



Report of the Director of Neighborhoods and Housing Department

Neighbourhoods and Housing Scrutiny Committee

Date: 7 March 2007

Subject: The Leeds Supporting People Programme

Electoral Wards Affected:

Specific Implications For:

Ethnic minorities

Women

Disabled people

Narrowing the Gap

1. Purpose Of This Report

1.1. The purpose of this report is to brief members on the Supporting People programme in Leeds.

2. Background

2.1. 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.

2.2. 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.

2.3. 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.

2.4. 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.

- 2.5. 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.
- 2.6. 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.
- 2.7. 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.
- 2.8. 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.
- 2.9. The Supporting People strategy was updated last year to ensure it better reflected the challenges facing the programme. The strategy was approved by Executive Board in December 2006. One of the key challenges facing the programme has been the need to deliver requisite budgetary savings.

3. Budget

- 3.1. The Supporting People programme grant is a cash limited budget. In 2006/07 the Leeds Supporting People partnership received a programme grant allocation of £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 obliged the partnership to identify opportunities to make efficiency savings in grant spend.
- 3.2. The partnership has been able to deliver the requisite efficiency savings through a number of sources: 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.
- 3.3. By the end of 2006 the partnership had generated efficiency savings of £6.5 million from the spend position in 2003/04.

3.4. The focus on achieving budget efficiency savings has meant that the partnership is currently forecasting that there will be a cash surplus of approximately £415,000. It is also forecast that there will be a contractual surplus of approximately £1.7 million in 2007/08.

3.5. The improved financial position of the programme has enabled the partnership to agree to pay an inflationary uplift of 2.4% to all service providers in 2007/08.

4. New Commissioning Priorities

4.1. The updated Supporting People strategy sets out the priorities for the commissioning of new services to address identified gaps in service provision. The updated Supporting People strategy identifies the following as the priorities for new service commissioning: additional floating housing support for older people, housing support services for people involved in offending who have related drug dependency issues and additional housing support that is designed to prevent homelessness.

4.2. The updated Supporting People strategy has noted the key principles relating to improving housing services for older people to promote choice in accommodation options, to promote independence and to assist older people wherever possible to maintain their existing homes.

4.3. Currently in Leeds 95% of support is tied to residence in a sheltered housing scheme. The remaining 5% of provision which is floating housing support is only accessible if the person is a social housing tenant.

4.4. The Older Peoples Housing Strategy has identified that 67% of older people in the city are homeowners and this is likely to rise to 80% in the next ten years. Vulnerable home owners can only access housing support through the Supporting People programme if they leave their existing home and move to sheltered or other social housing.

4.5. This conflicts with the principles of promoting choice, independence and assisting people wherever possible to maintain their existing homes. The partnership has noted that over 2000 pensionable age home owners have current housing applications on the Leeds Homes Register. It is reasonable to assume that a proportion of these people would prefer to stay in their existing homes if they were able to access housing support at that address.

4.6. The priority for action is therefore to commission additional units of floating housing support which are targeted at vulnerable older home owners. A pilot service which will be managed by Leeds South Homes has been developed and agreed at the Commissioning Body in January 2007.

4.7. Joint work between the Supporting People partnership and the Safer Leeds partnership has identified that a priority for new commissioning is the additional provision of housing support services of offenders who have contact with the Leeds Drug Intervention Programme (DIP). It is estimated that these offenders are responsible for 25% of burglary and vehicle offences in Leeds. Research by NACRO has also identified that offenders who are in stable accommodation are between 20 and 50% less likely to commit further offences.

4.8. A particular priority group is women who are involved in prostitution and are routed through the DIP. It has been identified that there are between 15 and 20 women who

have acute housing needs that make it problematic for them to access suitable temporary and/or permanent accommodation. The Supporting People partnership and Safer Leeds are in the process of developing a proposal for a floating support service which will be considered by the Supporting People Commissioning Body, and if agreed, will be subject to a competitive tender process.

4.9. The partnership is only able to commission a finite number of units and therefore it is essential that service users move on and secure settled housing solutions. However, it is also imperative that services can prevent a person becoming homeless and needing to access services wherever possible. The Supporting People partnership currently commissions one service which has a core aim of preventing homelessness. The wider strategic context seeks to prevent homelessness wherever possible and the partnership will support this aim by increasing the provision of services that are designed to prevent homelessness.

5. Audit Commission Inspection

- 5.1. The Leeds Supporting People partnership was subject to an Audit Commission inspection in January 2007. The inspection focused on the management and governance of the programme rather than the effectiveness of service provision.
- 5.2. It is anticipated that there will be an opportunity to give feedback at a round table meeting in mid-March. No firm date has been given for the publication of the final report but it is likely to be in mid to late May.
- 5.3. Following receipt of the final report, the Supporting People partnership will develop an action plan to address any recommendations made by the Audit Commission.

6. Conclusions

- 6.1 The Supporting People partnership has had to respond to significant challenges over the last three years: notably relating to the need to deliver significant efficiency savings. However, the partnership now has a favourable budget position and is now able to pay service providers an inflationary uplift in 2007/08 and to begin to address identified gaps in service provision through new commissioning.

7.0 Recommendations

- 7.1 To note the contents of the report.