

Supporting People Inspection Report

January 2008



Supporting People Re-inspection

Bedfordshire County Council

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Supporting People Inspections

The Audit Commission is an independent body responsible for ensuring that public money is spent economically, efficiently and effectively and delivers high quality local services for the public.

Within the Audit Commission, the Housing Inspectorate inspects and monitors the performance of a number of bodies and services. These include local authority housing departments, local authorities administering Supporting People programmes, arms length management organisations and housing associations. Our key lines of enquiry (KLOEs) set out the main issues which we consider when forming our judgements on the quality of services. The KLOEs can be found on the Audit Commission's website at www.audit-commission.gov.uk/housing.

This inspection has been carried out by the Housing Inspectorate using powers under section 10 of the Local Government Act 1999 and is in line with the Audit Commission's strategic regulation principles. In broad terms, these principles look to minimise the burden of regulation while maximising its impact. Supporting People inspections are carried out with the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP).

Supporting People is the Government's long-term policy to enable local authorities to plan, commission and provide housing-related support services which help vulnerable people live independently.

The Supporting People programme brings together significant funding streams including transitional housing benefit (THB), which has paid for the support costs associated with housing during the implementation phase, the Housing Corporation's supported housing management grant (SHMG), and the probation accommodation grant scheme (PAGS) into a single pot to be administered by 150 administering local authorities (ALA). Unitary and metropolitan authorities and counties are designated as an administering authority with the county taking the lead in most cases for the districts in their area.

Administering local authorities work in partnership, with districts where this is relevant, to agree Supporting People strategies and delivery mechanisms for housing related support services with housing, social services, health and the probation service providers. 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.

The former Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM)¹ has published a number of consultation papers on the developing programme and a work plan setting out what local authorities and their partners will need to achieve in order to deliver the programme effectively. All the relevant papers for Supporting People can be found on the Supporting People k-web that can be accessed through the Supporting People website: www.spkweb.org.uk.

¹ Now the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG).

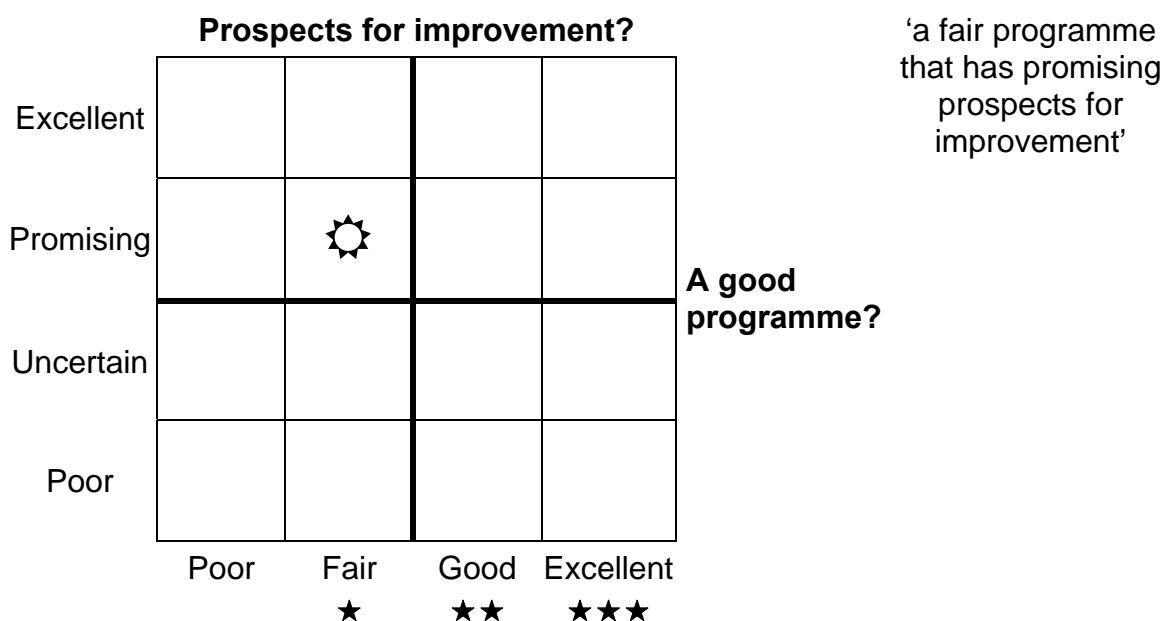
Summary

- 1 Bedfordshire County Council now administers a fair Supporting People programme which has promising prospects for improvement. In June 2006, when progress was first assessed, Bedfordshire's delivery of the programme was rated as poor with uncertain prospects for improvement.
- 2 The Council received a Supporting People grant of £7,118,216 in 2007/08 and an administration grant of £327,000. The Council has contributed an additional £100,000 worth of staff and resources. There are 80 contracts for 144 services providing 4,837 units of supported accommodation and 302 units of floating support. The highest cost service is accommodation based and provides visiting support to one person with a learning disability at a weekly cost of £413.29. The lowest cost service is an alarm only service with a unit cost of £0.97.
- 3 There is a strong corporate commitment to the Supporting People programme in Bedfordshire. There is a comprehensive understanding of the need for housing related support and the current gaps in provision. The Supporting People team is effective and well regarded.
- 4 Customer information is of good quality and sign-posting to Supporting People services is effective. Opportunities for service user involvement have greatly increased with service users' views shaping improvements and future plans. Provision is meeting a range of needs with a number of examples of positive outcomes for individual service users.
- 5 However, arrangements for safeguarding Supporting People service users are under-developed. Service users' complaints are poorly handled and managed. There is no single point of access for Supporting People services. Some accommodation based services are not fully accessible for people who have disabilities. Information about the programme is not readily available at some access points.
- 6 Information gained through customer surveys is not being used to improve the programme. Although service user involvement has improved, there is still no role for service users in the governance of the programme. There is limited choice for some people and the needs of some excluded groups are not being met.
- 7 The prospects for improvement are promising. The Council has made strong progress in implementing the Supporting People improvement plan and the recommendations from the June 2006 inspection. There have been a range of improvements customers would recognise. There is clear leadership for the programme and difficult decisions have been taken. There are sound plans which will deliver improved outcomes for service users and address key weaknesses. The Supporting People partnership is enhancing capacity.
- 8 However, the Council is not able to evidence a track record of improvement against Supporting People key performance indicators. There are weaknesses in performance monitoring and management and there is a lack of detail about how new service procurement will maximise value for money.

Scoring the Supporting People programme

- 9 We have assessed Bedfordshire County Council as providing a 'fair', one-star Supporting People programme that has promising prospects for improvement. Our judgements are based on the evidence obtained during the inspection and are outlined below.

Figure 1 Scoring chart²



Source: Audit Commission

- 10 We found the programme to be fair because it has a range of strengths including:
- good quality customer information including a directory of services;
 - frontline staff are effectively directing customers towards Supporting People services;
 - increased opportunities for service user involvement with service users' views shaping improvements and future plans;
 - a range of needs being met by Supporting People services which have all been assessed as meeting at least satisfactory standards;
 - a number of examples of individual service users being supported to live independently;

² The scoring chart displays performance in two dimensions. The horizontal axis shows how good the programme is now, on a scale ranging from no stars for a programme that is poor (at the left-hand end) to three stars for an excellent programme (right-hand end). The vertical axis shows the improvement prospects of the programme, also on a four-point scale.

- a strong corporate commitment to the programme;
 - a comprehensive understanding of the need for housing related support and the gaps in provision; and
 - an effective and highly regarded Supporting People team.
- 11 However, there are some areas which require improvement including:
- arrangements for safeguarding vulnerable young people and adults who are using Supporting People services are under-developed;
 - choice is limited and the needs of some excluded groups are not being met;
 - service users' complaints are poorly handled and are not performance managed;
 - service users are not involved in governing the programme;
 - there is no single point of access, referral or assessment for Supporting People services;
 - some accommodation based services are not fully accessible for people who have disabilities;
 - Supporting People information is not openly displayed at some customer access points; and
 - customer surveys are not being used to improve individual services.
- 12 The programme has promising prospects for improvement because:
- strong progress has been made in implementing the Supporting People improvement plan and the recommendations from the June 2006 inspection;
 - a range of customer facing improvements have been delivered;
 - there is clear leadership of the programme with difficult decisions taken;
 - there are sound plans in place to deliver improved outcomes for service users and address key weaknesses; and
 - the Supporting People partnership is enhancing capacity.
- 13 However, there are some barriers to improvement. These include:
- the Council is not able to evidence a track record of improvement against Supporting People key performance indicators;
 - there are weaknesses in the approach to monitoring and managing the performance of the Supporting People programme; and
 - there is a lack of detail about how procurement of new services will maximise value for money.

Recommendations

- 14 To rise to the challenge of continuous improvement, organisations need inspection reports that offer practical pointers for improvement. Our recommendations identify the expected benefits for both local people and the organisation. In addition, we identify the approximate costs³ and indicate the priority we place on each recommendation and key dates for delivering these where they are considered appropriate. The inspection team makes the following recommendations.

Recommendation

R1 Take immediate action to review the arrangements for safeguarding Supporting People service users and take steps to address the related weaknesses identified in this report.

Recommendation

R2 Improve access and customer focus by:

- ensuring that the Council's complaints process is widely publicised to all Supporting People service users and ensuring that barriers to its use are identified and removed;*
- devising a consistent and comprehensive system for tracking progress on and the quality of complaints handling by the Supporting People team and recording the outcomes and the learning points;*
- reviewing the approach to customer satisfaction surveys to ensure that the findings can be used to improve individual services; and*
- ensuring that information on Supporting People is readily available at key customer access points in the County.*

The expected benefits of this recommendation are:

- improved access to services;
- increased customer satisfaction;
- integration of services with customers' needs; and
- improved service delivery.

The implementation of this recommendation will have high impact with low costs. This should be implemented within three months of report publication.

³ Low cost is defined as less than 1 per cent of the annual service cost, medium cost is between 1 and 5 per cent and high cost is over 5 per cent.

Recommendation

R3 Improve service users' involvement in the programme by:

- *ensuring that they have a clear role in the governance of the Supporting People programme with appropriate support and training provided;*
- *developing mechanisms to ensure that service users have a role in monitoring the quality and performance of services; and*
- *ensuring that service users have a role in other aspects of the programme including developing new services and customer information.*

The expected benefits of this recommendation are:

- increased empowerment of service users; and
- increased service user focus with service user-led improvements.

The implementation of this recommendation will have high impact with low costs. This should be implemented within 12 months of report publication.

Recommendation

R4 Integrate value for money and performance management into working practices by:

- *continuing to build on the work done to date to ensure that value for money is maximised including setting targets for achieving efficiency savings in the Supporting People programme with outcomes monitored and reported;*
- *reviewing the approach to target setting to ensure that targets are challenging but realistic;*
- *ensuring that gaps in performance monitoring and management activity identified in this report are addressed; and*
- *developing a clear procurement strategy to ensure that new Supporting People services are procured in a way that maximises value for money.*

The expected benefits of this recommendation are:

- better use of resources;
- improved services and outcomes for service users; and
- efficiency savings.

The implementation of this recommendation will have high impact with low costs. This should be implemented within six months of report publication.

Recommendation

R5 Improve the management of the programme by:

- *working with providers and stakeholders to monitor whether move-on from accommodation-based services is an issue and develop a strategic approach to resolving any issues identified;*
- *ensuring that steady state contracts are in place for all Supporting People services; and*
- *working with providers to ensure that compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act is achieved.*

The expected benefits of this recommendation are:

- increased choice for disabled service users; and
- more effective use of accommodation-based Supporting People services.

The implementation of this recommendation will have high impact with low costs. This should be implemented within 12 months of report publication.

Recommendation

R6 Report and publicise the key findings of this report to service users, service providers, stakeholders, councillors and staff.

