

Associate Peer Review:

Worcestershire's Supporting People Programme



Produced for Worcestershire County Council



Improvement and
Efficiency
West Midlands

On behalf of Improvement & Efficiency West Midlands

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Supporting People services in Worcestershire

Introduction

In 2009 Worcestershire County Council established an innovative change programme to respond to the anticipated public sector financial challenge.

The BOLD (Better Outcomes, Lean Delivery) programme consists of four key strands: Transformation, Service Reform, Efficiency and Cost Control and Spend Less, Do Less. A key theme of the transformation agenda is commissioning, with WCC committed to becoming an excellent commissioning-based authority.

The council aims to apply a consistent and joined up process to source the right service from the right provider at the right price and is utilising peer support and challenge across the BOLD Programme to assess key services. A cross-Directorate Programme Board has been set up with a weekly 'Star Chamber' involving the Chief Executive and Leader, whereby projects are 'called in', monitoring progress against project milestones; however senior level independent challenge is limited and the council has therefore secured associate support from Improvement and Efficiency West Midlands to provide an external challenge and review of the Supporting People Programme.

About this Report

This report summarises the work of the review conducted by Impact Change Solutions Ltd on behalf of Worcestershire County Council and Improvement & Efficiency West Midlands. The report is in three parts: section one provides brief contextual information about Supporting People services in Worcestershire; the second section describes the methodology for the review and summarises its main findings based on discussion, observation and a review of the relevant documents supplied; and section three presents a future view of housing related support services in Worcestershire based on the conclusions from the review and an analysis of alternative models of housing related care and support in England.

Executive Summary

Worcestershire's Supporting People Programme makes a significant contribution to the personal outcomes of vulnerable people and can demonstrate substantial financial benefits associated with the avoidance of more costly service interventions.

Initially established in line with the direction given by the national programme in 2003, the Programme has largely remained faithful to the original design. Its objectives include 'strategic relevance' and this is arguably more important than ever in light of recent and emerging policy and the 'localism' agenda.

Our review precedes the planned revision of the Supporting People strategy (due in 2013) and we hope that the recommendations (highlighted in bold text) included in Section 2 will be helpful in facilitating the new strategy.

In requesting this review, Worcestershire County Council stipulated that any recommendations should be evidence based, capable of being put into action and offer a roadmap for change. **In this regard, we recommend that the Supporting People Commissioning Body should consider and respond formally to each recommendation in the form of an action plan, to be submitted to the Chief Executive of Worcestershire County Council (as ultimate sponsor of the review).** A proposed action plan template, incorporating each recommendation, is included within the Appendix below.

Based on our review we consider that housing related support should play a significant part in any future Preventative strategy aimed at ensuring independence. This does not imply the adoption of a 'no change' approach and the Options for Change included in Section 3 provide outline examples of some of the approaches being taken across the country. We have not evaluated these changes and do not warrant that they will be appropriate to Worcestershire's context – simply that they are worthy of consideration.

Nevertheless, the programme has many strengths and in considering change, the council will want to ensure that these are retained within whatever new arrangements it puts in place and in particular to maintain the programme's current focus on quality, cost-effectiveness, strategic relevance and above all outcomes.

Section 1: Supporting People Services in Context

Supporting People is a national programme that funds housing related support for vulnerable people. The programme has a focus on promoting independence to enable vulnerable people to live in the community.

The Supporting People programme in England began on 1 April 2003, bringing together seven housing-related funding streams from across central government. It is now a wholly decentralised programme, administered through 152 top-tier authorities who have complete discretion over where to direct their funds to best meet local needs. All Supporting People funding is incorporated within Formula Grant and allocated via the Local Government Finance Report for the relevant financial year. Services are largely delivered by the voluntary and community sector, and by housing associations and registered social landlords.

Administering local authorities work in partnership, with housing, social care, health and probation services to agree Supporting People strategies and delivery mechanisms for housing-related support services. Negotiation and consultation is also required with service users, all housing and support service providers, other statutory service providers, the private sector and voluntary organisations to plan and commission support services to meet identified needs.

About the service: Worcestershire Supporting People Programme

The Worcestershire Supporting People programme aims to help people to achieve and maintain independence by facilitating access to discretionary housing related support services. Worcestershire County Council is the Administering Local Authority (ALA) for the programme and runs it in partnership with:

- NHS Worcestershire
- West Mercia Probation Trust
- District Council Housing Services (Bromsgrove, Malvern Hills, Redditch, Worcester City, Wychavon and Wyre Forest)
- Adults and Children's Social Services (Worcestershire County Council)

The programme has a base budget of £11.594m in 2012/13. Reserves carried forward from 2011/12 (£2.294m) give operational resources for the programme of £13.888m for 2012/13. The base budget reflects a BOLD savings target of £3m for the two years to March 2013. As at July 2012, savings of £2.75m had been achieved through contract renegotiations with providers, with a further £250k savings to be identified.

The money is spent on discretionary housing related support services, which are delivered through individual support packages agreed directly between the Provider and the Service User (with or without the assistance of a support worker) subject to eligibility criteria being met. Approximately 97.3% of the budget is spent on commissioning supporting people services, with the remaining 2.7% being the cost of administering the programme. Additional money may be attracted from partners and other external sources to fund commissioning projects where the business case justifies such investment.

In 2010/11, 127 services were delivered across a range of client groups, supporting 18,146 people. The number of people supported has remained relatively stable for the last 3 years despite a reducing budget. Outcomes are tracked across client groups, reported periodically to the council by providers under the terms of their Supporting People contracts, and are published annually at summary (County-wide) and District levels.

Success is measured in terms of the individual outcomes achieved and also by the way in which people move on from being in receipt of services having achieved a level of independence. In 2010/11, 82% of people who moved on from services did so in a positive way, with 62% having 'completed the programme and no longer needs support'. The number leaving for this reason has increased from 29% in 2007/08 to the current level.

The financial value of the programme is calculated in terms of its preventative cost benefits (i.e. the cost of services that would be needed if Supporting People services did not exist), using the CapGemini / DCLG Financial Benefits Model. Net annual preventative cost benefits of £50m have been calculated, equating to an equivalent cost saving of £3.89 for every £1 spent on Supporting People services. The largest area of cost avoidance is in residential care provision, where benefits of £48.4m combined across Adult Social Care and Health budgets are calculated. Crime costs are estimated to be £9m lower and the Health Service benefits by a further £7m in avoided hospital admission and treatment costs. Whilst there are some services that actually see a rise in costs as a result of the Supporting People 'package' (for example, housing costs and Benefits and related services are higher by £4.7m and £3.1m respectively) the wider benefits case more than offsets these cost pressures.

Section 2: IEWM Associate Review of the Worcestershire Supporting People Programme

Whilst the outcomes and cost avoidance benefits achieved by the Supporting People programme are clearly evident, Worcestershire County Council wishes to ensure that the programme remains relevant in the context of national and local policy priorities and that the current portfolio of commissioning projects are as successful and effective as they can be. The council has therefore secured associate support from Improvement and Efficiency West Midlands to provide an external challenge of its commissioning of Supporting People Services.

