

REPORT TO: CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING – 18th July 2008
REPORT BY: ALAN CUFLEY, HEAD OF COMMUNITY HOUSING
REPORT WRITTEN BY: DOMINIC DEW, SUPPORTING PEOPLE MANAGER
SUBJECT: SUPPORTING PEOPLE PROGRAMME UPDATE

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To provide the Cabinet 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 Cabinet Member for Housing notes progress made in implementing a range of improvements to the Supporting People programme.

2.2 That the Cabinet Member for Housing notes the ongoing issues currently being resolved.

3. BACKGROUND

Overview of Supporting People

3.1 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.

3.2 The strategic oversight of the SP programme rests with the Commissioning Body (CB), chaired by Margaret Geary, Strategic Director and comprises senior officers from Housing, Social Care, Probation, and Portsmouth City Primary Care Trust (PCT).

3.3 The SP budget for Portsmouth in 2008/09 is £8.498 million, a reduction from 07/08 of £422k, excluding inflationary pressures. This currently funds 87 services, provided by 28 agencies to around 3,700 people in the city.

3.4 Portsmouth City Council is the administering authority for the SP grant and the Head of Community Housing is the Accountable Officer.

4. CURRENT STATUS REPORT

4.1 Supporting People Team

The current SP Team consists of Supporting People Manager, Contracts Officer, 2 x P/T Programme Development Officers, and a Finance & Administration Officer.

An administration grant of £171k is provided by the department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) as a contribution towards the Local Authority's costs of administering the programme, but this will reduce to £156k in 2009/10 and £135k in 2010/11.

These reductions mean it is inevitable that, with the existing staff resources and the considerable workload involved in the administration of Programme, there will be an ongoing budget pressure in future years.

4.2 Strategic Reviews

As reported previously to the Executive Member for Housing, Health, and Social Care in July 2007, the Commissioning Body agreed in 2007 to ask the SP Team to undertake Strategic Reviews of all SP funded services in Portsmouth. The purpose of the reviews was to examine the appropriateness of the currently funded provision based on the strategic priorities of the SP programme and a robust assessment of service user need, in order to make future commissioning decisions based on that analysis.

All SP-funded services will be reviewed in three 'super-groups' (equating to the three "circles" proposed by the CLG) as follows:

- Socially excluded
- Support with [statutory] Care
- Sheltered

The socially excluded review was completed in February 2008, and covered services for homelessness, ex-offenders, people with substance misuse problems, young people (16-25), teenage parents, domestic violence, refugees, travellers and people with mild mental health problems or learning disabilities (not eligible for statutory services).

As a result of the completed review, reducing grant funding and the Commissioning Body's consideration, 33 services remained mostly unchanged due to being identified as strategically relevant with 5 more (mostly hostel provision) to be remodelled. A further 16 services were decommissioned due to low prioritisation, low demand or rationalisation of services, and a very small number of services will be re-tendered. However, 4 possible new services were recognised as being needed in order to fill gaps in current service provision.

The next reviews for Support with [statutory] Care and Sheltered services are due to start in the next few months. It is planned to undertake the Support with Care review in close collaboration with a Social Care Commissioning review.

There will be a net reduction in capacity by end of this financial year 2008/09 of approximately 250 units (including floating support).

4.3 Budget update

As a result of the Strategic review of services that was successfully completed in February, there were £977,000 in reductions resulting from decommissioning and re-tendering on this cluster, with an estimated £240k being re-invested in new services.

The impact of these changes will be balanced across the budgets for the next two financial years. However, due to already confirmed reductions in the CLG grant funding for 2009/10 and 2010/11 (£425k and £403k respectively), further actions will inevitably be required to renegotiate, remodel or if necessary reduce service provision in the city to balance the SP budget in future years.

4.4 Local Area Agreements and the Local Strategic Partnership

The Government intention is to deliver the Supporting People Programme through the performance framework set out in the Local Government White Paper 'Strong and Prosperous Communities'. Furthermore, it plans to pay the Programme Grant through the Area Based Grant (ABG) from April 2009.

Whilst this course of action will not be confirmed until the end of the calendar year due to ongoing pilots in other authorities, the inclusion of the SP grant would appear to be the most likely outcome.

If included, the SP grant is expected to form a significant proportion of the total ABG grant and therefore the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), as they decide the future funding priorities for the city based on the Local Area Agreement and National Indicator (NI) priority targets, will need considerable support to understand the SP Programme and its outcomes for the vulnerable residents in Portsmouth.

It is proposed that there will be a presentation on Supporting People to the LSP at their next meeting on the 23rd July.

Within the Local Area Agreement, it has been confirmed that National Indicator (NI) 141, (% of vulnerable people achieving independent living) will be included as one of the 35 priority targets for Portsmouth. In addition, NI 142 will be a local indicator– helping to secure SP as a priority for Portsmouth and help ensure continuity of support for residents in the future. A stretch target, for NI 141, of 60% by 2010/11, from the current 55.5%, has been agreed in principle with GoSE.

4.6 Individual Budgets

The Government has still not announced results of the pilots that have been taking place across the country over the past 18 months, but have been quoted as being 'cautiously optimistic' regarding the results.

Whilst no announcement has been made that these will proceed within SP, work is currently underway to prepare for any implementation and consider the numerous varied models of individual budgets that could be put in place.

The Supporting People team are working with Social Care on Individual Budgets to see if these could be linked up with the current direct payments process.

This may also help contribute to Social Care's National Indicator target (NI 130) of increasing the number of people receiving direct payments.

4.7 New Quality Assessment Framework (QAF) Pilot

Portsmouth has been chosen by the CLG to pilot a new quality assessment process intended to streamline and improve on the existing methodology. This will provide the Portsmouth SP Team and its provider partners with an excellent opportunity to help shape a process that will more accurately reflect true quality of services, without being overly bureaucratic and cumbersome. More details will be announced by the CLG in July.

5.0 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)

6.0 CITY SOLICITOR’S COMMENTS

The City Solicitors considers that the recommendations are within the powers of the Cabinet Member to approve.

As the purpose of this report is to provide an update on the service an Equalities Impact Assessment is not required.

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 Cabinet Member for Housing on.....

Signed.....
**Councillor Steve Wylie
Cabinet Member - Housing**