Recommendation

R7 Take action to address all other weaknesses identified in this report.

- 15 We would like to thank the staff of Bedfordshire County Council who made us welcome and who met our requests efficiently and courteously.

Dates of inspection: 15 October to 19 October 2007

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Report

Context

The locality

- 16 Bedfordshire County Council is situated in the eastern region of England. Bedfordshire has a population of 397,700⁴, of which 14.4 per cent are aged over 65. At 11.1 per cent⁵ the proportion of residents from black and minority ethnic (BME) groups is slightly lower than the national average (13 per cent) but higher than the regional average (8.5 per cent).
- 17 Unemployment at 3.6⁶ per cent is lower than both the national average (4.9 per cent) and the regional average (4 per cent). The major employers for the region are the National Health Service, local authorities and the Police.

The Council

- 18 The Council has a political structure of leader and cabinet with the Conservative party in overall control. The Conservative party has 36 seats, the Liberal Democrats hold 9 seats and the Labour party has 7 seats.
- 19 Excluding schools staff, the Council employs 3,480 full time equivalent staff to plan and deliver its services. For the current year, the Council has a revenue budget of just over £221 million.
- 20 In an up-date of the Council's Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) score in July 2007, the Audit Commission rated the Council as a 'three-star' authority (out of a possible four). In terms of direction of travel, the Council is judged to be 'improving well'.
- 21 In July 2007 the government announced, as part of its local government reorganisation plans, that Bedford Borough Council would become a unitary council delivering all local government services in the north of Bedfordshire from April 2009. The government had asked Bedfordshire County Council to join with Mid and South Beds District Councils to work to develop a Central Bedfordshire option for delivering council services to the remainder of the county.

The Supporting People programme

- 22 For the current year, the Council received a Supporting People grant of £7,118,216 and an administration grant of £327,000. Additional staff and resources worth £100,000 have been contributed to the Supporting People programme by the Council.

⁴ The Mid year estimate for 2005 as published by the Office of National Statistics, 24 August 2006.

⁵ 2001 Census

⁶ Source: Annual Population Survey (Jan 05-Dec 05) & Annual Survey of Hours & Earnings 2006 - ONS

- 23** The 2006/07 Supporting People budget was under spent by £514,742.84. This was due to the strategic re-shaping of funding to permit the floating support service to be remodelled and also to provide revenue funding support for two new build and one remodelled refuge. The administration grant was also under spent in 2006/07 by £52,512.60. This was due to a restructure of the Supporting People team during the 2007/08 financial year.
- 24** The Accountable Officer for Supporting People is the Director of Adult and Community Services. The Supporting People team consists of:
- the Supporting People Lead Officer;
 - a Business and Contracts Manager;
 - a Commissioning Manager;
 - a Project Manager
 - a Commissioning Manager 16+ (joint post with Children's Services);
 - three Contracts Officers;
 - a Commissioning Officer; and
 - an administration assistant.
- 25** There are 80 contracts for 144 services. Bedfordshire has 4,837 units of supported accommodation and 302 units of floating support. The highest cost service is an accommodation based service with visiting support for one person with a learning disability with a weekly cost of £413.29. The lowest cost service is an alarm only service which is £0.97.
- 26** We first assessed Bedfordshire County Council's delivery of the Supporting People programme in June 2006. At that time we rated it as delivering a poor, zero-star programme with uncertain prospects for improvement.

How good is the Supporting People programme?

What has the programme aimed to achieve?

- 27 Bedfordshire's Supporting People Strategy 2006-11 sets out the following vision for the programme:

'Bedfordshire Supporting People will provide accessible high quality and cost effective housing related support for vulnerable people which complements existing services. Working in partnership with all stakeholders and in consultation with users, we will ensure services respond to local need, are inclusive, equitable, flexible and promote independence.'

- 28 The strategy has five key themes of partnership working and joint commissioning; investing resources to meet a variety of needs; engaging with service users and providers; improving access to Supporting People services; and improvement of referral mechanisms across services. It also sets out three overarching priorities:
- to develop referral mechanisms across services to enable countywide access to a range of services;
 - to develop service specifications and quality monitoring which are based on outcomes; and
 - to work with district councils and housing providers to ensure that lettings arrangements and move-on protocols exist to enable best use to be made of Supporting People services.
- 29 The priorities for future growth are to increase floating support and move-on provision and develop models for addressing multiple and complex needs.

Is the programme meeting the needs of the local community and users?

- 30 The assessment was based on the following key issues:

- governance and partnerships;
- grant compliance, strategy and needs;
- delivery arrangements;
- commissioning and performance;
- value for money;
- service user involvement;
- access to services and information;

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- diversity; and
- outcomes for service users.

Governance and partnerships

- 31** The Communities and Local Government (CLG) department has set out the following structural arrangements for the governance, development and delivery of the Supporting People programme.
- Accountable Officer and the Supporting People team: drive the whole process.
 - Inclusive forum: consults with service providers and service users.
 - Core strategy group: proposes strategic direction, service review procedures and timetables and work needed to secure the effective and efficient delivery and development of the programme.
 - Commissioning body: agrees strategic direction, compliance with grant conditions, outcomes of service reviews and monitors the delivery and development of the programme.
 - Councillors: approve key decisions of the Commissioning Body.
 - Supporting People team: delivers the local programme.
- 32** The June 2006 inspection found that weaknesses outweighed strengths in this area. Governance structures were in place but had not been operating in the most effective way to drive and develop the programme. However, corporate commitment to the Supporting People programme had improved.
- 33** In this re-inspection strengths and weaknesses are balanced. There has been a cultural shift in the governance of the Supporting People programme and corporate commitment to the programme is strong. The Commissioning Body is functioning effectively and the Accountable Officer is providing effective leadership. Key stakeholders are well represented and engaged in the programme and there is sound engagement with carers and advocacy groups. However, the Core Strategy Group and the Providers' Forum are not fully effective and service users are not currently involved in programme governance. Arrangements for safeguarding vulnerable adults are under-developed.

Corporate commitment

- 34** The Council has a strong, well-embedded, corporate commitment to the Supporting People programme in Bedfordshire. There is a clear understanding of the Council's role as the Administering Local Authority (ALA) for Supporting People. There is also recognition of how the programme is supporting and contributing to the delivery of relevant corporate priorities and objectives and enabling vulnerable people to live independently in the County.

- 35 Links between corporate priorities, the Supporting People strategy and other key strategies are clear. The Supporting People target for planned move-on from housing related support services is included in the Local Area Agreement (LAA). The programme is directly contributing to the two Council objectives to 'help those who need our help most' and 'build strong, prosperous and sustainable communities'. Local housing authority partners are ensuring that their housing and homelessness strategies dovetail with the Supporting People five-year strategy and those who are reviewing their strategies are drawing on the refreshed needs data. This is helping to ensure that the Supporting People programme is well integrated with wider strategies and objectives.
- 36 Relationships between key elected members and senior officers are positive. Regular briefings and discussions take place addressing performance and progress. Councillors understand the respective roles of the Commissioning Body, the Core Strategy Group and other elements of the Supporting People programme and offer constructive challenge to the service. This is ensuring accountability for the programme.

Commissioning Body

- 37 The Commissioning Body is functioning effectively. Meetings are regularly attended by key stakeholders with members who are of sufficient seniority. The group is stable and has matured. Difficult decisions have been taken, for example, the moving of focus and resources away from older people and people with a learning disability towards socially excluded groups such as those experiencing domestic violence, young people, substance misusers and people with mental health needs. Meetings are well managed and well run and a clear work plan guides the work of both the Commissioning Body and the Core Strategy Group. Overall, the Commissioning Body is providing direction and leadership to the Supporting People programme.
- 38 Commissioning Body members are well informed by the Supporting People team and their own experience to enable constructive challenge and decision making. They have secured changes in the way that information is presented to them with, for example, decisions taken to withdraw funding or move onto steady state contracts being based on very detailed understandings of cost and benefits weighed against identified need and relative priorities.
- 39 The partnership guide for the Supporting People programme is providing a comprehensive and useful resource. The content was widely consulted upon and it brings together key information in one place. Both Commissioning Body and Core Strategy Group members have indicated that this is providing a useful reference tool, particularly for new members.

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- 40 A mentoring arrangement is allowing Commissioning Body members to make use of their specific skills and expertise to add value to the work of the Supporting People team. Five Commissioning Body members are mentoring staff members on performance management, contracts, commissioning, the single assessment framework, service user involvement and diversity. Those members also present reports to the Commissioning Body on those work streams. This is involving Board members more closely in the programme and also helping to develop staff skills.
- 41 Steps are being taken to increase the links between the Commissioning Body and Core Strategy Group. A recently held joint meeting provided a useful opportunity to build synergy between the two groups. The event was used to identify strengths and weaknesses for the whole programme with the outcomes captured in action plans and the draft five-year strategy. Although there has been a potential for tensions given the implications of local government review proposals, Commissioning Body and Core Strategy Group members have put this aside and have worked well together to improve and develop the Supporting People programme.
- 42 Some of the documents presented to the Commissioning Body are not laid out in a helpful way. The Bedfordshire Supporting People 'Homeless Review for People with Drug and Alcohol Issues' does not show when it was written, who it was written by or who it is written for. There is no summary to say what the document is about. There are two different documents called 'Annual Plan 2007-08' with very different lay outs, and there are no dates or version numbers to distinguish them or show which is more up to date. This does not aid clear understanding or decision making.

Core Strategy Group

- 43 The Core Strategy Group is not fully effective. While some partners attend regularly, meeting attendance by a number of stakeholders, including one district council and Probation, is patchy. Some stakeholders have indicated that this may be due to the size of the group, that not everyone is able to engage with the agenda and also that the volume of information circulated means that it may be daunting for some people. The potential for the group to support the development and direction of the Supporting People programme is therefore not fully realised.
- 44 Some work has been done to improve partners' engagement with the Core Strategy Group. The Lead Officer is working with each member to explain their roles and using the partnership handbook as a basis for this. Attendance appears to have improved and there has been increased engagement around the work on needs assessment, the draft strategy and the proposals for reconfiguring the floating support service.

Accountable Officer

- 45 The Accountable Officer is providing leadership for Bedfordshire's Supporting People programme. He is in a position of seniority within the Council and is championing Supporting People internally and externally. This has helped to embed the programme corporately and in a wider context. The Accountable Officer has also been closely involved in monitoring the delivery of the programme's improvement plan which has provided direction in addressing many of the weaknesses identified in the June 2006 inspection. This has helped to drive forward improvement in the programme.

Health, housing, social care and probation/criminal justice partnership arrangements

- 46 Health, housing, social care and probation are well represented and engaged in the programme and understand its relevance to their areas of operation. Bedfordshire Drug and Alcohol Team is actively involved in the Core Strategy Group and reports good operational links with the Supporting People team. There is also a constructive partnership between the Youth Offending Service and the Supporting People team. This is helping to ensure that the needs of a wide range of needs groups are represented.
- 47 Multi-Agency Public Protection Agreements (MAPPA) arrangements are effective and the Youth Offending Service, housing officers and providers are properly represented in the process. This helps to assure public confidence.
- 48 While there is awareness of the need to safeguard young people and vulnerable adults and processes in place, there are some weaknesses in the overall approach. The Supporting People team is checking that providers have the necessary safeguarding training, policies and procedures in place but there is no comprehensive checking or monitoring of their use. Staff have had awareness raising training on safeguarding but this is not enough to enable them to monitor and challenge providers' practices in this area. The Commissioning Body has no role in monitoring safeguarding issues relating to the Supporting People programme and the risk register for the programme, while detailed, does not cover this key area of risk. Overall, the Council cannot be certain that the safety of vulnerable people using Supporting People services is assured.