The work has been undertaken by Paul Johnston, a Director of Impact Change Solutions Ltd and an experienced business change consultant and Local Government practitioner who has completed numerous projects on behalf of the West Midlands Joint Improvement Partnership and ADASS West Midlands.

About the review

The review has sought to:

- Consider and reflect all stakeholder interests (LA, Health, Housing, Service Provider, Service User etc.);
- Consider and reflect exemplars of excellent commissioning practice from elsewhere;
- Review the role of the Supporting People service and the Supporting People 'brand' to ensure an appropriate fit with other services;
- Ensure that its recommendations are evidence based, capable of being put into action and offer a roadmap for change;
- Produce learning from the review that is capable of being applied across the BOLD Programme.

The work has involved a range of on-site and off-site activities, including:

- Discussion with key personnel and external stakeholders, through a combination of one to one and focus group meetings;
- Observation of practice, including Governance meetings;
- Systems and documentation review;
- Research and identification of excellent commissioning practice;

to form a view of a number of strategic and operational aspects of the Supporting People Programme in Worcestershire:

Vision – the role and importance of Supporting People services in the context of the wider social care and housing agenda and strategic priorities for the county of Worcestershire;

Governance – the stakeholder and partnership interests and decision making arrangements that underpin Supporting People services and commissioning activity;

Strategy - the commissioning strategy for Supporting People services and the extent to which it reflects the required personal outcomes (Worcestershire Outcomes Framework, Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework), policy and organisational priorities;

Priorities - the prioritised commissioning projects for Supporting People services, their objectives and the evidence for pursuing them, including Financial Modelling and the allocation of funding across client groups;

Capabilities - the systems, processes, techniques and human resources employed or available to deliver commissioning projects and the extent to which they are applied;

Services – the public-facing services delivered and / or commissioned by the Supporting People team and their interface with the wider social care and housing services, including eligibility, access, referral and exit arrangements;

Performance – the extent to which commissioning projects are delivering their objectives and contributing to personal outcomes (e.g. Worcestershire Outcomes Framework, Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework) and policy and organisational priorities (e.g. personalisation, choice & control, market development); and the extent to which strategic risks are identified and mitigated.

Review Findings

The findings and recommendations arising from the review are set out below.

Vision

At the most fundamental level, the Supporting People Programme exists to help vulnerable people to achieve and maintain independence through housing related support and services. Independence is a key theme of the government’s policies on health, social care and housing and is seen to be empowered by the availability of a wide range of housing related services. The financial benefits model in use illustrates the preventative value of Supporting People services and reinforces the strategic importance of housing related support in delivering personal outcomes and avoiding more costly care and support interventions. Local priorities expressed in key strategies including the Sustainable Community Strategy, the Council Plan, the Draft Health & Wellbeing Strategy, the Ageing

Well Strategy and the Extra Care Housing Strategy all reflect preventative objectives which are also reflected in the programme's central aim.

The Supporting People Strategy 2010 – 13 defines the vision for SP in Worcestershire as follows:

“By 2013, Worcestershire Supporting People will deliver high-quality, strategically relevant and cost-effective services across the sector.” (Worcestershire Supporting People Strategy 2010 – 13)

This is a succinct and easy to remember statement of the programme's objectives, if a little vague in some of its language. For example, there is no indication of who benefits from the 'services' or any mention of the type of 'services' being delivered; references to being 'strategically relevant' (to what and for whom?) and 'the sector' (which one?) appear ambiguous; and there is no reference to 'personal outcomes'.

The statement goes on to describe six actions aimed at achieving quality, relevance and cost effectiveness: discussion with members of the SP team and a review of project documentation provided evidence that commissioning projects consistently focus on quality and cost effectiveness alongside the achievement of personal outcomes, while the question of 'strategic relevance' is addressed as a step within the review process as “summarising relevant strategies and their key outcomes”. In this sense the 'vision' is fulfilling its role to influence action across the SP programme.

There is no consistent use of the vision or description of objectives within the council's Supporting People literature or on the SP pages of the council's website and this means that outside of professional circles it is unlikely that people have a consistent understanding of what the Supporting People programme stands for. SP branded stationery and publicity materials have recently been updated to make specific references to 'Housing related support' and this offers a helpful indication of the type of support that is in scope for the programme. A marketing and communication plan, drafted in May 2012, describes a range of activities that collectively seek to address these issues by raising awareness of the role and responsibilities of Supporting People.

The SP strategy is due for review in 2013; dependent on the future direction for housing related support in Worcestershire (see Section 3 below), the SP partnership should refine and promote its vision in line with the next refresh of the SP strategy.

Governance

The SP team sit within the Council's wider community safety service area, which comprises the community safety partnership functions (including domestic abuse) and the Drug and Alcohol Action Team. This provides a suite of preventative, partnership and commissioning services, with strategic alignment around community safety, housing and independence in the community and is led by the Community Safety Partnerships Manager. These services are within the remit of the County Council's Head of Culture & Community under the direction of the Director of Adult & Community Services; responsibility for day to day management, development of the service and delivery of the strategy sits with the Supporting People Development Manager.

The Governance arrangements and requirements of partners are described in the Supporting People Commissioning Body Constitution. This was developed in 2007, when the grant funding regime and administrative requirements were very different to what now exists. **It is recommended that the programme's constitution be revised to reflect the current context and required operation, taking account of the views of all stakeholders.**

Representatives from all of the programme's partners are voting members of the Commissioning Body, whose decision-making remit extends to:

- Agreeing the SP Strategy and annual plan;
- Agreeing the service review and monitoring programme;
- Agreeing recommendations for the setting of housing support priorities.

The Commissioning Body also receives financial reports and operational updates from the SP Development Manager. These involve written and verbal reports, presentations and other exhibits (for example, video clips providing further service user insight about SP services). Report authors present their reports in person and face questions from Commissioning Body members, taking action as necessary thereafter to reflect the advice and guidance received.

There is a clear corporate commitment to from the County Council, with the Director of Adult and Community Services chairing the Commissioning Body and political representation from the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care. Provider organisations are represented, in a non-voting capacity, by the Chair of the Worcestershire Provider Forum, whilst service user input – again non-voting - is through a representative of the Choice Checkers panel.

It would appear that attendance at Commissioning Body meetings no longer reflects the requirements set out in the constitution, with more than the prescribed two County Council

representatives now attending whilst not all partners are consistently represented. Deputies have not been identified and this means that all stakeholder interests are not always represented. **Consideration should be given to identifying deputies, particularly in respect of service user and elected member representation.**

Some representatives voiced concerns about being increasingly less engaged and marginalised at Commissioning Body and particularly in the decision making process, where some decisions had been made by the Council's Directorate Management Team. Nevertheless, partners value their involvement in the SP programme and wish to be involved in the future commissioning of housing related services through any revised governance arrangements that might be introduced.

