

DUDLEY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

THE CABINET – 16 MARCH 2005

JOINT REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE, THE DIRECTOR OF HOUSING AND THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES

THE SUPPORTING PEOPLE PROGRAMME AND FIVE YEAR STRATEGY

1.0 **PURPOSE**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is twofold. Firstly to update Members on the current progress of the Supporting People Programme in Dudley and secondly to outline the key issues identified within the Supporting People Programme's Five Year Strategy.

2.0 **BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 Members will be aware of the Supporting People Programme, both from previous reports to a range of Committees and attendance at a series of Inclusive Forum meetings that have been held since the formal introduction of the Supporting People Programme in April 2003.
- 2.2 The current document that sets the strategic framework for the Supporting People Programme is the local 'Supporting People Shadow Strategy', which has been in place since December 2002 and is available in the Members' library and on the Dudley MBC Internet site, which can be accessed by following the links to www.spkweb.org.uk.
- 2.3 The last report to the Executive in February 2004 highlighted the background to the Supporting People Programme.
- 2.4 Briefly, the Supporting People Programme is nationally administered through the Homelessness Directorate of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) and located in Dudley within the Housing Directorate with its local Champion being the Cabinet Member for Housing.
- 2.5 The basis for all Supporting People Programmes nationally, is that they are partnerships between Councils, Primary Care Trusts and the Probation Service. All those interests are well represented in Dudley on the Strategic Commissioning Body, which is chaired by the Director of Finance.
- 2.6 A range of voluntary agencies; housing associations; statutory agencies and other housing support providers are represented through a range of nationally prescribed groupings, including the Core Steering Group; Providers Forum and the Inclusive Forum framework.

- 2.7 The underlying principle of the Supporting People Programme is to ensure that housing related support to vulnerable groups of people is planned and commissioned at a local level. The view being that services planned locally will ensure services better reflect local needs and complement existing strategies and services.
- 2.8 A critical arm of the Supporting People Programme is to enable people to maintain their independence in the community and this prevents or delays homelessness, re-offending and institutional care. The ODPM are extremely anxious that community based support is maximized and that the Supporting People Programme is at the heart of the preventative agenda in relation to homelessness; reducing the chaotic lifestyles of substance misusers and patterns of persistent offenders' behaviour.
- 2.9 Since the last report, the Supporting People Programme in Dudley has continued to ensure that providers of services have been paid promptly and accurately with no challenges to either timeliness or payments.
- 2.10 In the spring of last year, the Audit Commission Inspectorate carried out a Supporting People inspection, which was flagged up to the Executive at the time and culminated in the service being reviewed as fair with promising prospects for improvement.
- 2.11 Similarly to 2003/2004, the financial forecast for 2004/2005 is that the budget of £6.5m will be spent to target. The budget for next year will be in the region of £6.2m.
- 2.12 In last year's report, concern was expressed about slippage in the three-year service review programme caused by staff shortage but by the autumn of 2004 it was back on schedule.
- 2.13 However, Authorities which were eighteen months into their three year Review Programme without one service review started, have been assisted with supplementary administration grant to accelerate their programmes of service reviews.
- 2.14 A well-attended Inclusive Forum was held in July of 2004 along with a series of provider workshops to assist providers with the complexity of the administrative framework emanating from the ODPM.
- 2.15 A major achievement since the last report has been attracting resources for a collaborative project across the four Black Country Boroughs to jointly commission and develop a scheme for supporting vulnerable groups whose mobility and challenging behaviour impact disproportionately on communities across the sub-region.
- 2.16 Whilst it has not yet been translated into Government policy, the outcome of the major national independent review of Supporting People Programmes flagged up in last year's report, has nationally highlighted:

- a) the extremely wide variation of unit costs across and between different client groups from one authority to another;
- b) concerns over the eligibility of activities being funded through the Supporting People Programme;
- c) proposals on options to redistribute Supporting People resources in the future based on a more equitable needs based formula.

2.17 In Dudley, as a result of considered thought through the Core Steering Group and the Commissioning Body, unit costs on a wide range of client groups lie very much within the average compared to regional and national figures. This suggests that the degree of ineligible activities is low locally, as evidenced in the service review process so far. Finally, the favoured formula for redistribution would see a 90% increase in Supporting People Programme resources for the Borough compared to reductions for other West Midland authorities.