Service providers

- 49 The Council is working in a spirit of partnership with service providers. It produces regular newsletters and briefings which providers find useful. It supports the provider-led Provider Forum. It has worked in close consultation with providers on the development of the common assessment framework and feedback from them and service users have influenced the framework.
- 50 The Supporting People team is giving support to small providers. They have worked with individual providers to help them to put policies and procedures in place and given them good practice examples to follow. They have also helped them to develop good quality support plans. This is helping to improve services for vulnerable people.

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- 51 Although well attended and well chaired in the past, the effectiveness of the Provider Forum has declined in recent months. Group members have indicated that a lack of continuous attendance by some providers has meant that some discussions and issues are returned to and repeated which has limited the progress made by the group. The Council recognises that this is an issue and has engaged a consultant to work with the group to make the group and future meetings more effective.

Voluntary and Community Sector

- 52 Engagement with carers and advocacy groups is sound. The Supporting People Lead Officer sits on the Bedfordshire Carers' Group and carers have attended recent service user consultation events. There is close working with advocacy groups with advocates attending the Provider Forum and being active in ensuring that service users attend consultation events. While there have been few outcomes to date, fostering these links is ensuring that the views of all stakeholders are considered.
- 53 There are currently no opportunities for service user involvement in the Supporting People governance structure. While advocacy groups are represented on the Provider Forum, service users themselves do not have a direct involvement. The Council recognises that this is a weakness and is working with seventeen service users who have expressed an interest in becoming more involved in the programme, although they do not wish to attend meetings, and a local advocacy group, to develop a mechanism for ensuring that service users' views are communicated through the programme's governance structure.

Grant compliance, strategy and needs

- 54 The June 2006 inspection found that eligibility criteria and Fairer Charging were in place and providers were paid on time. However, despite working on a redraft of the five-year strategy for nearly a year it was still not available.
- 55 Weaknesses outweigh strengths in this area. Eligibility criteria are robust and funding has been withdrawn from ineligible services. The Council has comprehensive data on housing related support needs in the County including an analysis of the gaps in provision. While the draft five-year strategy shows promise, the existing strategy is weak. There is no move-on strategy and a lack of clarity about the extent of this issue in Bedfordshire. In this fifth year of the programme these are key weaknesses.

Grant conditions and eligibility criteria

- 56 Robust eligibility criteria are in place and the Council is meeting the grant conditions. The eligibility criteria are clear and detailed and were applied to all service reviews. All ineligible funding, totalling £417,000, has been retracted. The Council is ensuring that funding for Supporting People services is being maximised.

Five-year strategy

- 57 The existing five-year strategy 2006-2011 is weak. The needs analysis on which it is based is not robust and its plans are not prioritised or costed. In its current form it does not provide a firm basis from which to develop the Supporting People programme.
- 58 The Council recognises these weaknesses and is working with stakeholders to develop an improved strategy based on the recently completed needs data. The draft strategy is short, easy to read and has been influenced by service users. It includes specific targets such as increasing the number of floating support units, refocusing sheltered housing services to provide more floating support, and increasing refuge provision and provision for people with complex needs and those at risk of social exclusion. The draft strategy also makes clear linkages with the plans and strategies of key stakeholders. While consultation is still underway, the draft document provides a stronger platform for the programme than the existing strategy.

Needs mapping, analysis and review

- 59 The Council has undertaken a comprehensive needs assessment developed with stakeholder input. As well as commissioning a needs analysis in spring 2007, it has drawn on service users' experiences and on data from partners such as the Probation and Youth Offending services. It has added the findings of the research it commissioned into the needs of BME older people undertaken by Bedford Racial Equality Council as well as information on the needs of older people with mental health needs and those in residential care. Key stakeholders are satisfied that the data from the needs assessment is an accurate assessment of housing related support needs in the County and that it forms a sound basis for future service development and commissioning decisions.
- 60 While comprehensive, the needs mapping data has not yet been put in a format that is easy for stakeholders to follow. There is no easy to digest summary for each service area that would allow stakeholders to check whether the methodology is robust and decide whether they agree with the recommendations that flow from the needs.

Strategy for access to move-on accommodation

- 61 The Council lacks a strategic approach to move-on issues and is not clear what the extent of the problem is. The needs analysis did not indicate that this was a problem and, when consulted by the Council, the Core Strategy Group confirmed this. However, individual providers told us that there are cases where people are ready to move-on to independent living but are not able to do so due to a lack of suitable accommodation. There is no move-on strategy and the Council is not rigorously monitoring the issue or assessing the costs associated with services being silted up. As a result, vulnerable people may have to wait longer than necessary to access Supporting People services.

Delivery arrangements

- 62 The last inspection found that weaknesses outweighed strengths. The Supporting People team had suffered from problems with recruitment and retention and, as a result, it lacked the knowledge and experience needed. Relationships with providers were starting to improve but this was a relatively recent development.
- 63 This re-inspection found a balance of strengths and weaknesses. The Supporting People team is effective, well regarded and able to draw on a range of expertise. Work planning is effective. The programme is well integrated into the Local Area Agreement. The performance management framework and the approach to risk are sound overall. However, there are some weaknesses in the programme's annual plan. Performance targets are not being met and there are limited outcomes from performance monitoring activity. Safeguarding issues are not included in the risk register and the Council cannot evidence its performance on providing data to CLG.

Supporting People Team

- 64 The Supporting People team is effective and well regarded. Team members have a range of relevant skills and experience. This has been enhanced by the inclusion of a social worker as the Commissioning Manager 16+, a jointly managed post with Children's Services and the secondment of someone with expertise in diversity into the project manager role. The team works well together and members have much wider knowledge than before assisted by effective discussions and team meetings. Staff are clear about their workloads and progress against the work plan. Providers have noted the team's improved engagement, honesty and willingness to listen.
- 65 The Lead Officer is provider oriented, accessible and a positive appointment who has brought fresh ideas and innovation. Stakeholders have cited a number of examples where the Lead Officer's intervention and involvement has enabled longstanding issues to be addressed. This includes progressing the provision of an interim refuge in South Bedfordshire and the extension of floating support into the private sector. This has helped to build stakeholders' confidence in the Supporting People team.
- 66 The team is able to draw on a range of expertise. It is well placed in the commissioning section of adult services as advice is shared on commissioning issues as well as building understanding around the needs of particular client groups. This has improved morale as staff used to feel isolated. As well as the secondments mentioned earlier, which are financed from outside the team, the team also receives input from the corporate equality manager, assistance from finance in forecasting and regular help from IT. The team commissions external resources where needed, for example a benchmarking service provider has helped develop the benchmarking toolkit and a specialist research company carried out the needs analysis. This is adding to the overall effectiveness of the Supporting People team.

Work planning

- 67 The Supporting People programme has an effective planning process. The annual plan is detailed and includes timescales, responsibilities, budgets and outcomes. This is helping to provide direction for the programme.
- 68 However, the annual plan has some weaknesses. It is not clear when it was last updated. The measurable outputs and outcomes lack clarity as they fail to indicate when they will be achieved or what is 'successful'. The targets are not labelled so that stakeholders know they are LAA targets or match ones from particular partners. The column on outcomes consists of a collection of important phrases that apply to the whole section and cannot be measured. Individual actions have no outcomes or measures. Finally, as it was revised in September 2007 and it does not include the original target dates, it is not possible to see if there has been any slippage in the plan since it was originally developed. This limits the usefulness and impact of the plan overall.
- 69 The Supporting People team is contributing to the planning of services for adults with learning disabilities. This work has been informed through joint work with the Supporting People team and service users and has provided quality evidence of preferences, such as wanting to access services when they are needed rather than institutional, regular provision.
- 70 The Supporting People team is behind schedule in the contract compliance and improvement plans. The process of collecting data should have been completed in June 2007; however, due to weaknesses in communication and inadequate chasing this was not done until September 2007.

Local Area Agreements (LAA)

- 71 The Supporting People programme is well integrated into the LAA. Supporting People KPI 2 (planned move-on) is an LAA target and Supporting People specifically contributes to targets for substance misuse, domestic violence and emergency admissions. In addition there are related targets such as reducing homelessness.
- 72 There are some weaknesses in the integration of Supporting People in the LAA. Although there are direct links as described above, apart from KPI 2, these are not explicit in the LAA document. The document does not indicate which organisations or services have accountability for contributing to successfully achieving the targets. This limits effectiveness overall.

Performance monitoring and management

- 73 The programme's performance management framework is sound overall. There are clear reporting lines through the Council's management structure, to elected members and to the programme's own governance structure. The Commissioning Body receives a range of information that enables it to make informed decisions including performance against agreed indicators, action and improvement plans, including the diversity and equality action plan, and value for money tools. Improvements have been made to the way in which performance and financial information is presented to aid understanding and monitoring although there is more to do to make financial reporting comprehensive. Overall, key stakeholders have the information they need to track performance.
- 74 There are examples of active performance monitoring with remedial action taken although there have been few tangible outcomes to date.
- A risk table enables the team to chase up providers who are weak in certain areas of service delivery including PIs not submitted on time or a lack of appropriate paperwork in place. The team then sends warning letters and, if necessary, default notices with one default notice served in the year to April 2007.
 - The team is working with some providers to ensure that they submit accurate performance information.
 - They are helping providers with a poor level of utilisation by, for example, giving help with advertising and linking them with a larger provider.
 - One provider had poor PIs, poor stakeholder feedback and was expensive which triggered a special service review.
 - Providers who are under-performing on planned move-on for service users are given only one year contracts with improvement plans as an incentive to improve.
- 75 Supporting People performance targets are consistently not being met. While ambitious targets have been set for the programme, reports show that the majority of performance indicators are below the target set. Different measures are rolled into one in an inappropriate way, so targets are too low for some measures and not being met for others.
- 76 Although satisfaction surveys are part of the monitoring process, they are not being used to drive improvement. The surveys do not include information on which service and provider the respondent is commenting on. This means that issues for specific services and providers cannot be highlighted and remedied and that a score for service user satisfaction cannot be included in the overall evaluation of a service. An opportunity to monitor and improve services is being missed.

- 77 Providers are well informed about contract monitoring through a useful handbook, however the handbook can be improved. It does not communicate to providers clearly what the sanctions are for failing to meet requirements such as providing data on time, and providers were confused earlier in the year about what evidence they were required to provide. However, overall providers' response to the contract monitoring process is improving.

Fairer charging

- 78 Service users are well informed about Fairer Charging. This includes a clear leaflet and information on the Council's website. Where it is not clear if a service user needs an assessment, the Council makes a continued effort to contact them asking them to claim and asks permission to find out if they are on Housing Benefit. The Council's welfare rights service has also been working with some service users to maximise their income. Overall, the number of referrals for Fairer Charging has been increased from less than 50 in 2005/06 to 100 in 2006/07.
- 79 However, people who may be eligible for Fairer Charging assessments are not effectively targeted. The Supporting People team is not working with providers to identify service users who are currently paying for services themselves. This is a missed opportunity to target take-up work towards those who are most likely to be eligible.
- 80 The Council does not coordinate Fairer Charging between Supporting People and care services. This means that if somebody is receiving Supporting People support and care, they would have to go through two application processes. This is both inefficient and poor customer service.
- 81 Although the Council offers a valuable income maximisation service, it is not well promoted. It is only offered to those who are not on Housing Benefit and as part of a service to help service users fill in the Fairer Charging form. The implied result is that those who are happy to fill in the form themselves are not entitled to help with income maximisation. There is also no record of how many Supporting People service users have benefited from the income maximisation service.
- 82 The Council's approach to backdating Fairer Charging is not customer focused. Where a provider makes administrative errors with paperwork, the Council does not make a payment even if it would have otherwise had to pay for the service. In one instance a vulnerable service user was left with a debt of £150 due to an error on the part of their service provider. This is needlessly penalising vulnerable service users for provider errors.