Supporting People Project Teams are set up to plan, develop and implement the commissioning projects prioritised by the Commissioning Body. Project Teams are drawn from a wide pool of expertise involving, but not limited to, SP partners, provider and service user representatives. This role is not explicitly mentioned within the Constitution but has emerged as good practice.

The SP programme is in scope for the Corporate BOLD Programme led by the Chief Executive: the terms of the current Constitution make it clear that the County Council, as administering authority, has ultimate financial responsibility for the administration of Supporting People monies. This means that decision making responsibility ultimately rests with the County Council, with partners acting in an advisory capacity through the Commissioning Body. In practice this means that proposals developed by SP Project Teams are decided by Directorate Management Teams within the County Council, often before the Commissioning Body has had an opportunity to formally consider and advise on them. **There is a need to ensure that Commissioning Body members are able to influence and shape proposals before they are decided upon.**

Strategy

Worcestershire's Supporting People Strategy 2010 – 2013 seeks to inform and embed the commissioning intentions, principles and priorities for housing related support services for vulnerable and excluded people living in Worcestershire. The strategy, which is available for download from the SP pages of the County Council's website, has been drafted by the SP Development Manager, with input and quality assurance from a range of sources and engagement activity, including:

- stakeholder events,
- Commissioning Body partners;

- Service User events;
- Provider workshops;
- Local Authority commissioners

The strategy recognises significant financial and policy challenges throughout its 3-year duration and commits to an annual refresh “to ensure that the programme can maximise its opportunities to support the most vulnerable, and to ensure the cost savings continue to be of support to our partnership.” However, the financial challenges accepted by the partnership in 2010 led to the Commissioning Body agreeing to replace the planned annual refresh with a programme of strategic reviews by client group, aimed at identifying where savings could be made. As a result the strategy has not been refreshed since its initial publication.

Nevertheless, it is clear that there have been some significant changes in both national policy and local plans since the strategy was written and in the absence of a formal annual refresh, these changes are not clearly reflected in published SP information. **If the revised SP strategy is not to be subject to an annual refresh it is recommended that an audit trail of key changes be maintained and published on the SP website.** Without such information there is a risk that the strategy will become misleading and out of date.

The strategy describes a number of principles guiding the SP programme:

- Services directed at local priorities
- Partnership working and social capital
- Sustaining and expanding SP networks
- Building and expanding service user participation
- Service reviews incorporating the Quality Assessment Framework
- Outcome based commissioning and contracting
- Enhanced safeguarding for adults, young people and children
- Equality impact Assessments for all reviews
- Providers who meet the county council’s safeguarding aspirations

Priority actions are framed around the “Knowledge / Alignment / Promotion” (KAP) model:

Knowledge – of need, demand, supply, quality and benefits as well as of the changing policy, funding and partnership dynamics;

Alignment – to countywide and national priorities, and of the governance, community involvement and delivery arrangements underpinning the achievement of outcomes;

Promotion – of progress made and next steps.

For each client group a short analysis of need is made followed by a summary of the programme's commissioning intentions relative to that group of people. Finally, the strategy sets these intentions within the context of a series of commissioning principles to be applied to all services commissioned by the Worcestershire SP Programme:

- Changing the face of service provision.
- Improving access to good quality housing and support.
- Improving access for owner occupiers.
- Increasing access to services.
- Meeting the housing related support needs of black and minority ethnic groups.
- Encouraging the formulation of accommodation and support strategies across all client groups.
- Linking the Supporting People programme to housing capital programmes to facilitate new development.
- Reducing and eliminating risks to the programme.

Missing from these principles is the need to work across service and organisational boundaries, share learning and resources and be 'evidence-led' though this is evident in working practice and from analysis of the strategic reviews completed. Whilst seeking to promote independence, the strategy does not envisage individual control over the way SP allocations are spent, for example through personal budgets and direct payments. Choice exists albeit within the constraints of a wholly-commissioned provider market. These principles are important in the context of the financial and strategic challenges affecting the public sector and the increasing expectations of people who use services. There has been agreement at Commissioning Body to consider the success of national pilots which are looking at personalisation; and there are recommendations within recent strategic reviews to plan for this change.

There is no reference to the corporate commissioning approach (Review, Evaluate, Design, Source) developed by the County Council as this model was developed after the strategy was launched. The expectation that all services will be commissioned according to this approach does, however, appear to have been fully embedded within the team and was consistently described by in discussions about working practices. .

Overall the Strategy is rather complex, detailing the priorities and intentions of 14 different client groups, and according to some partners, lacks clarity. There are various references to differing 'principles' and 'priorities' and this detracts from its stronger points. **The drafting of a new strategy, due in 2013, provides an opportunity to simplify and clarify the strategy and to make the alignment to other county-wide priorities, within the context of a new**

national policy framework for Care and Support, more explicit. Consideration should also be given to the differing needs of the audience, perhaps producing an easy read version and making this available in various formats.

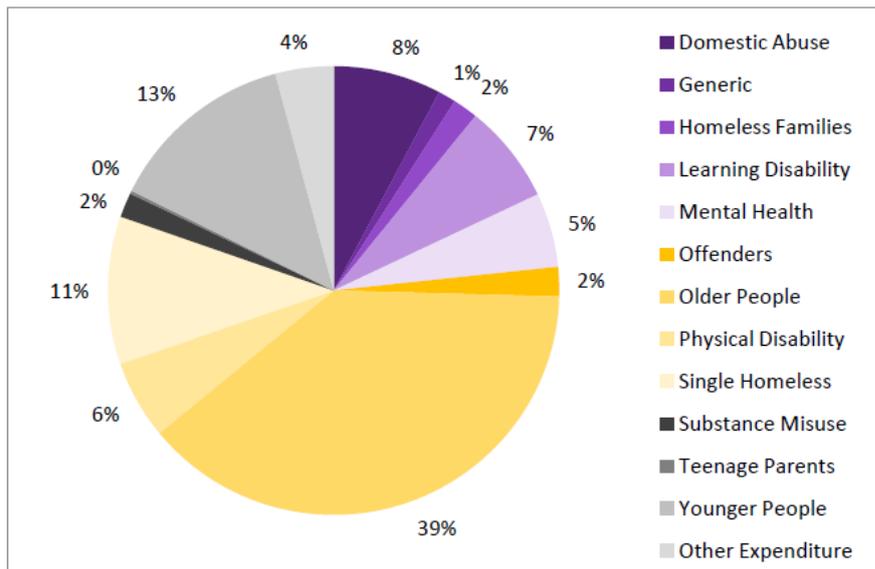
The Care and Support White Paper sets out the government's expectation that all Local Authorities should produce a Market Position Statement covering the social care market. The Market Position Statement is intended to be a market-facing analysis of current and future demand, current supply (including quality), models of practice that are to be encouraged, commissioning intentions and priorities, and an indication of how commissioners will support the development and diversification of new solutions. It provides the evidence base and stimulus for change and highlights the actions needed to achieve the desired configuration of services, providers, price and quality. As such it is a key strategic document that provides the basis for engagement and co-production with providers.

