



Report of the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods

Scrutiny Board (Environment and Neighbourhoods)

Date: 20th April 2009

Subject: Update on the Supporting People Programme

<p>Electoral Wards Affected:</p> <input type="checkbox"/> Ward Members consulted (referred to in report)	<p>Specific Implications For:</p> <p>Equality and Diversity <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Community Cohesion <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Narrowing the Gap <input type="checkbox"/></p>
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides an update on the Leeds Supporting People programme following the last report to Scrutiny Board in November 2008.

Supporting People is the national programme for commissioning housing related support services for vulnerable adults. The Leeds Supporting People programme is managed through a partnership of the Council, NHS Leeds and the West Yorkshire Probation Service, and is administered on a day-to-day basis by the Environment and Neighbourhoods Directorate.

The Council has proactively sought to address the improvement recommendations made by the Audit Commission following the inspection of the programme in January 2007 and to deliver wider improvements to the delivery of the programme. A new contract management process was introduced in April 2007, which includes a quarterly performance review of all services subject to Supporting People contracts. This process has led to significant improvements in the quality, performance and in the value for money of commissioned supported housing services in the city.

The government has always intended that the commissioning of housing related support services become mainstreamed within local authorities and cease being part of a separate programme of services with a ring fenced budget. The government had proposed that the Supporting People grant should be paid to councils through Area Based grant from April 2009. However, it has decided not to implement this from 2009. It has now been confirmed that in 2009/10 Supporting People funding will be allocated to councils as a 'named' but non ring-fenced grant as part of a transition year. This will enable councils to have more flexibility to allocate funding according to local need, but will still be viewed as a grant for housing related support. Supporting People programme grant will be included in Area Based Grant from 2010/11 onwards.

1. Purpose of This Report

- 1.1. To update Scrutiny Board members on progress and service improvements relating to the Supporting People programme, since the last Scrutiny Board report in November 2008.

2. Background Information

- 2.1. Supporting People is the national programme for commissioning housing related support services for vulnerable adults. Services are commissioned through a ring - fenced budget. The programme commissions a range of services, such as sheltered warden services for older people, projects for people with learning disabilities and hostels for homeless people. The purpose of housing related support services is to enable vulnerable people to achieve and/or maintain an independent living outcome.
- 2.2. The Leeds Supporting People programme is currently managed through a Commissioning Body, comprising of representatives from the Council, NHS Leeds and the West Yorkshire Probation Service. The programme is administered on a day-to-day basis by the Housing Strategy and Solutions section, which sits within the Environment and Neighbourhoods Directorate.
- 2.3. The Leeds Supporting People programme was subject to an Audit Commission inspection in January 2007, which concluded that the Council was delivering a fair (one-star) service with promising prospects for improvement. The Council, with partners, have strived to address the improvement recommendations identified by the Audit Commission and to deliver further improvements in service delivery.
- 2.4. The key recommendation made by the Audit Commission related to the need to re-assess eligibility, where this had been previously estimated, and put in place revised arrangements to retract funding where services were found to be ineligible. This review was completed in 2007 and the two year retraction plan was agreed and put in place. The second and final year of the retraction arrangements has now been implemented.

3.0 Service Improvements, efficiencies and new investment

- 3.1 The Leeds Supporting People programme has succeeded in delivering significant improvements in service quality and performance at the same time as generating efficiency savings. These improvements are directly attributed to partnership work with service providers through the contract management process introduced in April 2007.
- 3.2. All commissioned services are assessed against the Quality Assessment Framework, which gives an A-D (excellent, good, fair and poor) rating against six key criteria. Needs and Risk Assessment, Support Planning, Health and Safety, Protection from Abuse, Fair Access, Diversity and Inclusion and Complaints. There has been a 60% improvement in service ratings in the last eighteen months. No service is now scored at a Level D. The government has recently refreshed the Quality Assessment Framework (QAF), raising quality levels and reducing the quality ratings to A-C. There will no longer be a poor rating. The revised QAF will be implemented for Leeds commissioned housing related support services in July 2009. The services in Leeds are well placed to meet the new quality benchmarks.

3.3 The Leeds Local Area Agreement includes NI 141: number of people helped to achieve independent living through housing-related support. A stretch target of 17% has been agreed with the government office over a 3 year period based on a baseline position of 59% in 2007/08. The target for 2008/09 was 66% and the target for 2009/10 is 71%, and 76% in 2010/11. Actual performance has steadily improved with performance exceeding the target each quarter. Performance against NI 141 averaged 74.5% for the first three quarters of 2008/09. Again, the improvement in performance can be attributed to the intensive contract management approach adopted by the Housing Strategy and Solutions section.

3.4 Despite a £3 million reduction in the level of Supporting People programme grant to Leeds since the start of the programme in 2003, the generation of efficiencies in excess of £7.5 million has enabled Commissioning Body to make four annual inflationary uplifts, balance the budget and undertake new commissioning.