Risk management

- 83 The Supporting People programme's approach to risk is sound overall. The Council has a corporate risk management strategy which is helpful for providing overall direction, highlighting responsibilities and giving practical guidelines. An annually updated service risk impact assessment table for the Supporting People programme identifies a number of risks including the impact of service closure. A contingency plan is in place with two per cent or £140,000 of the Supporting People pot allocated for unexpected events as outlined in the policy.

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- 84 However, the Supporting People risk register does not address risks to young people or vulnerable adults. Safeguarding issues are important and service failure in this area could have serious consequences. This is a key omission which the Council is now taking steps to address.
- 85 The contingency plan does not include ensuring that there are organisations able to step in and help or take over in an emergency or in the event of a provider withdrawing. The interests of vulnerable people are not being fully protected.

CLG data uploads

- 86 The Council does not report, at all, nor keep information on, performance on providing complete data information to CLG. As a result the Council does not know how well it is meeting one of its grant conditions or whether performance in this data collecting exercise is improving.

Commissioning and performance

- 87 In June 2006 there had been a slow start to the service review programme. Although the Council was expected to meet the (then) ODPM's deadline for completing reviews, there was no time to look at services strategically. There was inconsistency in the application of quality assurance processes. However, reviews were well received by providers.
- 88 This re-inspection found that weaknesses outweigh strengths. The contract compliance process is effective, the Council is engaged in cross authority working with some outcomes and the improvement process is effective. However, steady state contracts have still not been issued. Quality assurance systems are not yet in place. The Council's approach to service users' complaints is an area of significant weakness.

Contracts

- 89 Although steady state contracts have not yet been issued, the contract compliance system, which is robust, has been in place since April 2007. Information is collected quarterly, annually or once in the contract as appropriate and relevant information is pulled together in an annual report. Visits are planned to half of the learning disability services with greater emphasis on visits in the future. The Council has a handbook for providers on how to meet compliance requirements along with guidance on how to assess and provide information on the Quality Assessment Framework (QAF).
- 90 The Council consults well on the contract compliance system. Providers were consulted through a working group first and a presentation on it went to the providers' forum over a month before it went live. Feedback after six months has led to changes, reducing the number of contract compliance documents required from 22 to 8.

- 91 The Council will be using contracts effectively to drive up service standards. The first set of steady state contracts are planned for homeless services in November 2007. Services that are not performing so well will be given a one year contract with a promise of a longer one if they implement a number of changes and meet certain standards.
- 92 However, the majority of providers have not yet been issued with steady state contracts. This should have been done when service reviews were completed in March 2006. While only three providers have steady state contracts there are plans in place to issue contracts to providers receiving 48 per cent of the grant, equalling around 38 per cent of contracts, by November 2007 with the remainder being issued within 12 months. Until these are issued to providers, they will not have the certainty they need to provide stable services.
- 93 The Council is not yet sharing good practice on contract compliance. The contract compliance function for Supporting People does not work with or learn from its counterparts in the rest of the Council. This is a missed opportunity to secure improvements in the programme.
- 94 The new contract monitoring process does not focus adequately on eligibility. It is not addressed until the end of the contract. A file on a service for frail elderly people picked randomly as part of the monitoring process showed a support plan that was almost entirely care. The only housing related support was maintaining links with the family, despite four hours of frontline support per person per week. The file did not indicate how much care was being paid for making it harder to judge the eligibility question. The Council might be funding ineligible services as a result of inadequate monitoring.

Quality assurance

- 95 Quality assurance of the contract monitoring process is limited. The two contract officers sometimes look at each others work but this is not recorded and the managers read the reports that they write. The team does have a plan to do random checks on the process but this has not started yet.

Cross authority

- 96 The Supporting People team is well engaged with cross authority and regional working with some outcomes. Regional accreditation is in place and a regional steady state contract has been developed which the Council will use. Benchmarking has been done on homelessness and this has informed contract negotiations.

Improvement planning

- 97 The Council has an appropriate process for improving services. Providers are required to improve against the QAF in two areas of their choice in a six month period. Providers use their own initiative on how to make the improvement. The Council will only intervene and take action if the improvement is not made. This puts pressure on providers to improve while enabling providers to work to their own strengths.

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- 98 Services have improved. All providers who did not reach level C in each area of the QAF received an action plan from the Council. By April 2007 all services had been validated as reaching level C and 84 out of 100 services for older people improved in at least two QAF areas.
- 99 While services are improving, too many currently sit at level 3 of the QAF. At the point of inspection, 105 services, or 74 per cent, were at level C with only 37 or 26 per cent of services at level B. No services had an A overall. There is also no reporting on the number or proportion of services at the four QAF levels. As the criteria for what constitutes a level C service are reviewed and the bar is raised, there is a risk that a large proportion of Supporting People services in Bedfordshire will not meet minimum standards unless clear and challenging targets are set for services to progress through the QAF.
- 100 Contract monitoring processes are not vigorously driving service improvements. The document on the process has a limited focus on service improvement and does not result in a score which would easily highlight the lower or higher performing services. It is not used on a cross authority basis so benchmarking is not possible. The contract monitoring process does not include the views of service users from the annual survey. This limits the overall impact of the process.

Complaints and appeals

- 101 It is not easy for Supporting People service users to complain to the Council about the service they are receiving. While a leaflet explains the complaints process for Supporting People service users, the procedure is unduly restrictive and unclear in the complaints that will be accepted. The Council does not check that providers' complaints procedures tell service users of their right to complain to the Council. Service users are told that complaints must be put in writing which is a barrier to some vulnerable people. Opportunities to address service users' concerns and to improve services are being missed.
- 102 The Council is failing to provide an effective complaints service. There is no monitoring of complaints to check that they have been handled promptly and appropriately. We reviewed a very serious complaint which had been poorly handled with lack of timely or appropriate action taken. There is also no process for capturing and disseminating learning points from complaints. Vulnerable service users are not receiving an appropriate or high quality service in this area.
- 103 A clear process is in place to deal with providers' appeals against service review or any other Commissioning Body decisions. This has not been used to date.

Outcomes

- 104 There are few examples of service improvements as a result of the service review process completed in March 2006. However, outcomes from the QAF show that services are addressing quality issues and services are improving their QAF score. In addition, the service reviews have led to the retraction of ineligible funding and savings totalling £1.1 million which has freed up resources to commission new services in line with priorities.

Value for money

- 105** In the last inspection this was an area where weaknesses outweighed strengths. The approach to addressing value for money was still being developed and was focused solely on costs. Savings, although not efficiency gains, had been made through service reviews and providers were to be paid an uplift in 2006/07. Benchmarking had been limited although this was being looked at regionally.
- 106** Strengths and weaknesses are now balanced. The value for money methodology for Supporting People is sound and benchmarking of services is taking place. The draft procurement plan is clear and some progress has been made on joint procurement. While there are some examples of value for money being achieved, overall the programme has been slow to comprehensively address value for money issues. It is unclear how new services will be procured and benchmarking on the administration grant has not led to any outcomes.

How do costs compare?

- 107** Since the Supporting People programme began in April 2003 average unit costs have reduced for most needs groups and increased only slightly for older and frail older people, people with mental health problems and young people leaving care. Comparison of homelessness services regionally and through a national benchmarking service shows that Bedfordshire Supporting People services are consistently 20 per cent or more below comparators' average costs.

How is value for money managed?

Methodology for contracted services

- 108** The Council has a clear understanding of the relationship between cost, quality and outcomes for service users. This is demonstrated by a strong value for money methodology which includes price, outcomes, quality and performance. This was developed with a working group of stakeholders and was based on Warwickshire's model which was amended to suit local circumstances. The methodology also allows for factors such as locality and complex service user groups to be taken into account in carrying out an assessment. This tool is providing a comprehensive basis from which to negotiate steady state contracts with providers.
- 109** The value for money assessments for the steady state contracts has been more robust than the process used in service reviews. The latest exercise has involved comparing costs, quality and outcomes for homeless services and resulted in a redistribution of the funding within that service group. Some providers are getting more money and others less, according to their assessed value for money.

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- 110 The value for money process carried out for service reviews was not robust. While almost £600,000 in savings were realised as part of the service review process, a more recent exercise on homeless services has highlighted further value for money issues. This delay in comprehensively assessing the value for money provided by all services means that it will be the end of 2007 before poorer value for money services have their funding adjusted. As a result, some services will have received more Supporting People funding than was necessary for almost five years.

Benchmarking

- 111 The programme is actively engaging in benchmarking on Supporting People service costs although there have been few outcomes to date. Due to a lack of meaningful local benchmarking opportunities, the Council took the decision to subscribe to a national benchmarking service as well as benchmarking regionally. While this data is being used to inform negotiations on steady state contracts, these are not yet in place.

Procurement

- 112 A clear corporate procurement strategy and action plan is in place. While the 2007 Corporate Assessment of the Council found that it had not yet been effectively implemented, it offers a sound basis for procuring goods and services.
- 113 The Council has a clear draft procurement plan for the Supporting People programme. It sets out plans for procuring eight types of service over three and a half years. It states the resources available, the exact costs, savings and unit numbers. While the plan does not make clear how services will be procured, it does provide clarity about current thinking on the development of the Supporting People programme.

Improving value for money

- 114 As mentioned earlier, the programme has been slow to comprehensively assess the value for money provided by some Supporting People services. However, there are some examples of value for money being achieved.
- The service review process resulted in £600,000 in savings which are now being targeted towards the services strategic priorities.
 - One refuge received increased funding from £32,000 to £68,000 for additional units and to reflect the value and quality of the service.
 - A service review noted poor utilisation of sheltered housing provision at one scheme and so funding of £9,600 was transferred to enable an increase in floating support provision with the same provider.
 - Another floating support provider is providing 15 units instead of 10 for the same funding. Overall this is helping to provide better value for money and services for more people.

- 115 Difficult decisions are being made. For example, £300,000 of Supporting People funding was removed from an adult learning disability service last year following an assessment of the value for money it provided. This has released Supporting People resources for investment in other priority areas.

Cross authority approach

- 116 Although there has been limited joint procurement to date, two significant projects are at an advanced stage. Work with Luton to jointly commission a support service for Gypsies and travellers in the south of the county is nearing completion and eight bed spaces for people with mental ill health who also abuse alcohol are being jointly commissioned. Discussions are taking place with Northamptonshire to commission a service for Gypsies and travellers in the north of the county although this is at an early stage.

Administration grant

- 117 While benchmarking on administration costs has been undertaken, there has been no specific action taken on the findings. When compared to a range of ALAs, Bedfordshire was ranked sixth from bottom. The exercise included an assessment of inspection scores which showed that those with poorer scores were spending more on programme administration. While the Council feels this is justified in order to improve a failing service, it means that a poorer performing service is costing more than that of better performers and is therefore providing less value for money overall.

Service user involvement

- 118 In June 2006 this was an area of serious weakness. The Council had acknowledged this and had identified it as a priority area of work. There had been some limited service user involvement in the development of the five-year strategy but this was essentially a 'one off' exercise. The involvement of service users had been mainly through the service review programme but there had been no outcomes to date.
- 119 Strengths and weaknesses are now balanced. There is a strong corporate commitment to service user involvement. There are more opportunities for service user engagement and efforts are being made to engage with hard to reach communities. Service users have been routinely involved in service and contract review processes and have shaped and influenced a range of recent and planned developments in the Supporting People programme. However, there is currently no service user involvement in programme governance. It is unclear whether service user feedback from service and other reviews has led to changes in individual services. There is no role for service users in contracting and monitoring processes beyond their own services.