FIVE YEAR STRATEGY

2.18 The final new dimension since last year has been the development of a draft Regional Supporting People Strategy for the West Midlands, which obviously sets the context for local Supporting People Five Year Strategies and to which the Borough has been an active contributor.

2.19 As reported last year, the expectation from the ODPM is that Supporting People Five Year Strategies will build on the directions identified in Shadow Supporting People Strategies which had to be submitted to the ODPM in 2002.

2.20 The clear view of the Commissioning Body reinforced through a series of wider strategy development sessions concluding in December 2004 was that the credibility of the Supporting People Programme locally must be based on ensuring a high degree of continuity and stability in the supported housing sector.

2.21 This means that any re-alignment of Supporting People Programme funds will not only be based on clear and explicit links to the Commissioning Body's priorities and sound analysis of the consequences of resource re-allocation but be introduced over a lengthy transition period to ensure stability.

2.22 The expectation of the Commissioning Body is that a major part of the strategic direction in the Shadow Strategy would flow through into the longer term Five Year Strategy from now until 2010

2.23 The Shadow Supporting People Strategy itself was rated good overall by the ODPM and in fact scored within the top one third of Local Authorities nationally.

- 2.24 In line with the arrangements for the Shadow Strategy, the ODPM were particularly prescriptive about the format for the development of the content and layout of the document. This has led to the production of a document running to around 150 pages with appendices marginally longer than the Shadow Strategy. The final draft can be accessed on the Supporting People website (supporting.people@dudley.gov.uk), the [spkweb](http://spkweb.org.uk) (spkweb.org.uk) or on CD ROM available from the members library.
- 2.25 Unlike the unchanged date for the Shadow Strategy to the ODPM, the submission date for the Five Year Strategy has changed on numerous occasions from the spring of 2004 to autumn 2004 but has now finally been fixed for the end of March 2005.
- 2.26 The starting point in the Five Year Strategy is the setting out of the vision in a regional and local context, followed by achievements to date, demonstrating that changes in the Supporting People Programme provision in the Borough since 2002 could be linked back to the Shadow Strategy's commissioning priorities. (Please refer to the Executive Summary at the end of this section).
- 2.27 The Five Year Strategy and Supporting documentation also identifies, in line with ODPM guidance, how the Strategy was developed and the wide range of consultation and presentation events there were with partnership and user groups.
- 2.28 There is a very detailed analysis of the supply of Supporting People provision locally, broken down by contract type primary client group, unit numbers and expenditure profile.
- 2.29 The document charts the Service Review process locally and the changes in the Programme that have arisen from the reviews carried out so far.
- 2.30 This is followed by an extensive and objective analysis of the Supporting People needs in the borough, identifying a range of gaps in the current provision, which then flow through into the long-term vision for Supporting People up to 2010.
- 2.31 Complementing the chapter on the needs analysis is one identifying the strategic priorities for the Supporting People Programme in the light of the national Programme's stated aim, the national and regional context and Dudley's local strategic priorities.
- 2.32 The document also outlines the key elements of the Five Year Vision, many of which, for reasons outlined earlier, follow on from the Shadow Strategy. The executive summary and sections detailing the strategic direction of the programme are as follows:

EXCERPT FROM THE SUPPORTING PEOPLE FIVE YEAR STRATEGY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.33 *This is the second Supporting People strategy for the programme in Dudley. It builds on the Shadow Strategy which was developed by the partner stakeholders and produced in October 2002.*
- 2.34 *The Shadow strategy acts as the baseline for measuring achievements since its production and sets the context for the future vision and development of the programme over the next five years.*
- 2.35 *Supporting People services provide housing related support to a range of vulnerable people enabling them to live independently and acts as a preventative measure to help them avoid, for example, homelessness, entry into institutional care or clinical services and reduces the risk of re-offending.*
- 2.36 *The Programme is managed by the Dudley MBC as the Administering Authority on behalf of the Commissioning Body partners from Housing, Social Services, Health and Probation.*
- 2.37 *The strategy sets out how we propose to redesign the delivery of services over the next five years so that funds are targeted at those clients in greatest need and commissioning and broader strategic priorities are achieved.*
- 2.38 *The development of the Strategy has been a major piece of work over the last year. An extensive needs analysis exercise was undertaken as was consultation that encompassed a wide-ranging, diverse group of stakeholders.*
- 2.39 *The Vision Statement in the Shadow Strategy has been revisited to ensure it continues to underpin the ethos of the programme in Dudley and reflects the corporate vision.*

“Independence through Inclusion, Equality and Support”