As the Supporting People Strategy incorporates many of the features of a Market Position Statement it is recommended that the next iteration of the strategy should adopt the format for Market Position Statements developed by the Institute of Public Care and recommended by the Think Local Act Personal partnership – this can be found at <http://www.thinklocalactpersonal.org.uk/Regions/SouthWest/Resources/Resource/?cid=8903>.

Priorities

There are many priorities described within the SP Strategy, with commissioning projects identified across all client groups. Services are mainly commissioned through block contracts, with strategic reviews prioritised according to contract review dates. This avoids the need for costly early termination of contracts but tends to produce tactical, service-based reviews rather than a strategic, programme wide appraisal. As a consequence, services tend to be re-commissioned on a like for like basis (albeit with some changes in the specific providers engaged) rather than as a result of any strategic decision to shift resources between services and client groups based on a wider assessment of need.

The 2010/11 expenditure profile shows the proportions in which the money is spent in Worcestershire:



Source: Supporting People finance records 2010/11

Figure 1: How the money is spent in Worcestershire

The most recent financial projections for 2012/13 show an expected increase in the proportion spent on Older People's services to 41% of the total (2010/11: 39%) and a reduction in spending on Younger People's support, from 13.5% in 2010/11 to 12.3% in the current year. This is despite the fact that there are more new clients in the younger age groups each year than older people. This indicates that younger people are moved more successfully out of dependency than older people. However, it implies an increasing proportion of the SP budget being spent on longer term support and the SP partners may want to consider this prioritisation in a more strategic context.

Collectively, the programme's priorities are summarised as follows:

- To ensure joined up and transitional provision and in particular the development of new services designed both to support and advise vulnerable adults.
- To develop capacity in the community and voluntary sector, and managing our process to meet the needs of the COMPACT2 within the county.
- To maximise opportunities for joint commissioning housing-related support services to meet local strategic targets.
- To ensure that housing-related services are targeted at key areas of deprivation (including Super Output Areas, and the Areas of Highest Need), and linked closely to the Homelessness and Community Safety agendas.
- To lead on key priorities and public service agreements around vulnerable client groups where priority outcomes are dependent upon housing related support.
- To promote a countywide approach to floating support to enable the service user to sustain their support needs despite changes in tenure.

There is a need to demonstrate how these priorities relate to the wider area priorities as expressed in the Worcestershire Partnership Sustainable Community Strategy and reflected in the Council Plan, the Draft Health & Wellbeing Strategy, the Ageing Well Strategy and the Extra Care Housing Strategy etc (developed since the Supporting People strategy was published).

Capabilities

The SP team has a range of strategic and operational responsibilities:

More strategic

- Administering and accounting for the SP budget
- Managing relationships with key stakeholders (including Providers and Service User representatives)
- Developing and maintaining the SP Strategy

More operational

- Delivering the SP team's work programme
- Reviewing provision
- Designing, specifying and commissioning (and de-commissioning) services
- Negotiating contractual terms
- Monitoring Provider performance
- Reporting performance and outcomes achieved

Strategic capabilities are reflected in our analysis of the Vision, Governance, Strategy and Prioritisation above: in summary, this is felt to be effective, albeit with a need to simplify and realign the programme to more closely reflect the current context and county-wide priorities.

Operational responsibilities broadly align to the County Council's strategic commissioning approach (Evaluate, Design, Source, Review) and discussion with commissioners sought to test the extent to which commissioning practice is aligned to this model.

Evaluate

The main purpose of the Strategic Review process is to evaluate existing provision relative to current and future needs and in the context of wider policy and practice. As described elsewhere, SP strategic review projects tend to be conducted on a rolling basis towards the expiry of existing block contracts and focus on provision for specific client groups. Good project governance is evident, with broad-based project teams drawn from the relevant

services and organisations and including Provider and Service User representation. Opportunities for cross-service synergy and alignment with relevant strategies are explored. Strategic reviews address issues of supply, demand, policy and practice. Qualitative input is provided by service users through the innovative Choice Checkers panel. The panel involves current and former service users in site visits and service user interviews, with findings playing a key part in the evaluation and subsequent design of services. Funding and other resource constraints are explored and commissioning intentions examined, leading to a range of recommendations for change that might affect both commissioning practice and provider development of services.

The Strategic Review of Mental Health Housing & Support Services (<http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/cms/pdf/SP%20MH%20Strategic%20Review%20-%20Housing%20and%20Support%20Needs%20Worcestershire.pdf>) is an example of a completed SP strategic review and reflects good practice from which broader commissioning exercises within and outside of the County Council might benefit.

Evaluations consider issues of equality and diversity and there is a strategic objective to improve access for Black and Minority Ethnic communities as a result of the evaluations undertaken. Consideration is given to deprivation and specific pockets of need, with proposals reflecting the need to address current and projected gaps in provision and quality at both client group and locality levels.

Design

The recommendations arising from strategic reviews are used to inform the re-design and specification of services and also to initiate changes in commissioning practice and provider development of services. Recommendations reflect the evidence base used to conduct the evaluation including the input of service user input gathered through Choice Checkers panel members (for example, the inclusion of security and storage requirements within hostel accommodation for homeless people).

The SP team has built good relations with contracted providers and engages extensively with the Provider Forum. The ethos is one of co-production with providers involved in pre-tender discussions aimed at increasing their understanding of the changes that are required.

Based on our assessment of published reviews, there is evidence that design recommendations broadly address the programme's strategic aims of high quality, strategically relevant and cost effective services.

Contracts continue to be designed on a block purchase basis with payments made on either a Gross or Subsidy basis. Gross contracts require that the council pays the full cost of the

service whereas Subsidy contracts require the council to make a contribution towards the total cost, based on the client's financial assessment. Consideration has been given to introducing charges for SP services, although this was rejected following an appraisal of the costs and benefits. The options appraisal informing this decision was predicated on an assumption that contract prices would revert to the previous level for subsidy contracts (equivalent to an increase in costs of £722k) although this assumption does not appear to have been tested or validated. Section 3 below makes further comment on this aspect of local policy and emerging practice nationally.

SP contracts are felt by some providers to place a heavy administrative burden on them, with quarterly customer and outcomes reporting being required. Anecdotally, larger providers are largely untroubled by the reporting requirements whilst smaller ones are more sensitive. The SP team produces helpful guidance and standard templates for data capture and submission and this helps ease this burden. Concern was also expressed about a recently introduced requirement to increase the amount of 'input' data (e.g. hours delivered). **It is recommended that engagement takes place with the Provider Forum to explore issues associated with the administrative and reporting requirements of the programme, with a view to minimising the burden and associated costs.**

Some review projects (for example, the Mental Health review mentioned previously) make recommendations about the introduction of personal budgets as a means of facilitating client choice and control, although these have not yet been taken forward. There is further discussion about this within Section 3 below.