3.5 The Supporting People Partnership has been able to commission a range of additional services in the last year to meet strategic priorities and areas of unmet need. Long term commissions include:

- Offender management services to assist priority and prolific offenders to secure more settled living arrangements to address offending behaviour
- Telecare Mobile Response service promoting capacity for older people to live independently through provision of a response service for service users without 'named' contacts
- Family Intervention Project to assist problematic families to achieve and maintain settled living arrangements
- POPPs – to assist vulnerable older people with mental health problems to achieve and maintain independent living arrangements
- Neighbourhood Network Services contribution to the funding of services designed to assist older people to live independently

Short term commissions in 2009/10 include:

- Housing support service for young people in contact with the Youth Offending Service will ensure that those released from offender institutions have clear pathways into settled accommodation to address their offending behaviour.
- Housing support service for young people leaving care will ensure young people have clear routes into settled supported housing when making the transition from care into independent living

3.6 The Housing Strategy and Solutions section has worked closely with other council departments to jointly contract manage and review services which are jointly funded or which share strategic objectives. This joint work with Adult Social Care has resulted in significant efficiency savings to Adult Social Care budgets.

4.0 The future of Supporting People

4.1 Since the start of the Supporting People programme the government has been clear about its intention to mainstream the commissioning of housing related support services within local authorities.

4.2 The government had proposed that Supporting People programme grant funding would be paid to councils through the Area Based Grant from 2009/10.

However, the government decided not to implement this proposal following representations about the effect of the removal of the ring-fence and the potential diminution of housing support services for vulnerable people and funds being diverted to underpin statutory services.

- 4.3 Instead the government has confirmed that during 2009/10 Supporting People funds will be paid to the council as a 'named' grant under section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003. This will allow local authorities more flexibility to allocate funding according to local need, but will still be viewed as housing related support. Supporting People will be paid through Area Based Grant from April 2010 onwards, following this transitional year.
- 4.4 It remains mandatory for authorities to continue to report performance against NI 141 and NI 142, and to report on the number of services and providers funded to deliver housing related support and levels of expenditure on these services to Communities and Local Government. The requirement is for this information to continue to be submitted on a quarterly basis through the submission of a data extract.
- 4.5 The Audit Commission inspection of local Supporting People programmes will cease from April 2009. The commissioning and delivery of housing related support services will in the future be inspected as part of the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) of local authorities. The CAA will include a review of performance against the National Indicator set which includes the two Supporting People Indicators NI 141 and NI 142: number of people achieving and sustaining independent living. However the CAA will be wider than NI 141 and 142, the Audit Commission and other inspectors will be given access to local housing related support outcome data to see how well commissioned services are meeting agreed outcomes for vulnerable people in receipt of commissioned housing related support services.
- 4.6 In addition, the regional government office will be monitoring the impact of the changes with a clear focus on the impact on the four client groups covered by PSA 16: the proportion of socially excluded adults in settled accommodation, employment, education and training. The four client groups are young people leaving care, people with mental health problems, offenders and people with a learning disability.
- 4.7 One of the measures being introduced to aid the transition is the development of a financial modelling tool, which will provide evidence at a local level on the financial benefits of investment in housing support. This is intended to quantify the financial benefits in terms of crisis prevention and reduced need for more intensive and costly interventions, leading to better outcomes for vulnerable citizens as well as savings to other health, social care and criminal justice budgets. This will be available in the summer and is designed to enable commissioners of housing support to make the local case for housing support services.
- 4.8 To complement this, the Leeds Commissioning Body has agreed to commission a piece of research into the wider benefits and outcomes that are generated through housing support services. This will identify the wider links with the health and wellbeing and community safety agendas.

5.0 Implications for Council Policy and Governance

- 5.1 The Supporting People Commissioning Body has agreed that decisions relating to service commissioning will be made within the context of the Leeds Strategic Plan and the Leeds Local Area Agreement. All new and re-commissioned services will contribute directly to the delivery of these strategic outcomes.
- 5.2 The allocation of funding to address local priorities and needs now rests with local authorities. However there are clear expectations by government and the Audit Commission that housing related support services will continue to be delivered to vulnerable groups of people to enable them to achieve independent living outcomes. Local councils are still required to report on these outcomes along with details of services and expenditure to government.
- 5.3 Local authorities are expected to have local housing related support policies in place to take forward their commissioned services. A local housing related support strategy will be developed for Leeds under the umbrella of the updated Housing Strategy. This will be informed by the research and financial modelling work referred to earlier in this report, along with local performance and outcome information.

6.0 Legal and Resource Implications

- 6.1 The Leeds Supporting People programme received a grant settlement of £32.9 million for 2008/09, and will receive the same level of funding through the 'named' grant in 2009/10. However, the level of funding allocated to Leeds for housing related support services will reduce by £1 million in 2010/11. This saving will need to be found from existing services. Given the level of efficiencies achieved to date it is unlikely that this level of funding can be achieved through the further application of value for money measures without compromising service quality.

7.0 Conclusion

- 7.1 The council continues to make significant progress in improving the quality and performance of services commissioned to deliver housing related support services to vulnerable people through the commissioning and contract management arrangements and continues to realise efficiencies where there is still scope to do so.
- 7.2 The Leeds Supporting People has been successful at delivering efficiency savings in excess of £7.5 million, improved service quality by 60% and improved performance by over 19% in the last eighteen months. These achievements can be attributed to the contract management and review arrangements that have been adopted by the Housing Strategy and Solutions section since the Audit Commission inspection.

8.0 Recommendation

- 8.1 Members are asked to note the contents of the report.

Background papers

None