessment. These indicators are therefore being reported on a quarterly basis through the Council's performance management framework.

## **11.0 Conclusions**

- 11.1 The Supporting People programme is currently operating in an extremely challenging context. The updated strategy recognises this context and puts in place appropriate plans to address these challenges. The strategy recognises the importance of maximising the effectiveness of currently commissioned services and of the need to ensure that the partnership is operating effectively to enable service providers to deliver quality services. The updated strategy recognises that the programme sits within a wider strategic context with the 'Vision for Leeds' being the key local strategic driver. The priorities for action have been shaped and driven by other key strategic initiatives relating to homelessness, criminal justice, community safety, older people and adult social care that all contribute towards the wider strategic aim of promoting social inclusion.

## **12.0 Recommendations**

- 12.1 To note the contents of the report and to approve the updated Supporting People strategy.