Source

There has been a downward pressure on contract value for successive years and the BOLD savings target of £3m by 2013 is expected to be delivered almost entirely from contract pricing. Existing providers have been through a contract renegotiation exercise which assumed a 20% across the board reduction. Negotiations have largely focused on timing rather than rates, with some tolerance for providers requiring time to restructure their operations in order to achieve the required savings.

The full effect of reduced contract pricing, in the context of new service specifications and potentially onerous outcome reporting requirements, on future sourcing of providers is yet to be seen. Anecdotally, providers are concerned about the increased risk of failure and a reduction in quality and both of these concerns will require careful monitoring. Provider representatives report that some local providers are deciding against retendering on the basis that they do not feel that the contract will be viable. **The SP team should monitor the risks of provider failure and falling number and nature of respondents to tendering**

exercises to ensure that its principles of local procurement and social capital are not breached.

Review

The strategic review process has been described elsewhere in this report and is a significant driver for change in SP provision. Strategic reviews have led to some de-commissioning and re-provisioning within client groups although there was no evidence provided of a deliberate or planned shift in resources between client groups. **The next iteration of the SP Strategy provides the opportunity for a ‘whole programme’ analysis and this should be used to confirm resource prioritisation for the short to medium term:** this would provide the basis for a strategic realignment of programme resources as future client group reviews are undertaken.

Service reviews are undertaken with individual providers in line with their contract terms, submitted performance data and service user feedback. Quality and performance issues are addressed through the review process; where providers continually fail to meet the standards required of them they face having their service de-commissioned and examples were cited of this taking place. However, mechanisms to support decommissioned providers through the transition do not appear to be in place and this increases the risk of the wider care and support market constricting through provider failure. **The council should ensure that mechanisms are in place to support providers through the decommissioning of services in order to manage the risk of market failure.**

Overall it appears that the Evaluate – Design – Source – Review cycle is well embedded within the SP team and that there are some examples of good practice within the SP team that could benefit other service areas within and outside of the council (e.g. approach to and output from evaluations; involvement of service user representatives / Choice Checkers in evaluation and design; co-production of design solutions with providers, etc).

The Choice Checkers team comprises volunteer members with experience of using a range of SP services. Whilst their primary function is to help assess quality and to advise on design improvements, they also play an important role in engaging with hard to reach customers and are an invaluable component of the SP proposition in Worcestershire. **There is the potential for the Choice Checker service to play a wider role in assessing service quality and engaging with clients across the area and beyond, including as a commercial / social enterprise.**

The SP team is ably supported by business partners from other council functions (notably finance and business intelligence teams) who play an active part in the programme's delivery.

Services

The SP programme funds housing-related support services in order to develop the capability of vulnerable people to live independently in accommodation or to sustain their capacity to do so. SP services are delivered through individual support packages agreed between the provider and service user.

Supporting People services can be either short-term or long-term in duration, albeit with an assumption of increasing independence being achieved as a result of the support provided. "Short-term" SP-funded services are aimed at enabling people to acquire and maintain the ability to live independently (either while living in less-independent residential settings or while living in independent accommodation). "Long-term" SP-funded services are designed to help service-users move towards this independence or to minimise the reduction in independence due to increasing age or infirmity, without any necessary expectation that they will ever be able to achieve it fully. Services are 'preventative' in nature because they avoid or reduce dependence on other more costly interventions.

Services are not intended to replace other longer term forms of support (e.g. social care provision following an assessment of needs). However, they are often delivered by providers who are also contracted to deliver social care services and this presents a number of risks and opportunities. Existing funding arrangements mean that there is a need to ensure the correct apportionment of time between services and to prevent 'double-counting'. Providers also face administrative (and therefore cost) challenges associated with multiple contracts around reporting and monitoring requirements and in many cases in distinguishing between housing-related and other forms of support. **The council should assess the number of providers with multiple contracts and investigate with those providers, ways of simplifying contractual and monitoring arrangements.**

Services are provided across a range of Client Groups, to people in receipt of housing benefit or whose Financial Assessment supports the payment of a SP subsidy. The support offered has to be a part of a package of support agreed with the service user and set out in some form of written plan containing a statement of the objectives that the support service will assist the service user in achieving. Reviews of the plan with the service user are built in to the process and form the basis of the outcome monitoring described above. Access can be either through self-referral, through a referral from SP partner agencies, or can be arranged directly with the service provider, for example with a Registered Social Landlord.

Applicants are required to complete an Eligibility Checklist and this is assessed by the SP Team before confirming the allocation of a subsidy. **The Eligibility Checklist published online is out of date, having been superseded with revised financial limits, and should be replaced by the most recent version.**

The programme’s published Policy on Eligibility is marked as ‘DRAFT’ (created in 2006) – this should be refreshed to reflect the desired context.

In 2010/11 almost 2,400 new clients accessed SP services – around 13% of all service users. In the same period around 4,500 people left the SP programme. 82% of people who moved on from services did so in a positive way, with 62% having ‘completed the programme and no longer needs support’.

There appears to be an anomaly with the client data recorded in the Outcomes report for 2010/11. The report states that the total number of clients has remained static at around 18,000 yet the analysis appears to show a net decrease of over 2,100 clients (the difference between new clients and those who left the service).

The online Supporting People Provider Directory shows that there are 47 listed SP service providers with a capacity to support over 19,600 clients.

The following table summarises the types of support offered:

Type of Support	Providers (No.)	Capacity
Accommodation-Based	14	1061
Floating Support Service	31	10931
Accommodation-Based with Floating Support / Resettlement Outreach	3	668
Outreach Service	2	124
Resettlement Service	1	123
Community / Social Alarm Service	15	6306
Home Improvement Agency Service	2	412
	47 *	19625
* Fourteen providers offer more than one type of support.		

Figure 2: SP Provider Directory: Types of Support

With a client base of around 18,000 service users per annum this suggests a degree of under-utilisation. The reported figures from 2010/11 show that across client groups, service

capacity was utilised between 0.9 and 5 times, with Domestic Abuse capacity being the most utilised service and Learning Disabilities capacity being least utilised. Utilisation is an indicator of both demand for and discharge from services: for example, not all Learning Disabilities capacity was needed in 2010/11, whilst Domestic Abuse utilisation could only be achieved by moving people on from the service.

Average utilisation was 254% (or 2.54 times capacity), with 6 client groups exceeding the average. Those client groups achieving below average utilisation include those likely to be dependent on longer term support (Older People, Mental Health, Learning Disabilities) and some that are infrastructure-dependent such as Call Alarm services, where utilisation of 110% is an indicator of the extent to which alarm equipment is being recycled.