- 2.40 *Dudley’s local vision for Supporting People links to the Regional Housing Strategy and the developing framework of the Regional Supporting People Strategy.*
- 2.41 *Throughout this executive summary two of the key components of the regional vision will act as reference points for the developing direction of the Five Year Strategy namely, pathways of housing choice for householders and communities and sustainable housing and communities.*

- 2.42 *It has been recognized from the outset of the Supporting People (SP) Programme in Dudley that achievement of the local vision is only possible as part of a wider collaborative framework at regional, and regional market levels and to this end, Dudley has been actively involved in a range of wider collaborative ventures, including the sub regional Supporting People Liaison Group from its inception, or more latterly the Black Country Cross Authority Project (BCCAP) via the successful Value Improvements Projects bid.*
- 2.43 *The theme of sustainable housing and communities has been central to the original vision for Supporting People in Dudley from its inception but it now more sharply recognises that sustainable, diverse and peaceful communities do not easily coincide with artificial boundaries that often, in a densely populated urban environment, cut across sub regional market areas.*
- 2.44 *In particular, over the last eighteen months, cross authority objectives have been broadened to ensure that, where appropriate and achievable, existing wider links have been more closely forged to complement and enhance existing service areas, across the regional and regional market spectrum.*
- 2.45 *For those groups best served at a regional or regional market area level, and for providers of specialist supported housing solutions, this will markedly improve pathways of housing choice and is consistent with the regional housing vision.*

The Vision in a Local Context

- 2.46 *Central to the vision is the preventative programme that Supporting People promotes locally, offering “person centred” services that help clients achieve and sustain independence regardless of tenure or length of stay.*
- 2.47 *This emphasis on prevention is a core value that underpinned much of the original investment areas and has had a profound impact in meeting the needs of people across the spectrum of vulnerability.*
- 2.48 *The initial and continuing strategic vision for Dudley has been consistently endorsed from the outset by the Core Steering Group and Commissioning Body whose view is that the credibility of the programme long term must be based on ensuring continuity and stability in the supported housing sector.*
- 2.49 *It was this view that led to Core Steering Group and Commissioning Body jointly ensuring that in the early development phases of the SP programme, caution was exercised on which schemes were appropriate to be supported and the scale of support for those schemes.*
- 2.50 *This realistic approach to service development support might in part explain the situation that the provisional assessment of the impact of the SP distribution formula would indicate a 90% increase in grant level for Dudley.*
- 2.51 *Early information sharing and benchmarking of Supporting People unit cost and qualitative information across authorities with a similar demographic*

profile seems to suggest that much lower relative and absolute levels of investment gravitated towards people with learning disabilities for example. To remedy this will require enhanced levels of increased funding and not the inequity of transferring funds from areas meeting that preventative agenda already.

2.52 *However, notwithstanding these budgetary constraints, Dudley has managed to implement pipeline services for Caribbean elders and people with mental ill health problems who have a medium to high level support need and continues to develop an original and innovative approach to better utilisation of the current grant allocation.*

2.53 **Achievements to Date**

2.54 *The last year has been a period of intense planning activity pre and post inspection, with the Business Plan, Improvement Plan and Service Delivery Plan laying the foundations for target improvement and providing a practical reference tool for marking progress.*

2.55 *There is a good understanding of corporate direction and how individual and team activity contributes to this overall direction. Laying this foundation has allowed the team to adopt a more focussed approach, appropriately ordering competing priorities and promoting a sense of collective and personal achievement.*

2.56 *Performance monitoring of both individual and collective team targets as well as the success of the programme from a service user perspective has helped evidence the difference Supporting People makes to peoples' lives and the community at large.*

2.57 *It has assisted the prioritisation of service reviews with those deemed high cost or high risk being undertaken first, and their realignment or development.*

2.58 *For example, immediately prior to the start of the SP Programme in April 2003 (and excluding the community alarm based support), accommodation based support provided well over 60% of the overall provision. Since that date and up to the end of March 2004, the balance has changed to just over 55% which, over a relatively short period of time, is a marked shift in position.*

2.59 *This increase in floating support of nearly one quarter (24%) compares to a 4% increase in accommodation based units. These new areas of floating support have covered the spectrum of client groups with the largest concentration on extra floating support to meet the needs of people with mental health problems. In fact, nearly a third (30%) of the increase in floating support has been in this area.*

2.60 *The Borough has extended its well developed floating support infrastructure for older people with support needs and a range of tenancy sustainment schemes have been added since 2002, helping to meet the needs of*

vulnerable groups, both becoming homeless or at clear risk of becoming homeless. In total 40% of all new floating support schemes fell into this category.