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Opportunities

- 120 There is a strong corporate commitment to consulting and involving service users which extends to the Supporting People programme. This is supported by a dedicated Supporting People engagement officer and service user engagement strategy informed by service user consultation. The strategy is supported by an action plan which reflects SMART (specific, measurable, agreed, realistic and time-based) principles. The plan commits to using a range of methods of engagement that should secure good dialogue with users. An outcomes working group has been established to capture evidence of outcomes for service users. Two well attended stakeholder consultation events have been held to date to capture views and consult on the direction of the Supporting People programme in Bedfordshire.
- 121 The Supporting People team is making good use of providers' existing consultation mechanisms to capture service users' views. This includes providers such as the Langley House Trust, Bedfordshire Pilgrims Housing Association, Aragon Housing, the YMCA, the Mayday Trust and Signposts. The team is also working with adult learning services to access service user views which have been used to monitor performance and shape future service delivery.
- 122 There is increased focus on engaging with service users from BME communities but this is at an early stage. The service user engagement strategy emphasises the use of personal contact with existing voluntary sector agencies and the development of relationships with communities through leading figures. While this will help the team to capture the views and needs of people from BME communities, engagement is not yet fully developed and there have been no outcomes to date.
- 123 The Council has made efforts to ensure that it adopts appropriate consultation methods when working with Gypsies and travellers to develop Supporting People services. This has been informed by meetings with local people, health visitors who visit sites, the Travellers' Education Service, the Ormiston Trust and Luminus, a housing association with expertise in traveller site management. The Council funds a Gypsy liaison worker on one site and will continue to consult in line with their service user engagement strategy. It has also identified relative priorities for addressing the worst problems first including how to support Gypsies and travellers to sustain tenancies, unauthorised sites and authorised sites.
- 124 Supporting People service users have opportunities to shape and influence services through their providers' own consultation mechanisms. For example, Langley House, a service for offenders or people at risk of offending, offers numerous opportunities including questionnaires, meetings with trustees, monthly residents' meetings and one resident had attended the provider's annual conference. Residents viewed this positively and saw it as a way in which the organisation demonstrated that it valued people.

Involvement in contracting and monitoring

- 125** Service users have been routinely involved in the service and contract review process. Providers recognise and appreciate the efforts made by Supporting People staff to engage with service users and to understand the provider's operating context. Staff have worked hard to engage with service users in the most appropriate way including one to one interviews and small group meetings and have made efforts to make service users comfortable about the process.
- 126** However, there is no involvement of service users in contracting and monitoring processes beyond their own services. Involvement of service users in a 'peer reviewer' role would strengthen the process by bringing a service user perspective.

Outcomes from user involvement

- 127** Service users have shaped and influenced a range of recent and planned developments in the Supporting People programme.
- Current and former users of floating support services were interviewed to seek their expectations of services and the equality and accessibility of provision. Their views were fed back to the Floating Support Working Group and were used to design the planned new floating support service.
 - The Bedfordshire single assessment form was designed in consultation with eight service users and providers with the form being changed and simplified in line with their suggestions.
 - Service user feedback from consultation events has been used as the basis for the new draft five-year strategy.
 - The specification for the new permanent refuge has been informed by survey information from service users and visits to other facilities. This has resulted in extra kitchen and bathing facilities that will be a major improvement for service users.
- 128** Service users are given feedback on how their views have led to service developments. Adult services produces a regular 'You told us, we listened' bulletin which includes examples of changes to Supporting People services as a result of customer feedback.
- 129** As has already been mentioned, service users are not formally involved in the governance of the Supporting People programme. While the Council is working to address this, service users are currently unable to play a full part in leading and directing the programme.
- 130** It is not clear how service user feedback gained through service reviews and ongoing contract monitoring review processes has led to tangible service improvements. This is potentially a missed opportunity to use service users' views to shape and improve frontline services.

Access to services and information

- 131 This was an area of weakness in June 2006. Signposting to supported housing services was weak. There was limited printed information available and the information on the Council's website was aimed at providers rather than service users. There was a directory of services on the website that has been advertised locally.
- 132 Strengths and weaknesses are now balanced. Signposting to Supporting People services by frontline staff is effective. There is a good range of professionally produced information and a good quality service directory. However, there is no single point of access, referral or assessment. Some accommodation based services are not Disability Discrimination Act compliant. Supporting People information is not always openly displayed at customer access points.

Access and referral to services

- 133 Signposting to Supporting People services by frontline staff is effective. This was a significant weakness identified by the previous inspection, particularly for people fleeing domestic violence. The Council has worked hard to address this. Frontline staff have been trained, provided with an information pack and have had refresher training, with particular emphasis being given to domestic violence in the light of the weaknesses previously identified. The Council has tested the impact of this by mystery shopping with action taken to follow up issues identified. Our own mystery shopping queries were handled well with appropriate and comprehensive advice given in each case.
- 134 Steps are being taken to improve access for vulnerable young people. The programme is jointly funding a post with social care which is focusing on championing access and positive outcomes for young people aged 16 and over. While it is too early for this to have resulted in outcomes, it is a positive development.
- 135 Both providers and the Council are able to access interpretation and translation services easily when needed. This ensures that language is not a barrier to accessing services.
- 136 There is currently no single point of access, referral or assessment for Supporting People services in Bedfordshire. While a 'gateway' service will be part of the new floating support provision, this does not extend to accommodation based services and it is not yet in place. In the meantime, some vulnerable people may not be accessing the most appropriate service to meet their needs.
- 137 Not all accommodation based Supporting People services are compliant with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act. While contract monitoring processes are being used to address this and track improvement, some services are still not compliant. This limits access to those services for some people who have disabilities.

Information

- 138 There is a good range of professionally produced customer information about Supporting People. Service leaflets include one which gives clear information on Fairer Charging, one with useful contacts and a regular newsletter. Printed information features messages in relevant community languages and about availability in different formats. The Accessibility Paperwork Group of six people who have learning disabilities and two people who have a visual impairment have redesigned the general Supporting People leaflet. This helps to promote awareness of Supporting People services in an accessible way.
- 139 However, this information it is not readily available in some customer access points in the County. While staff were able to find information to help with our mystery shopping queries, it was not always on display for customers to take away. Supporting People services may not always be widely promoted.

Directory

- 140 The directory of Supporting People services is of good quality. It gives information on the services available by geographical area and by needs group. It is available at key access points in the County and on the website and provides a useful resource for potential service users and referral agencies.
- 141 However, the directory does not specify whether accommodation based services are accessible to people with disabilities or if services provided are culturally sensitive. Potential service users would therefore not know if a service was appropriate for their particular needs.

Website

- 142 The Supporting People area of the Council's website is satisfactory. It provides key Supporting People documents including the service directory. People with some sight impairment can change the text size or have text only. However, there is currently no 'read aloud' facility for people who are blind. There is no link to or promotion of the complaints process from the Supporting People area and, while there is a 'have your say' facility which provides an automatic response, a query we made through the facility was not answered. The potential of the website to promote and improve Supporting People services is not fully realised.

Better Care Higher Standards

- 143 There is appropriate coverage of Supporting People in 'Better Care Higher Standards', the Council's charter for services for vulnerable people. This includes overarching service standards for the programme and how they will be measured. This gives both current and potential service users a clear indication of what they can expect.

Diversity

- 144 Weaknesses significantly outweighed strengths in June 2006. Although research had taken place into the needs of some specific groups, information on the diverse needs of the community the programme served had not been generally collected and services had still to be tailored to meet those needs. Services were available for the majority of user groups.
- 145 This re-inspection found a balance of strengths and weaknesses. There is a clear corporate commitment to providing fair and relevant services. The Council is aware of gaps in provision and is building links with a range of agencies to understand diverse needs better. However, there is limited provision and outcomes for people from excluded groups including Gypsies and travellers, people with drug and alcohol problems and people with HIV/Aids.

Identifying diverse needs

- 146 There is a clear corporate commitment to providing fair and relevant services which is evident in a range of documents. A corporate equality plan is in place. The Council has reached level three of the Equality Standard for Local Government and is aiming to reach level four by April 2008. There is a corporate equality and diversity steering group and diversity awareness training is mandatory. Overall, this is helping to give focus to providing fair and equal services.
- 147 The Supporting People programme has a focus on equality and diversity. An equality impact assessment has been carried out on the current five-year strategy and progress on the action plan arising from this is monitored quarterly by the Commissioning Body. The team recognises that a further impact assessment will be required when the content of the new five-year strategy is finalised. The team is part of the corporate equality and diversity steering group and all staff have received diversity awareness training.
- 148 The Council is working to enhance its understanding of the take-up of services by people from BME communities. It is drawing on Census and lettings data and is using this to explore relevance and take up of Supporting People services across a range of harder to engage groups. It has identified, for example, that while BME communities access a high level of services, BME elders are not accessing services as often as other groups. It has commissioned Bedford Racial Equality Council to assess awareness levels, capture experience of Supporting People services and test the relevance of current provision to inform a gap analysis. This will enhance the Council's understanding of need and provide a basis for service development and improvement.
- 149 The Council is adding to the intelligence gained through the needs assessment by building relationships with a range of statutory and voluntary sector organisations that aim to meet the needs of harder to engage groups. This includes gypsies and travellers, refugees and migrants and young people with drug and alcohol problems. Links have been established and the Council is fully aware of the provision in place. It is now beginning to work closely with agencies to confirm needs and make plans to develop provision that will meet those needs.

Excluded groups

- 150** The Council is aware of the gaps in current provision. The 2007 needs assessment included a gap analysis and found that substance misusers, offenders, vulnerable young people, homeless people, gypsies and travellers, people experiencing domestic violence, BME communities, those with HIV/Aids, and people with long term or multiple needs are not fully provided for. Some gaps are already being addressed with increased domestic violence provision and floating support services being re-aligned following a joint review with the Drug and Alcohol Team to improve support by commissioning an outreach worker.
- 151** However, real outcomes for some vulnerable people are currently limited. Support services have been withdrawn from three gypsy and traveller sites due to concerns about the quality of the service. Work is taking place to jointly commission a service in the south of the county but this is not yet in place and discussions about replacement provision in the north are at an early stage. There is a shortfall in provision for people with drug and alcohol problems and, while some needs are being met through other provision and funding is being sought for new provision, the Council has been slow to reach this point. While the housing related support needs of people with HIV/Aids have been identified through the needs assessment, there is currently no specialist provision for this needs group and no plans to provide any. A number of needs groups are currently lacking the support they need to live independently.

Cultural sensitivity

- 152** Providers are showing sensitivity to diverse needs. Specific examples include ensuring that a Muslim service user was able to have Halal food and other providers demonstrating sensitivity to service users' dietary and religious needs. Another organisation showed sensitivity in meeting the needs and preferences of a former rough sleeper by holding key working sessions outdoors. Overall providers are aiming to deliver services which are tailored to the needs of individual service users.
- 153** Equality and diversity is not assured in all aspects of Supporting People provision. Not all providers have undertaken equality impact assessments of key policies and not all provision is accessible for people with disabilities. Some vulnerable people may therefore not be receiving fair and equal access to services.

Outcomes for service users

- 154** Weaknesses outweighed strengths in June 2006. There were additional services available but these had not been developed against assessed needs. The Commissioning Body had not addressed the serious shortage of move-on accommodation and the programme lacked a mechanism to measure how successful it had been. There had been some better outcomes for some vulnerable people and most services we visited as part of the inspection were promoting greater independence for service users.

36 Supporting People Re-inspection | How good is the Supporting People programme?

- 155 The re-inspection found that strengths and weaknesses are balanced. Supporting People services are meeting a range of needs and a range of improvements have been achieved. However, choice is limited and the full range of outcomes from Supporting People services is not being effectively captured.