Client Group	Average Capacity	Service Utilisation	Service Utilisation %
Domestic Abuse	182	903	496
Substance Misuse	52	215	413
Young People at Risk	358	1322	369
Offenders	76	248	326
Single Homeless	284	815	287
Physical & Sensory Disabilities	194	511	263
Homeless Families	167	421	252
Generic	336	654	195
Older People	3167	5592	177
Teenage Parents	7	12	171
Mental Health	142	225	158
Call Alarm	6401	7032	110
Learning Disabilities	220	196	89
Home Improvement Agency	206		
Total	11792	18146	254

Figure 3: SP Service Utilisation 2010/11

Optimal utilisation is likely to differ between services and client groups. The extent to which spare capacity exists within individual contracts is one of the factors explored by SP Commissioners within their contract monitoring discussions with providers.

Performance

Our assessment has considered 3 aspects of performance: (i) the achievement of positive outcomes for people who use SP services; (ii) the achievement of BOLD savings targets; and (iii) the achievement of operational objectives by the SP commissioning team.

Outcomes Performance

The SP programme provides support to a large number of vulnerable people and produces sophisticated monitoring data to demonstrate the outcomes and financial benefits (in terms of costs avoided) of SP services in Worcestershire. The programme is seen by partners as being successful and is valued by people who use SP services.

The most recent published performance data is for 2010/11, with the 2011/12 due to be presented to the Commissioning Body in October for sign off. **The analysis is robust although inevitably there are further combinations of data that could be explored in order to assess the relative value across client groups and to aid value-based prioritisation decisions** (for example, the relationship between expenditure, service interventions (utilisation), outcomes and financial benefits). The analysis includes a good mix of historic data, projections and qualitative feedback, representing the voice of the service user through feedback from Choice Checker activity and individual case studies.

There is a need for more information about 'length of time in receipt of service' across client groups. One of the programme's success criteria is about 'moving on' and this should be monitored more fully, particularly for those service interventions intended to be 'short term'.

The next round of performance reporting should attempt to align performance to the wider objectives and priorities for the area as set out in various strategies published since the SP Strategy was written in 2010. The 2010/11 report successfully links outcomes to the objectives set out in the Local Area Agreement while the interim performance update for 2011/12 demonstrates the programme's contribution towards a number of the County Council's Corporate plan objectives. A similar mapping is required against the 3 priorities set out in the Worcestershire Partnership Sustainable Community Strategy and in particular the Health & Wellbeing objectives set out in the draft Joint Health & Well-being Strategy. SP services undoubtedly make a contribution in a number of areas: it would serve the programme well to realign its performance reporting so that this contribution can be seen in the widest possible context so that its benefits and achievements are felt to be relevant to all stakeholders.

The programme no longer submits its performance data to the St Andrews University observatory, which was set up to maintain oversight of national and comparative performance, and this means that performance benchmarking is limited. The SP Development Manager maintains good relations with other SP Managers from across the West Midlands and further afield, including through housing, care & support consultants Sitra and this enables information exchange on a less formal basis.

Savings Performance

The programme's base budget of £11.594m in 2012/13 reflects a BOLD savings target of £3m for the two years to March 2013. As at July 2012, savings of £2.75m had been achieved through contract renegotiations with providers, with a further £250k savings to be identified. The financial position is closely monitored and reported to the Commissioning

Body as well as through Worcestershire County Council's Corporate and Directorate management systems, and there is a high degree of confidence that the savings target will be achieved.

Operational Performance

Although the regular reporting of outcomes is in place and there is good information provided about the delivery of savings targets, monitoring of progress with the programme of strategic reviews – or indeed information about the revised target for strategic reviews - has not been seen.

The focus on delivering the BOLD savings target whilst protecting the achievement of positive outcomes has inevitably resulted in some slippage in the SP team's planned programme of client group strategic reviews: some reviews were bought forward, whilst some reviews have been delayed to allow the re-commissioning of new work to meet the new financial restrictions. It is not possible to say, from published information, how far the programme has progressed towards its target for reviews across all client groups.

The SP Commissioning Body should consider requesting a rolling progress report against operational responsibilities to allow it to assess progress, issues or risks and to maintain oversight of programme delivery.

Whilst the programme commits to the review of all client group provision during the life of the SP Strategy and documents relating to current and completed strategic reviews are published online, the SP website only provides information on the review of four client groups. Of these, only two include the published review (and one of these, for Younger People's services, was completed in the period of the previous strategy). There does not appear to be a consistent approach to the publication of relevant documents

There is a need to ensure that the SP web pages are regularly updated with all relevant materials, including completed reviews and outcome summaries, in order to make delivery more transparent and the service more accountable.

Section 3: A Blueprint for Change

Whilst Supporting People services are undoubtedly contributing towards positive outcomes for a large number of vulnerable people in Worcestershire, there are a number of 'drivers for change' that apply to the operation of the SP programme:

- Policy and legislation – a shift towards 'Localism', with local structures and accountability for health & well-being; reform across the health, social care and support and public health agendas, with an emphasis on prevention, choice and control, personal budgets, integrated services and quality of provision; and a national housing strategy that overtly promotes preventative housing related support.
- Service User expectations – including better information and advice, more involvement in decisions affecting care and support, more choice of providers and the ability to make personalised buying decisions.
- Constraints on public finances – with no sign of an end to austerity, and with systemic changes to public sector funding settlements affecting generations to come, driving structural change and an intense focus on priorities.

These drivers apply across the country and are causing a number of SP partnerships to radically revise their proposition, whilst continuing to ensure the availability of high quality preventative services and support for vulnerable people.

Wider welfare policy changes, including a move towards the Universal Credit and changes to Housing Benefit eligibility, are likely to have an impact on eligibility for SP services and this strengthens the case for greater focus on Prevention.

In responding to the need for change, it is important to recognise the continuing value of preventative housing related services and of the experience and good practice that has developed within Worcestershire's SP programme over many years. In designing its change approach the council will want to preserve these features:

- Robust intelligence base and analytical competence
- Strong relationships with Providers
- Innovative approach to service user involvement (Choice Checkers)
- Robust commissioning practices
- Strong focus on Outcomes
- Significant contribution to 'future cost' avoidance

This section of the review explores the way in which change has been approached in a number of areas.

Options for Change

There is no single standard formula for change in SP services that has been developed or can be recommended across the UK: most areas have introduced change throughout the life of their SP programmes and from time to time when prompted by policy guidance. The local context is paramount: what works in Warwickshire, for example, won't necessarily work in Worcestershire and the examples below are therefore offered simply to illustrate the ways in which thinking on SP provision is developing. The short and longer term effects of change are not fully apparent and in designing any change within Worcestershire, stakeholders will want to maintain their focus on quality, cost-effectiveness, strategic relevance and above all outcomes.

We have considered options for change across four broad dimensions – recognising that the SP Programme in Worcestershire may wish to pursue change in any or all of these areas, and that change in one dimension may force change in the others.

Changing the Funding

Most Administering Authorities have seen significant budget reductions in recent years, and in particular since the removal of the ring-fencing of SP monies. Worcestershire's programme expects to achieve a £3m (21%) reduction in its base budget by 2013 and this is mainly being achieved through across the board contract renegotiations.