- 2.61 *A support provision for travellers has been introduced and an accommodation based service for teenage parents is due to open later this year.*
- 2.62 *An addition, a floating support service for people with acquired brain injury and physical or sensory disabilities is set to increase its service provision within the same financial resources.*
- 2.63 *A domestic violence service for Asian women was jointly recommissioned with Sandwell MBC enabling the service to raise its profile and re-establish itself in the market.*
- 2.64 *The most notable achievement to date is the identification of joint revenue streams to fund a new service development for people with mental health problems and substance misuse.*
- 2.65 *This is a joint venture between various stakeholders across the Black Country area and the Value Improvement Project sponsored by ODPM will act as a conduit for this development.*
- 2.66 *In addition, the following developments or improvements have been undertaken in the last year:*
- *Successful completion of the Audit Commission inspection*
 - *Implementation of the review process*
 - *Joint development with Social Services and the voluntary sector of a steady state contract*
 - *Continued monthly commitment to Commissioning Body meetings*
 - *Successful bid for additional HIA grant funding*
 - *Correct and timely payments to providers*
 - *The raising of Dudley's profile and representation at a national, regional and cross authority level*
 - *The beginning of a service user consultation programme via Information Exchange Days*
 - *The fostering of good working relationships and improved consultation with providers*
 - *Significantly improved attendance and membership of the Provider Forum*

Achievements to Date – Conclusions

- 2.67 *Whilst there are still areas for improvement and not all groups have had their needs totally addressed at the same pace, there is clear evidence that most of the groups identified have seen their needs addressed within the constraints of the available budget and action has been taken through the*

review process, which has freed resources to begin to develop those areas where pace has been more limited.

2.68 *Coupled with revived governance and programme management arrangements, it is this background of real achievement which sets a context for the future direction of local services that will ensure that the Supporting People Five Year Strategy in Dudley is one where strategic direction is translated into service change and improvement.*

2.69 **Future direction of local services**

2.70 *The next five years will be a critical period in which the Supporting People Programme will accelerate even further the transition from its present collection of diverse 'legacy' services into a more clearly focused programme better reflecting the Commissioning Body's Service purchasing priorities for the future.*

2.71 *The aim is to distinguish short, medium and long term objectives for the programme and plan the transition incrementally so as not to destabilise the local market and allow full and frank consultation with providers and potential providers of services.*

2.72 *The Commissioning Priorities are set out in more detail in the body of this document as are the related investment implications and these will act as the reference framework for each proposal.*

2.73 *It is recognised that the process of transition, which underpins this framework, is the difficult and challenging aspect of the Five Year Strategy. The Commissioning Body however, has already demonstrated a capacity to re-align services even when the outcome of those service re-alignments often means short and potentially medium term capacity reduction in some key areas.*

2.74 *The process of transition requires:*

- *Clarity over the strategic priorities and goals to be owned by all partners.*
- *Commitment by all parties to embrace change.*
- *Consensus on the type of services required to fulfil the preventative agenda.*
- *Communication to all stakeholders of the long term benefits of this revised strategic direction.*

2.75 *The strategic direction of local services over the next five years can be summarised in three categories:*

A continuing emphasis on -

- *greater flexibility to respond to changing client needs;*

- *preventative services demonstrating their important contribution towards reducing or slowing down increases in homelessness, re-offending or admission to institutional care. There will be a two-fold emphasis of this preventative agenda. Firstly, by addressing gaps in service provision to meet the needs of currently failing client groups whose lifestyles are chaotic and mobile. Secondly, ensuring that clients with low or moderate needs are supported to ensure those clients do not develop more substantial and critical needs;*
- *move-on accommodation to ensure that present supported housing does not stagnate and the ultimate aim of the transition into totally independent living is achieved;*
- *ensuring in a sensitive and measured way that those Supporting People services focusing on the long term needs of client groups are fully dovetailed into the wider service provision of the health and social care agencies;*
- *ensuring that the future contracting environment is based on a well understood set of agreed aims and objectives with an equally well understood and transparent set of contracted incentives which encourage continuous improvement;*
- *equality of access covering tenure, location, gender, ethnicity or culture, physical or mental capability and financial capacity;*
- *cross border working where economies of scale can be gained, particularly for mobile groups where there are clear gaps in provision;*
- *identifying sources of additional and joint funding. The present size of the Supporting People budget allocation is extremely limited and whilst the more formula based budget allocation will obviously be welcomed locally, it is recognised that its introduction will be a protracted process. However, the potential for long term financial increases does not blunt the commitment locally to seek other alternative sources of funding through joint commissioning to ensure the housing related support needs of Dudley clients are adequately addressed. This joint commissioning commitment is to work, in line with policy directions from the Regional Housing, Homelessness and Supporting People Strategies;*
- *ensuring that present gaps in the provision of housing related support services are met..*