Supporting People service improvements

- 156 Services for women experiencing domestic violence are being increased and improved. Supporting People funds jointly with the Domestic Violence Partnership two domestic violence support workers hosted by the police. A domestic violence strategic improvement group involves providers and is influencing and monitoring progress. An interim refuge has been provided in the South Bedfordshire area pending permanent provision. Development plans will increase the amount and quality of provision in the county further with a new Asian women's refuge due to be completed in April 2008.
- 157 Bedford Borough Council's rent deposit scheme includes a Supporting People funded floating support element. The scheme has assisted 195 households since it began three years ago. The scheme is helping to increase people's housing options by accessing the private rented sector and aiding tenancy sustainment.
- 158 The Council has increased the number of people with learning disabilities who are living independently. A new supported living scheme in Shefford is enabling six service users to live in their own home rather than in a hostel environment. This gives service users more choice and control over where they live.
- 159 Supporting People is funding some units of move-on floating support. This includes four units for offenders or people at risk of offending, 15 people leaving the foyer and three units for women experiencing domestic violence. This helps to ensure that people are able to sustain their tenancies when they leave accommodation based support.
- 160 Service reviews have brought about some improvement in the quality of services. Services are improving against QAF with all having reached at least level C. We visited a range of provision during the inspection and found it to be of good quality. However, as noted earlier, too high a proportion of services are meeting only minimum standards with 74 per cent assessed at level C.
- 161 There are examples of a lack of joint work between Council departments. Links between Supporting People and hostels for 16 and 17 year olds funded by children's services are not always adequate. When they reach 18 these young people are moved to independent accommodation. Apart from for those who have been in care, there is no support available from Supporting People to help them settle into independent accommodation.

Case studies

- 162 There are a number of examples of people who have sustained independent living as a result of Supporting People services. The following were gathered by the inspection team during visits to providers.

- A resident in provision for offenders or people likely to offend had experience of landscape gardening. He was given tasks to renovate the gardens in the provider's properties. He planned and built a number of patios to an extremely high standard. The staff worked with him to produce a good quality portfolio of photographs and plans that he could use to show potential employers when looking for employment.
- A high profile life sentence prisoner was released to the Bedford Approved Premises. The national media discovered his whereabouts which meant he was at risk of physical attack from some members of the local community. He was therefore vulnerable. He was rehoused by the local council with floating support provided. With this support, the man successfully made the transition to mainstream accommodation in the community.
- Bedford Borough Council's rent deposit scheme has enabled one family in particular to maintain and sustain a family home following domestic violence and a history of failed tenancies and, as a result, allowed a child of the family to be returned from local authority care.

Choice for service users

- 163** Choice is currently limited in Bedfordshire's Supporting People programme. Floating support accounts for only six per cent of the programme and, in the main, this is tenure specific, does not cover the whole county and does not meet the full range of housing related support needs. There is a limited choice within needs groups, such as for people who use drugs, and homeless families. The location of provision for excluded groups limits choice with the majority of services being in Bedford Borough. However, plans to improve floating support provision will address many of these issues.
- 164** There is a lack of clarity about whether access to appropriate move-on accommodation is an issue. As mentioned earlier, the needs assessment did not identify this as an issue and the Council indicated that stakeholders had said this was not a problem when asked. However, some providers told us that lack of move-on was silting up some short term accommodation based services. The lack of robust monitoring of this issue or a strategy and firm plans to address this is a weakness and means that some people with housing related support needs may have to wait longer to access appropriate provision.

Support plans

- 165** The Supporting People team is ensuring that support planning is in place for all service users. Providers are developing support plans with service users and reviewing them regularly. The team is supporting providers to strengthen support planning and one provider visited was very complimentary about the team's input. The provider was asked to improve the plans and given specific advice. The provider has redesigned the support plans and found the new approach very useful, although it has been implemented too recently to really be sure of the effect.

Outcome measurement

- 166 Bedfordshire, along with all other ALAs, is now using the CLG framework for measuring outcomes for service users. This was introduced in May 2007 for users of short term services and measures how successful the programme has been in terms of a number of outcomes. These cover the five key areas of:
- achieving economic wellbeing;
 - enjoying and achieving;
 - being healthy;
 - staying safe; and
 - making a positive contribution.
- 167 As this framework has just become operational, it is too early to be able to report on outcomes as yet. It is anticipated that when data is available it will demonstrate the positive contribution that the programme has made to the lives of vulnerable people.
- 168 Some measures show improved outcomes for service users. All services have attained at least level C on the QAF. Performance on planned move-on is improving, albeit from a very low base, with 47 per cent reached by the first quarter of 2007/08 from just under 36 per cent achieved in 2006/07. Joint work between the Drug and Alcohol Team and Supporting People has shown that a joint approach to housing and drug treatment has benefited service users with 71 per cent of people being retained on drug misuse programmes in 2006/07 compared to 52 per cent in 2005/06.
- 169 The Council is not effectively capturing the full range of outcomes from Supporting People services. While it is monitoring the Supporting People KPIs for planned move on and independent living, there are other outcomes which are not being measured. For example, while the number of tenancies sustained through the rent deposit scheme is recorded, other positive outcomes, such as children leaving or not going into local authority care are not. Similarly, hospital and care admissions prevented are also not recorded. This would demonstrate the overall impact of Supporting People in enabling independent living and reducing the burden on a range of statutory and non-statutory services.

What are the prospects for improvement to the Supporting People programme?

What is the Council's track record in delivering improvement?

- 170** The June 2006 inspection found a balance of strengths and weaknesses on track record. The Council could demonstrate overall improvements in performance and there have been significant improvements to both adult's and children's social services. However, these improvements had not been replicated within the Supporting People programme which was only beginning to make changes in how it operated. The programme was not able to demonstrate a track record of improvements over the three years that it had been in operation.
- 171** The re-inspection found that strengths slightly outweigh weaknesses. Strong progress has been made in implementing the Supporting People improvement plan and the recommendations of the previous inspection. There have been outcomes from the five-year strategy. A range of customer facing improvements have been achieved. However, there have been delays in addressing some issues. The Council cannot evidence a track record of improvement for relevant PIs and the track record for improving value for money is mixed.
- 172** The Council has effectively implemented change in order to improve the operation of the Supporting People programme. It has completed 43 out of 45 actions in the service improvement plan with work on the two remaining items of the single assessment framework and the procurement plan at an advanced stage and due for completion by April 2008. The table below shows that 13 out of 14 of the June 2006 inspection's recommendations have been completed. The improvements delivered have had a positive impact on service users and will also bring long term benefits to the programme.

Table 1 Progress on recommendations made in the June 2006 inspection report

Recommendation	Progress made
Improve the accessibility of services by:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensuring that frontline staff who are signposting customers are aware of the availability of housing related support services offered through the programme; and 	Completed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensuring that frontline staff who are signposting customers are aware of the services available for vulnerable people, including those suffering domestic violence. 	Completed
Improve the accessibility of information by:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improving the availability of leaflets and information both electronically and in hard copy; 	Completed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • updating Better Care: Higher Standards to include information on the Supporting People programme; and 	Completed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improving information for service users on the website. 	Completed
Improve the management of the programme by:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Producing a comprehensive strategy for the programme that includes the following: 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - plans for how service users will be included in all aspects of the programme; 	Completed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - plans for how needs of all service user groups will be assessed and refreshed through the life of the strategy; 	Completed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - plans for how services will be assessed and developed to meet identified needs across the whole county; 	Completed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - plans for how services will be accessible to service users on an equitable basis; 	Completed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - plans for how the programme will tackle inequalities and diversity; 	Completed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - plans for how the performance of the programme will be measured and monitored; 	Completed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - plans for how service users can move on to permanent accommodation once they have gained skills in independent living; and 	Incomplete
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - plans for how the governance of the programme can be improved to share involvement and responsibility. 	Completed

Recommendation	Progress made
Improve the value for money offered by services by developing an approach to a value for money assessment that takes into account service cost, quality and outcomes for service users and ensuring its application to all services.	Completed

- 173** There have been outcomes from the current five-year Supporting People strategy. These include establishing floating support for people experiencing domestic violence; the creation of a drug outreach worker post; and a review of provision for people with learning disabilities with six people moving out of a hostel into independent living.
- 174** The Supporting People programme is operating in a context of corporate improvement. Within a three year period Bedfordshire County Council has moved from being a 'poor' Council to a 'good' Council in the Audit Commission's July 2007 corporate assessment. There is clear ambition and drive for further improvement which extends to the Supporting People programme.
- 175** However, there have been delays in achieving some objectives. Insufficient progress was made on the Supporting People annual plan for 2006/07. In July 2007, out of 21 items marked, only four were completed, one was partially completed and sixteen were not completed and rolled forward to 2007/08. The majority of providers do not yet have steady state contracts and, while plans are in place to address this, this remains a weakness as these should have been issued 18 months ago.
- 176** There have been a range of customer facing improvements including:
- improved information for service users including the website and the service directory;
 - improved signposting to Supporting People services;
 - increased opportunities for service users to influence the programme with their views being used to shape the floating support service, the single assessment framework and the new five-year strategy;
 - improved and increased provision for women experiencing domestic violence;
 - a strong approach to support planning; and
 - improved quality of provision overall with all Supporting People services achieving at least QAF level C and with 84 out of 100 services for older people and people with learning disabilities improving against the QAF.

42 Supporting People Re-inspection | What are the prospects for improvement to the Supporting People programme?

- 177** The Council cannot evidence a track record of improvement against Supporting People KPIs. It is unable to provide information on its performance for 2004/05 and 2005/06. Performance on planned move-on (KPI 2) is showing a positive direction of travel with 47 per cent reached by the first quarter of 2007/08 from just under 36 per cent achieved in 2006/07. The percentage of service users who have established or maintained independent living (KPI 1) shows variable performance with a high of 99.44 per cent in quarter two of 2006/07 falling to 97.88 in quarter four but increasing to 98.76 for quarter one of 2007/08. However, it is not possible to establish the overall direction of travel for the last three years.
- 178** The track-record for improving value for money is mixed. Significant cost savings were achieved through the service review process completed in March 2006 and there are examples of value for money improvements since reviews were completed. No ineligible services are being funded. However, recent work to evaluate the value for money of homelessness services using the revised methodology has highlighted issues not identified during the service review process. This indicates that earlier reviews were not sufficiently robust and that the full range of efficiency savings possible have not been realised.

How does the Council manage performance?

- 179** The last inspection found that weaknesses outweighed strengths. Corporately, a culture of performance management was being embedded but this was not well developed in the Supporting People programme and there was not a comprehensive suite of performance reports. The programme was not consistently linked to Council and partner strategies although the leadership of the programme was improving.
- 180** The re-inspection found that strengths and weaknesses are balanced. There is a clear work plan and key weaknesses are covered by improvement plans. Leadership is clear and visible. Difficult decisions have been taken. The Supporting People team is willing to learn from others. However, there are significant gaps and weaknesses in performance monitoring and management activity. Learning is not always captured and used effectively.
- 181** The overarching Community Service directorate's service plan is a thorough, high level document. It links the Council's vision and key objectives to high level plans and objectives for the Supporting People programme. This sets the programme in a wider corporate context.
- 182** There is a clear work plan for the Commissioning Body and Core Strategy Group which flows down to the Supporting People team. While the plan has some limitations, as detailed earlier, it is clearly well used document and is regularly reviewed. Discussions with those involved with governance and delivery of the programme showed that it is providing focus and direction for improvement.