This is a relatively common approach and has generally been successful in achieving a balanced position. However, it is unlikely that there remains much scope for further reductions on a similar basis, while the long-term effects on provider viability, service quality, choice and competition remain as risks to be managed. Nevertheless, some councils continue to exert significant downward pressure through contractual savings – for example, Nottinghamshire County Council aims to achieve its £10m savings target through contract reductions of between 10% and 70% of current contract values, with savings prioritised according to service type and client group. Further information about [Nottinghamshire's savings proposals](#) can be found online.

The policy direction from central government encourages greater investment in Prevention and according to the government's housing strategy 'Laying the Foundations', the national SP 'pot' faces a less than 1% per annum average cash reduction, with £6.5bn secured over the spending review period. The strategy goes on to describe the importance of Supporting People programmes in empowering independence and leveraging the financial benefits associated with cost avoidance.

Nevertheless there is local discretion to allocate formula funding according to local priorities and some councils have made substantial SP budget cuts on this basis. This is typically associated with some form of prioritisation of services – for example, Derby City Council aims to reduce its SP budget from £9.5m in 2012/13 to £3.3m in 2014/15, with the remaining budget allocated across 4 strategic priorities:

- information, advice, advocacy and general support about housing-related matters
- emergency/ crisis interventions for those people who need immediate assistance
- recovery and re-ablement services that support people to have the confidence and skills to obtain and/or maintain their accommodation
- preventative housing related support for people already living independently

These proposals are due to be put to Cabinet in September having been through a public consultation exercise and scrutiny by local councillors.

There have been a number of judicial reviews of decisions to decommission some SP services, with mixed results. In all cases the judgements highlight the need for councils to follow rigorous processes in reaching their funding decisions.

The removal of the financial ring-fence for SP provides Administering Authorities with the opportunity to use SP budgets to fund a wider range of services or to pool the money with other budgets – for example as part of a wider Preventative strategy, with spending priorities aligned to a broader set of commissioning intentions.

A number of councils operate charging frameworks for Supporting People services. For example, Haringey Council provides all short-term services free of charge but levies a charge for long term support (subject to financial assessment of means) and Wolverhampton City Council has applied a Resource Allocation System for housing related support. Many councils appear to operate SP contracts on a ‘subsidy’ basis, whereby the client pays for the service but receives a subsidy from the council towards the cost, based on the financial assessment (e.g Dorset County Council:

[http://www1.dorsetforyou.com/caring/Leaflets.nsf/-/9326CD5A9A581291802570060047B9D8/\\$FILE/Paying%20for%20Supporting%20People%20services.pdf](http://www1.dorsetforyou.com/caring/Leaflets.nsf/-/9326CD5A9A581291802570060047B9D8/$FILE/Paying%20for%20Supporting%20People%20services.pdf)). These arrangements appear to work within tightly controlled SP contracts without introducing significant extra costs to the SP budget. Worcestershire’s own assessment of charging for SP Services concluded that contract prices would rise by approximately £700k per annum if charges were to be levied although we have been unable to verify this estimate.

Changing the Governance

A number of (primarily unitary) councils have taken the opportunity to disband SP governance arrangements following the government's devolution of full control to Administering Authorities of SP arrangements (e.g. Coventry City Council, Portsmouth City Council). Whilst this change has been made largely without negative impact in these places, the approach is unlikely to be politically or operationally appropriate in 2-tier areas where the contribution and support of District Council partners remains key in the context of their housing and community safety remits.

The advent of area-wide structures aligned to strategic priorities (e.g. Health & Wellbeing Boards) provides an opportunity to align Governance arrangements more closely to these agendas and underpinning priorities. For example, SP governance in Staffordshire is provided by the Housing, Support & Independence Partnership Board, whose role is "to inform, advise, and provide challenge to commissioners at a county level in the development of services across health and social care for people". This is a much broader remit than housing related support alone and should encourage more integrated approaches to commissioning.

As described earlier, Worcestershire's SP governance arrangements no longer reflect current practice and a review should form part of the plans for change.

Changing the Operational arrangements

It is understood that in the short term, operational accountability for the SP Team will pass to the Head of the Joint Commissioning Unit. This provides an opportunity for closer integration and greater capacity as well as for administrative cost savings, perhaps through the simplification of bureaucratic processes associated with the controls originally required by central government.

It is important that SP expertise is not 'lost' in the integration process and in particular that strategic SP capacity is maintained. There are many examples of good commissioning practice within the SP team and the Head of Service will want to maximise the learning and advantages to an integrated team.

A number of councils have gone a step further and fully mainstreamed the commissioning of housing related support within and across service specialisms – for example, London Borough of Camden, where services for older people, people with mental health issues, and people with learning and/or physical disabilities are commissioned within the strategic planning and joint commissioning division of housing and adult social care, while services for single homeless people with support needs, homeless families, people with substance

misuse problems, rough sleepers, ex-offenders and women escaping domestic violence are commissioned within the needs and resources division of housing and adult social care.

Many Administering Authorities are moving away from the Supporting People brand to a more descriptive 'Housing Related Support' or more strategic 'Preventative Services' focus. Some councils have removed references to Supporting People programmes from their websites, implying that commissioning has been mainstreamed within other services.

Northamptonshire County Council has developed a 'Prevention and Demand Management Strategy' which embraces all preventative services formerly under the Supporting People brand; preventative services are to be commissioned on a county-wide basis through a lead agency (with locality governance arrangements linked to the Health & Wellbeing Board) and a flexible approach to the continuation, renegotiation or termination of existing preventative contracts (including those previously branded as SP).

The national housing strategy envisages the introduction of personal budgets / direct payments for SP services and there are a number of councils piloting this approach: for example, Suffolk County Council has a Direct Payments Policy whereby customers, assessed as eligible to receive a Direct Payment from Social Care, may also be eligible for Supporting People funding for that Direct Payment. This means that the same carers can be used to meet both personal care and housing related support needs. Similarly, the London Borough of Bexley offers a needs-related personal budget allocation, with funded applicants receiving direct payments with which to directly arrange support with the provider rather than under an LA contract / framework. This is in line with social care policy on independence.

Changing Provision

Changes in funding and operational arrangements inevitably have some impact on service provision. At individual provider level this can mean the loss of long-standing contracts and an increased risk of failure for those providers who are substantially dependent on their SP contract. Councils need to develop systems for the early detection of market risk through provider failure and to put in place actions to mitigate. Warwickshire County Council's Strategic Commissioning team includes a market facilitation function which takes a proactive approach to provider engagement and works with those facing decommissioning to explore different business models and revenue options.

Similarly, the risk to service quality needs to be managed: many councils are applying Quality Assurance Frameworks to SP contracts as a means of increasing the focus on quality and on building a culture of high quality provision.

As described earlier, there are mixed approaches to resource prioritisation with some authorities applying 'top-slicing' approaches across all services and others taking a more strategic approach. Assistive technologies are increasingly being considered as alternatives to more costly forms of provision and some councils are prioritising information and advice over physical provision.