A new emphasis on -

- *rationalising the referral framework currently being piloted for people with mental health problems but offering the opportunity longer term for a wide range of client groups to receive the most appropriate placements and speed up the allocation process;*

The Supporting People Programme locally must ensure that the capacity exists to respond to both growing areas of currently recognised need and needs that will only arise over the five year period.

2.76 *Particular emphasis in the light of Service Review outcomes will need to focus on hard to reach groups such as people with drug problems; challenging behaviour; multiple and complex needs and those groups where culturally specific service issues are important.*

2.77 Related Investment Implications

2.78 *The initial work on the potential Supporting People distribution formula shows graphically that Dudley would receive the greatest increase within the Central regional market area authorities, nearly doubling its present allocation.*

2.79 *Early information sharing and benchmarking of Supporting People information seems to suggest that much lower relative and absolute levels of investment gravitated towards people with learning disabilities for example. To remedy this will require enhanced levels of increased funding not the inequity of transferring funds from areas meeting that preventative agenda already.*

2.80 *The Core Steering Group and Commissioning Body were conscious from the outset that dramatic cost switching for certain types of schemes would lead in the long term to damage the credibility of the Supporting People Programme and potentially undermine the financial viability of providers.*

2.81 *As mentioned earlier in this summary, this realistic approach to service capture in the early days, might in part explain the situation that the provisional assessment of the impact of the SP distribution formula would indicate a 90% increase in grant level for Dudley.*

2.82 *A comparison with a range of similarly assessed Authorities indicates that Dudley had around 80% of the average grant compared to the other authorities. A situation placed in greater relief by the fact that in population terms the Borough is the second largest in the West Midlands and one of the largest metropolitan authorities in the country.*

2.83 *Given the wide-ranging national concerns about the Supporting People funding levels, the outcome of the Robson Rhodes report and the required Gershon savings, maintaining current levels of supply will be a challenge. In the immediate term, new developments will only occur where there is a reciprocal contraction of service elsewhere. In the long term new significant investment in the programme will be required.*

2.84 *Despite the difficulties the programme will inevitable face over the next few years whilst implementing change, Dudley is optimistic that it will gain financially in the long term. The Five Year Strategy will enable Commissioners to seize the opportunity to shape the direction of the*

Supporting People Programme in the Borough so that it is best positioned to address the needs of vulnerable people for the rest of the decade.

3.0 **PROPOSALS**

3.1 That the progress of the Supporting People Programme is noted and that the principles and direction of the Five Year Strategy be endorsed.

4.0 **FINANCE**

4.1 The resources for the Local Authority to administer payment to nearly 50 providers in the Borough is through direct Government grant of over £6.5m a year whilst the administration costs for the Supporting People Team currently stand at around £200k for this year and are ring-fenced for this specific purpose.

5.0 **LAW**

5.1 Dudley MBC as the Supporting People Administrative Authority must comply with the national Supporting People Grant Conditions and Directions.

5.2 As the Supporting People Administrative Authority, the Council relies upon a range of housing, education and social services statutory functions. In addition, Section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000 enables the Council to do anything that it considers is likely to achieve the promotion or improvement of the economic social or environmental well-being of this area.

6.0 **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES**

6.1 The Supporting People Programme is specifically designed to engage with harder to reach and traditionally excluded groups.

7.0 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

7.1 That the proposal set out in Section 3 be approved.

8.0 **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 8.1
1. DTLR Policy into Practice 2001
 2. DTLR Supporting People Guidance, October 2001
 3. Report to Select Committee on Community Safety – October 2001
 4. Report to Select Committee on Good Health – November 2001
 5. Shadow Supporting People Strategy
 6. Report to Executive Committee – 10 July 2002
 7. Report to Select Committee Environment – 25 March 2004
 8. Report to Executive – 11 February 2004



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