- 183** Key weaknesses identified during the inspection are covered by improvement plans for the service. Planned improvements which have potential to bring real benefits to service users include:
- the reconfiguration of floating support to provide a service to more people, county-wide and across tenures and needs groups. This includes a gateway service to assess needs and prioritise applications;
 - a single assessment model;
 - an assistive technology pilot for people with learning disabilities;
 - increased service user involvement in shaping the programme;
 - improved and increased provision for Gypsies and travellers and women experiencing domestic violence; and
 - strengthened arrangements to ensure contract compliance and service improvement.
- 184** Some plans will increase the efficiency of the programme including:
- work place on a regional basis to rationalise contracts where there is provision of social care and support by the same provider. Supporting People currently accounts for about 15 per cent of spend and 85 per cent of administration. Rationalisation has the potential to lead to considerable efficiencies across the Council; and
 - a planned move to fixed capacity contracts which will be more user friendly and more efficient. This will save administration in tracking the payment status of every individual in a scheme. It will save users from having to apply for Fairer Charging from the Council and the stress of waiting for payments. Reconciliation will only be done annually.
- 185** Leadership for the programme is clear and visible. This has been a key factor in the progress made in delivering the majority of the actions in the Supporting People improvement plan and the recommendation made in the 2006 inspection report.
- 186** Difficult decisions have been taken. This includes making staff changes in order to deliver the scale of improvement needed in the programme; decisions to shift the focus of the programme towards excluded groups; and also decisions to withdraw funding from services which were not providing value for money. This has benefited the programme overall.
- 187** The performance management framework is generally satisfactory. Regular performance reports are considered at appropriate levels including the Council's internal management structure, elected members and the Supporting People Commissioning Body. Changes have been made to the presentation of information in order to make it more meaningful and easier to identify exceptions.

44 Supporting People Re-inspection | What are the prospects for improvement to the Supporting People programme?

- 188 However, there are significant weaknesses in performance monitoring and management, particularly in areas which have an impact on service users.
- There is no monitoring of safeguarding issues by the Commissioning Body.
 - There is no monitoring of or reporting on the quality or timeliness of complaints handling which is a key weakness.
 - The number of services scoring A, B or C against the QAF or of movement between the categories is not reported.
 - Challenging performance targets have been set but they are consistently not being achieved indicating that they may be unrealistic.
 - No efficiency targets have been set for the programme.
 - While financial reporting has improved it is still not as clear as it could be. Reports lack totals and end of year predictions and also comparisons between these, forecasts and grant levels.
- 189 There are numerous examples of the Supporting People team's willingness to learn from others and adapt it to their own local context. The performance management framework is an amalgamation of Durham's and Bedfordshire Drug and Alcohol Team's; the eligibility criteria is based on Hampshire's; the value for money methodology is based on Warwickshire's; and the approach to service user involvement was based on Bolton and Hampshire's models.
- 190 However, learning is not always being captured and used to best effect. Learning from service users' complaints is not being captured. The Supporting People team did not look externally when devising its contract compliance approach and when developing Fairer Charging it looked only at neighbours and not the stronger performers in this area. While learning about providers' positive practice is gained through contract compliance work, it is not being systematically captured and shared with all providers. Opportunities to improve services are therefore being missed.

Does the Council have the capacity to improve?

- 191 Strengths outweighed weaknesses in June 2006. Action was being taken to improve the capacity of the Supporting People programme through the move of the Supporting People team to the adult social care commissioning unit. However, it was too early to see benefits from this. The Council was committed to improving its overall performance and additional capacity was available corporately to support this. Partnership working was expected to be further improved through the implementation of the Local Area Agreement.

- 192** The re-inspection found that this is an area of strength for Bedfordshire's Supporting People programme. The Supporting People team is competent and highly regarded. The Supporting People partnership is enhancing capacity. Prudent financial provision has been made to manage the impact of Supporting People grant reductions. Staff are supported by HR practices. IT systems are adequate but are not fully supporting the team's work. There is a lack of detail about how procurement of new services will maximise value for money.
- 193** A competent and highly regarded Supporting People team is in place. Key stakeholders are positive about relationships with the team and the role of the Lead Officer and the team in progressing and resolving longstanding issues and ensuring that key procedures, plans and systems are in place. Key secondments into the team have increased capacity on diversity, service user engagement and the coordination of provision for young people. This helps to ensure that key building blocks are in place for future improvement.
- 194** Key stakeholders involved in the Supporting People partnership are enhancing capacity. Commissioning Body and Core Strategy Group members interviewed during the inspection showed enthusiasm and commitment to the programme and its ongoing improvement. They bring a range of expertise to the programme and the mentoring of Supporting People team members by Commissioning Body members is adding value.
- 195** The location of Supporting People within the wider Community Services directorate is allowing the programme to benefit from a range of expertise and resources. Some senior staff have wide experience across social, adult, children and care sectors which is informing the Supporting People programme and also ensuring co-ordinated distribution of resources. This means that arrangements are in place to build links between services to manage resource allocation decisions.
- 196** There is a senior level commitment to nurturing the Supporting People programme and to ensuring that resources are not diverted elsewhere. This provides a degree of reassurance for the future of Supporting People services for vulnerable people when the Supporting People grant ring-fence is removed in April 2009.
- 197** Prudent financial provision has been made to manage the impact of changes in Supporting People grant allocation. The Council has assessed its likely situation when the national redistribution formula is applied and is estimating an 11 per cent cut. It has set aside some accrued under spend to off-set this and reflected the possible outcome of redistribution in the draft procurement plan.
- 198** HR systems support staff appropriately. Staff receive regular one to one meetings and team meetings which they find helpful. They have clear targets and are familiar with how these fit into the team's larger plans. They have had training in issues such as safeguarding, diversity and equality, and health and safety. This is adding to the overall effectiveness of the team.
- 199** The Supporting People programme's IT systems are adequate. Information is recorded and reported, payments due are calculated and checks are done on the data before it is sent to CLG.

46 Supporting People Re-inspection | What are the prospects for improvement to the Supporting People programme?

- 200** However, IT systems are not currently fully enhancing the team's capacity. A lack of appropriate reporting software means that management reports have to be manually produced leading to inefficient duplication of work and increased risk of inaccuracy due to errors in data entry. It is also hard to compare performance over time at provider level or by service user group. The Council has a plan to improve this in the next few weeks.
- 201** There are weaknesses in the Council's approach to safeguarding issues and complaints management which have already been detailed in this report. If these are not addressed they will limit the Council's capacity to drive improvement in services.
- 202** Contract compliance officers have not had training tailored to their need to assess quality in other organisations. While they have received standard training on issues like safeguarding and diversity, this is not necessarily sufficient to enable them to identify and challenge weaknesses in providers' policies and practices.
- 203** The use of procurement to increase capacity is mixed. It is positive that the Council is now jointly procuring services for gypsies and travellers and substance misusers with a neighbouring authority. However, there is a lack of detail about how new Supporting People services will be procured in order deliver maximum value for money.

Appendix 1 – Performance indicators

Demographic information

This section includes demographic information relevant to Supporting People, comparing the Council and with England.

Table 1

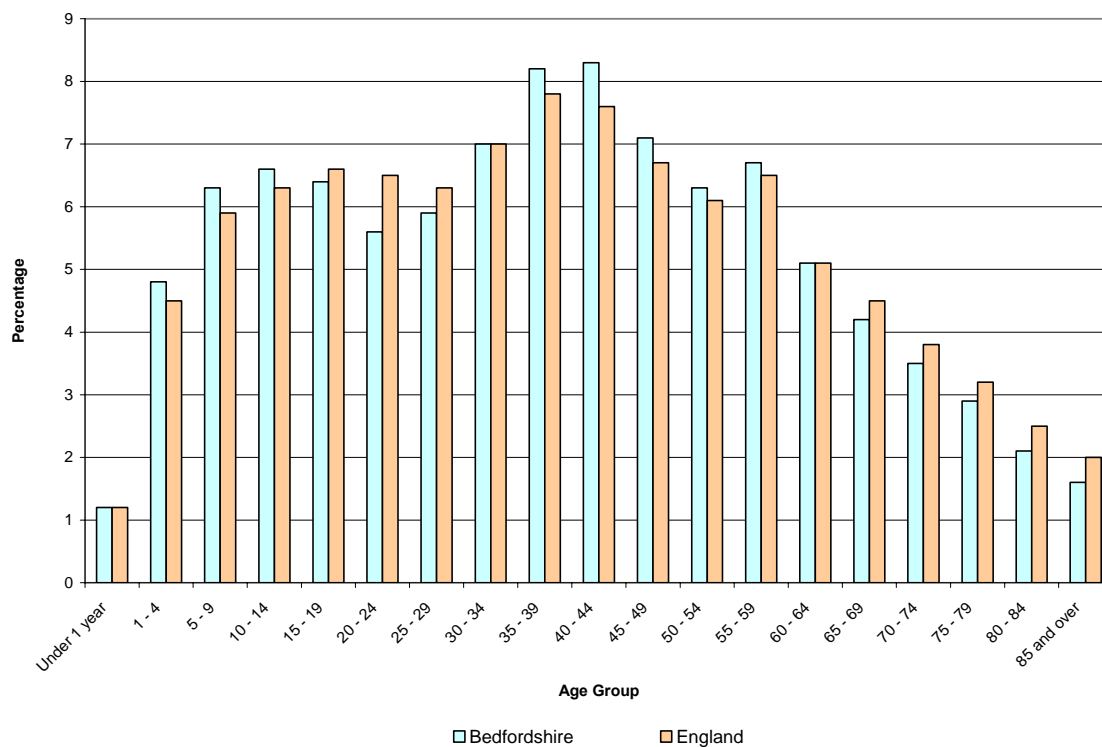
Measure	Bedfordshire	England
Population (mid-2005) ⁷	397,700	50,431,700
Percentage of the population aged 65+ (mid-2005)	14.3	16.0
Percentage from minority ethnic groups (all groups other than White – British 2004)	6.7	10.44
Percentage unemployment (claimant count rate) ⁸	1.6	2.3
Deprivation Index (1 highest, 354 lowest) ⁹	327	-

⁷ Source: midyear population estimates (2005)

⁸ Source: claimant count with rates and proportions (June 2007)

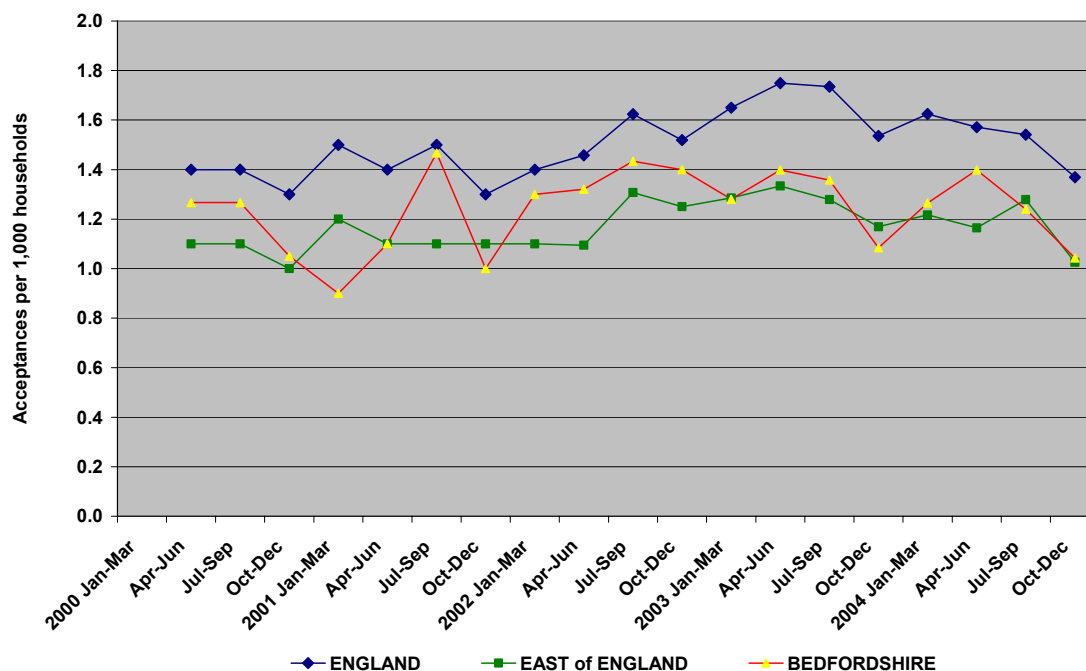
⁹ Source: deprivation Index 2004, average ward score for the authority.