There is evidence that some authorities are developing different commissioning strategies for short-term and long term provision. For example, Birmingham City Council differentiates between independence services, which are about maintaining independence, and transitional services, which are about achieving independence; and the London Borough of Hackney allocates support according to 3 categories rather than the existing 12 client groups: support for adults under the age of 55; support for adults & families placed in temporary accommodation; and support for older people. Both approaches are designed to facilitate a move to framework contracts and to simplify tendering arrangements.

Under Derby City Council's savings programme, an open tender exercise will be undertaken through an EU compliant competitive tendering process. The objectives of the tender would be to deliver the new service model and maximise the opportunity for efficiencies across the services to be commissioned, with service specifications focused on delivering agreed outcomes. Invitations are to be sought from bidders for either single or multiple services across the range of specifications, to allow smaller organisations the opportunity to collaborate when submitting tenders.

Wolverhampton City Council awards a positive weighting to consortia bids to deliver SP services and this is seen as an attempt to encourage and support smaller providers. It should be borne in mind that there are costs and administrative pressures involved in setting up and running a consortium and this may discourage those who feel they don't have the capacity to do so.

Another pillar of the national housing strategy is the introduction of Payment by Results (PBR) contracts, where a proportion of the contract value is linked to the delivery of the specified outcomes. This ought to be seen as a means of incentivising providers rather than of avoiding or reducing payments – the emphasis should be on delivery of high quality preventative intervention rather than on cost saving. Ten pilot authorities are trialling approaches to PBR, including Birmingham City Council and the shire county councils of Derbyshire and Kent. The Audit Commission published a guidance paper on PBR in April 2012 which considers the potential benefits for local authorities of using PBR, the risks involved and how to mitigate them. The briefing sets out to help councils understand what it entails, and whether it is right for their circumstances. As most schemes, including the 10

pilots, are at an early stage it is not possible to draw meaningful conclusions about the different approaches being trialled. The Commission has therefore examined the issues that local commissioners should consider if they are to use PBR successfully, drawing on some national and international examples. The briefing can be downloaded [here](#).

Evaluation of the various approaches being adopted across the country was not in scope for the review. The examples included here are by no means a full exploration of practice but are provided simply to stimulate debate in the context of the review comments included in Section 2 above. We recommend a full evaluation of these and other options before decisions about the future of housing related support in Worcestershire are taken.

In conducting our research, we have also sought the views of interviewees on possible or desirable changes to SP services in Worcestershire. The following is a summary of the suggestions made:

- Develop a more consistent approach to prioritisation across services / client groups;
- Explore ways of leveraging investment into preventative services, including virement between budgets;
- Standardise and simplify monitoring arrangements across contracts;
- Utilise Choice Checker resource across all areas of ASC commissioning and remove restrictions on access to County Hall for Choice Checkers;
- Simplify tendering arrangements, particularly to facilitate access for Providers and to reduce the time spent by commissioners on the evaluation of tenders;
- Simplify the reporting requirements for providers and remove the focus on outputs;
- Engage with business partners (Finance, Information Team) earlier in the Strategic Review process to help manage demand;
- Simplify the language used in strategic documents and plans;
- Increase public awareness of Supporting People service;
- Find new / better ways to engage with Health partners;
- Address the artificial separation of provision between 'support' and 'care';
- Increase engagement with Providers (co-production);
- Clarify and simplify reporting and decision-making arrangements.

These comments are included here for completeness; they are reflected more fully in sections 2 and 3 above.

Appendix – Checks undertaken

We carried out a number of on-site checks, based around the work described above, in order to get a full picture of Supporting People commissioning. These on-site checks were designed to gather evidence about the service and to see how well it is delivering against the Council's stated objectives. Our on-site checks included:

- Discussion with key personnel and external stakeholders, through a combination of one to one and focus group meetings;
- Observation of practice, for example at project meetings;
- Systems and documentation review;
- Progress reporting;
- Presentation of final report.

Off-site activities included:

- Research and identification of excellent commissioning practice and benchmarks;
- Assimilation of on-site notes and other records;
- Preparation of draft report for quality assurance;
- Publication of final report.

Action Plan

Recommendation	Page No.	Response	Action Owner	Due Date
Section 2: Review Findings				
The Supporting People Commissioning Body (SPCB) should consider and respond formally to each recommendation in the form of an action plan, to be submitted to the Chief Executive of Worcestershire County Council	4			
The SP partnership should refine and promote its vision in line with the next refresh of the SP strategy.	9			
The programme's constitution should be revised to reflect the current context and required operation, taking account of the views of all stakeholders.	10			
Identify deputies, particularly in respect of service user and elected member representatives, to serve on the SPCB.	11			
Ensure that SPCB members are able to influence and shape proposals before they are decided upon.	11			
Maintain an audit trail of key SP Strategy changes and publish on the SP website.	12			
Simplify and clarify the strategy and consider publishing in easy-read and other formats	13/14			

Recommendation	Page No.	Response	Action Owner	Due Date
The next iteration of the strategy should adopt the format for Market Position Statements developed by the Institute of Public Care	14			
Ensure that the SP Strategy demonstrates how SP priorities relate to the wider area priorities.	16			
Engage with the Provider Forum to explore issues associated with the administrative and reporting requirements of the programme, with a view to minimising the burden and associated costs	18			
Monitor the risks of provider failure and the number and nature of respondents to tendering exercises to ensure that the principles of local procurement and social capital are not breached.	18/19			
Undertake a 'whole programme' analysis to confirm resource prioritisation for the short to medium term: as the basis for a strategic realignment of programme resources	19			
Ensure that mechanisms are in place to support providers through the decommissioning of services in order to manage the risk of market failure.	19			
Explore the potential for the Choice Checker service to play a wider role in assessing service quality and engaging with clients across the area and beyond,	19			

Recommendation	Page No.	Response	Action Owner	Due Date
including as a commercial / social enterprise.				
Assess the number of providers with multiple contracts and investigate with those providers, ways of simplifying contractual and monitoring arrangements.	20			
The Eligibility Checklist published online is out of date, having been superseded with revised financial limits, and should be replaced by the most recent version.	21			
The programme's published Policy on Eligibility is marked as 'DRAFT' (created in 2006) – this should be refreshed to reflect the desired context.	21			
Further combinations of data should be explored in order to assess the relative value of services across client groups and to aid value-based prioritisation decisions.	23			
Produce management information about 'length of time in receipt of service' across client groups as evidence of people 'moving on' from service interventions.	23			
The next round of performance reporting should attempt to align performance to the wider objectives and priorities for the area.	23			
The SPCB should request a rolling progress report against operational responsibilities.	24			

Recommendation	Page No.	Response	Action Owner	Due Date
Ensure that the SP web pages are regularly updated with all relevant materials, including completed reviews and outcome summaries, in order to make delivery more transparent and the service more accountable.	24			
Section 3: Options for Change				
Changing the Funding	26 - 27			
Changing the Governance	28			
Changing the Operational arrangements	28 - 29			
Changing Provision	29 - 31			