

REPORT TO: EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HOUSING, 19TH JULY 2007

REPORT BY: ALAN CUFLEY, HEAD OF COMMUNITY HOUSING

WRITTEN BY: DOMINIC DEW, SUPPORTING PEOPLE MANAGER

SUBJECT: SUPPORTING PEOPLE PROGRAMME UPDATE

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To provide the Executive Member for Housing with an update on progress made on ongoing issues within the Supporting People programme in Portsmouth.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the Executive Member for Housing notes progress made in implementing a range of improvements to the Supporting People programme.
- 2.2 That the Executive Member for Housing notes the ongoing issues currently being resolved.

3. BACKGROUND

Overview of Supporting People

The Supporting People (SP) programme was introduced by the Government as a single pot of funding to finance housing-related support services for vulnerable groups of people and to promote independent living. Until the late 1990s, such support was funded through the Housing Benefit system, and as such, was effectively 'hidden' in rental costs. This position was overturned in a court case, leading the Government to develop alternative arrangements for the financing of supported housing. A Transitional Housing Benefit (THB) scheme was put in place, until this was replaced with Supporting People funding from April 2003.

The strategic oversight of the SP programme rests with the Commissioning Body (CB), which comprises senior officers from Housing, Social Care, Probation, and Portsmouth City Primary Care Trust (PCT) together with representation from the Providers Forum and Service Users network.

The current SP budget for Portsmouth in 2007/08 is £8.92 million (there was no increase in funding from year 06/07 despite inflationary pressures), which funds 147 services, provided by 29 agencies to over 4,000 people in the city.

4. CURRENT STATUS REPORT

4.1 Supporting People Team

The current SP Team consists of a Supporting People Manager, a Contracts Officer, a Finance & Administration Officer and 2 x Programme Development Officers (one post of which is currently vacant and the other is a job share which is only half filled on a permanent basis, these will be advertised shortly).

An administration grant of £180k is provided by Communities and Local Government (CLG) as a contribution towards the Local Authority's costs of administering the programme.

4.2 Budget update

As predicted, and reported previously to the Executive Member for Housing, Health, and Social Care in October 2006, the SP budget did overspend in the last financial year 2006/07. However, the anticipated overspend of £359K was reduced to £314K by year-end.

Due to the sensitive nature of SP services, the effects of funding reductions and the absorption of last years overspend and inflationary increases, a significant budget pressure remains for the current year.

As a consequence a plan to reduce obtain further savings and improve investment in much needed services has been agreed and will take the form of Strategic Reviews – see paragraph 4.3 below.

In addition, the CLG have recently announced an extra £100k funding for the Supporting People programme in Portsmouth. This must, however, only be spent on Family Intervention Projects.

4.3 Strategic Reviews

The SP Commissioning Body have agreed, in line with the city's SP Strategy published in 2005, to carry out a Strategic Review of all SP funded services in Portsmouth.

The Strategic Review is designed to examine the appropriateness of the currently funded provision based on the strategic priorities of the SP partners and an assessment of need for services, with a view to making future commissioning decisions based on this analysis.

All SP-funded services will be reviewed in three 'super-groups' (equating to the three "circles" proposed by the then ODPM in the draft national SP strategy published in 2006), as follows:

- Socially excluded
- People with disabilities
- Older People

The socially excluded grouping review commenced in April 2007 and covers services for the client groups; Single homeless with support needs, Homeless families with support needs, Offenders, People with substance misuse problems, Young people at risk or leaving care, Teenage parents, Women at risk of domestic violence, Refugees, Travellers, People with mental health problems (not eligible for adult mental health services), People with mild learning disabilities (not eligible for adult learning disability services) and Generic Services

4.4 New Outcomes Framework

In order for Government to monitor Supporting People outcomes, The CLG have recently introduced a new set of 5 'high level' outcomes to be completed by Providers. These are:

- Achieve economic well-being
- Enjoy and achieve
- Be healthy
- Stay safe
- Make a positive contribution

The outcomes were initially rolled out for short-term services in May 2007 and it is expected that they will be introduced for long term services in the summer.

5 NATIONAL SUPPORTING PEOPLE STRATEGY

5.1 Summary

On 20th June 2007, Communities and Local Government (CLG) published 'Independence and Opportunity', the Strategy for Supporting People. The key areas are;

- Keeping service users at the heart of the programme and of the local delivery of the service;
- Building on the already successful partnerships with the Third Sector;
- Delivering effectively in the new local government landscape; and
- Working towards better efficiency and less bureaucracy.

5.2 Future Funding

The strategy fails to give any specific answers to the current questions about future budgets by stating that funding levels and the distribution of funding will be addressed after the current Comprehensive Spending Review Process.

5.3 Individual Budgets

The Government feels that it is still too early to have definitive evidence on the practical issues coming out of the pilots but says that emerging themes are that there are real benefits.

The paper acknowledges that choice can sometimes be stressful and therefore more work needs to be done on helping people make the right choice, supported by, for example, independent brokers.

The strategy does not go so far as to commit Local Authorities to using Individual Budgets but says that they should learn from the mechanisms currently used to offer a similar approach.

5.4 Performance Framework and Local Area Agreements

The strategy does, however, lay out the intention of the Government to deliver the Supporting People programme through the performance framework set out in the Local Government White Paper with their support for authorities and their delivery partners in moving towards delivering Supporting People funds through the area based grant by April 2009.

Therefore, whilst not committing to figures, the strategy does confirm the likelihood to pool the SP funding into the Local Area Agreement.

5.5 Other items

Other interesting items are a “Charter for Independent Living”, the commitment to a National Value Improvement Project and the development of a Common Assessment Framework for Adult Services - this would allow a person’s health, social care and housing support needs to be assessed at the same time.

6.0 ACCESS TO INFORMATION

*Background List of documents
Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972*

The following documents disclose facts and matters which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report

Report to Leader of the City Council – August 2006
Portsmouth City's Five-year Supporting People Strategy (2005-2010)
Independence and Opportunity – Our Strategy for Supporting People,
Department of Communities and Local Government (June 2007)

7.0 SIGNING OFF THE REPORT

Signed.....
Alan Cufley Head of Community Housing

Dated.....

8.0 APPROVAL TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations set out above were approved / approved as amended / deferred / rejected by the Executive Member for Housing, on.....

Signed.....
**Councillor Hugh Mason
Executive Member for Housing**