Figure 1 Percentage of the population¹⁰ in each age group compared with England



¹⁰ Source: midyear population estimates (2005)

Figure 2 Households accepted as homeless between 2000 and 2004 compared with the region and England (acceptances per 1,000 households)



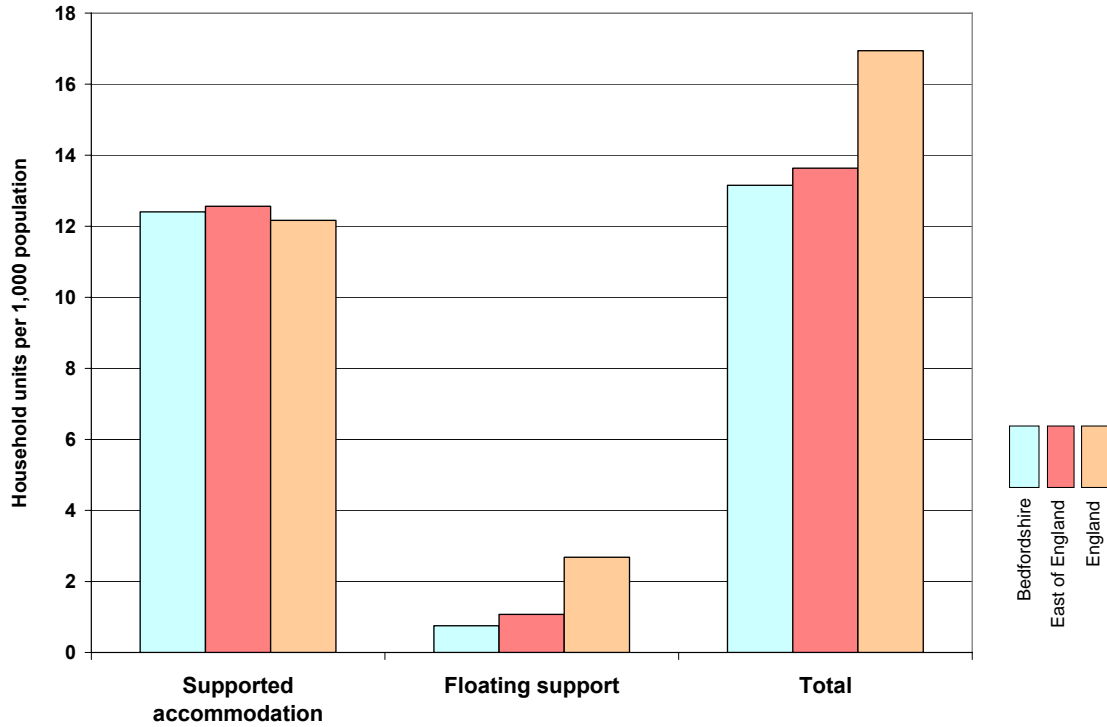
Performance information

This section highlights strong and weak areas of the Council's performance in services that are relevant to Supporting People. We have used the following information to help us reach our judgements:

- data for services funded through the Supporting People programme;
- Comprehensive Performance Assessment scores;
- star ratings for social services;
- Performance Assessment Framework indicators for social services; and
- relevant best value performance indicators.

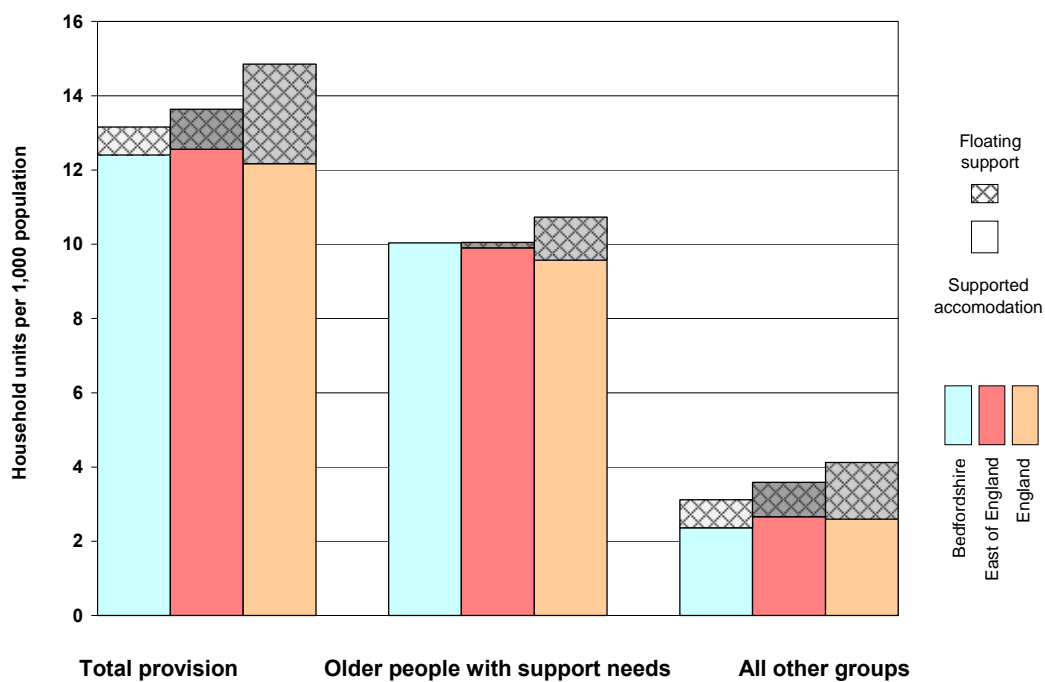
Supporting People data

Figure 3 Total service provision funded through Supporting People¹¹



¹¹ Source: CLG, 05/06. Excludes community alarms, home improvement agencies, leasehold schemes and pipeline services.

Figure 4 Services for older people with support needs compared with the region and England¹²



¹² Source: CLG, 05/06. Excludes community alarms, home improvement agencies, leasehold schemes and pipeline services.

Figure 5 Services for other groups compared with the region and England¹³

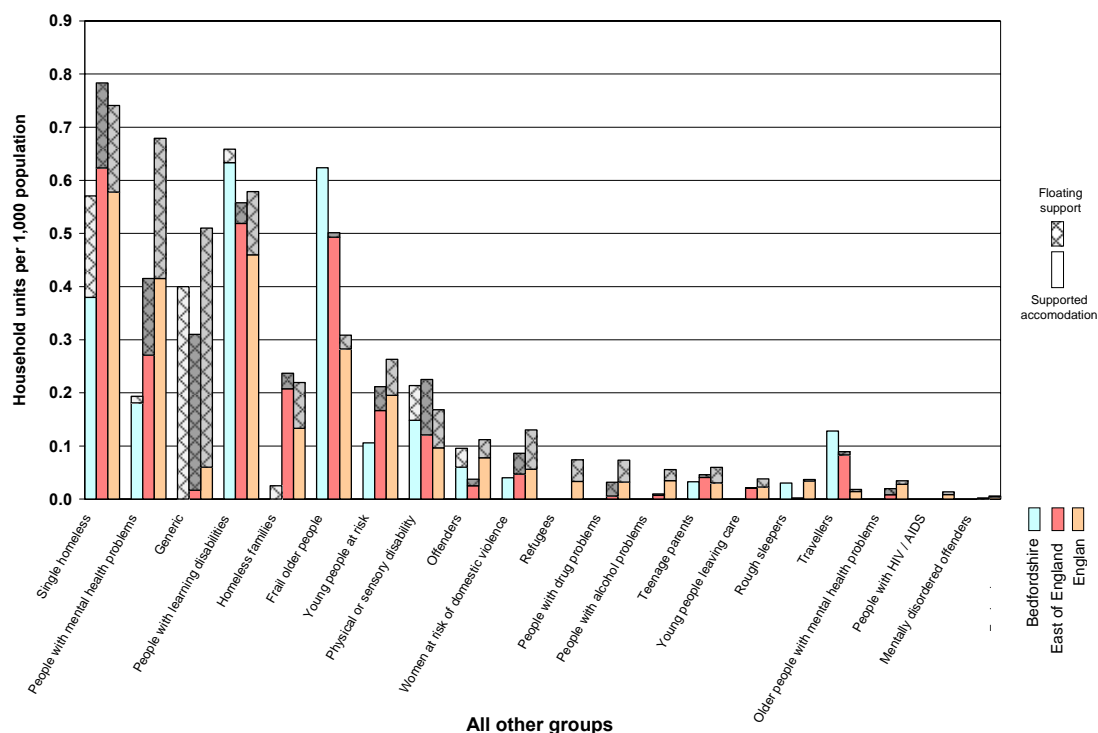


Table 2 Funding for Supporting People¹⁴

Bedfordshire	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
Final Supporting People grant	£ 7,243,472	£ 7,118,216	£ 7,118,216
Administration grant	£ 327,362	£ 327,362	£ 327,362

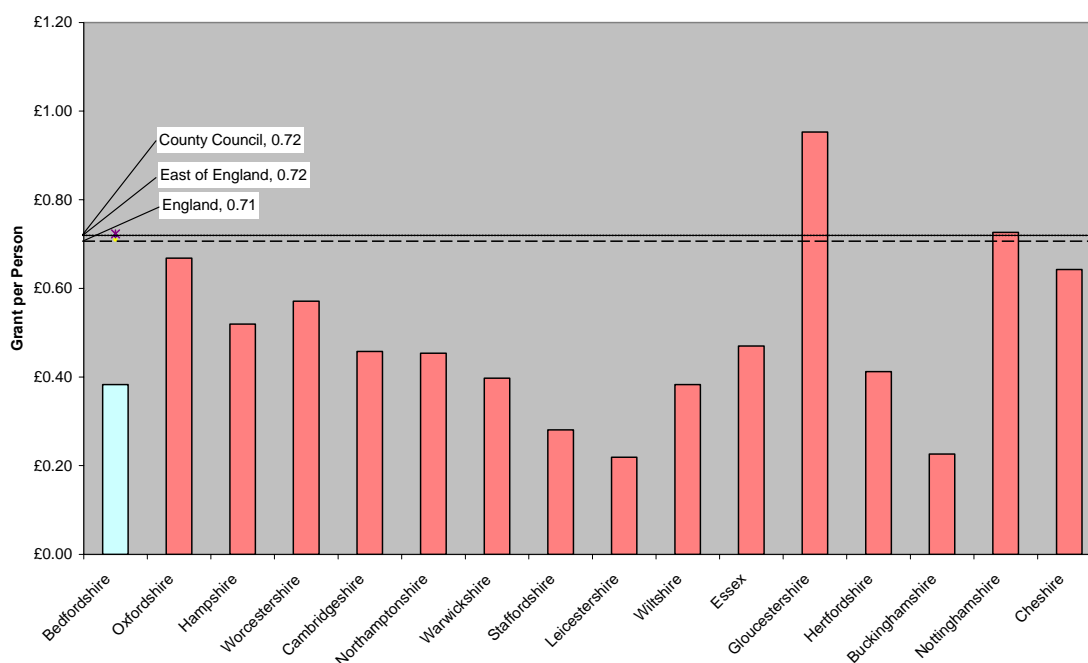
¹³ Source: CLG, 05/06. Excludes community alarms, home improvement agencies, leasehold schemes and pipeline services.

¹⁴ Source: Grant allocations, ODPM.

Table 3 Unit costs of Supporting People services in 2003/04 (£ per week)¹⁵

	Per head of population	Per unit	Per unit excluding community alarms	Per unit excluding community alarms & sheltered housing
Bedfordshire	£ 0.38	£ 26.72	£ 27.23	£ 83.51
East of England	£ 0.46	£ 22.73	£ 28.11	£ 65.57
England	£ 0.70	£ 28.30	£ 34.71	£ 76.37

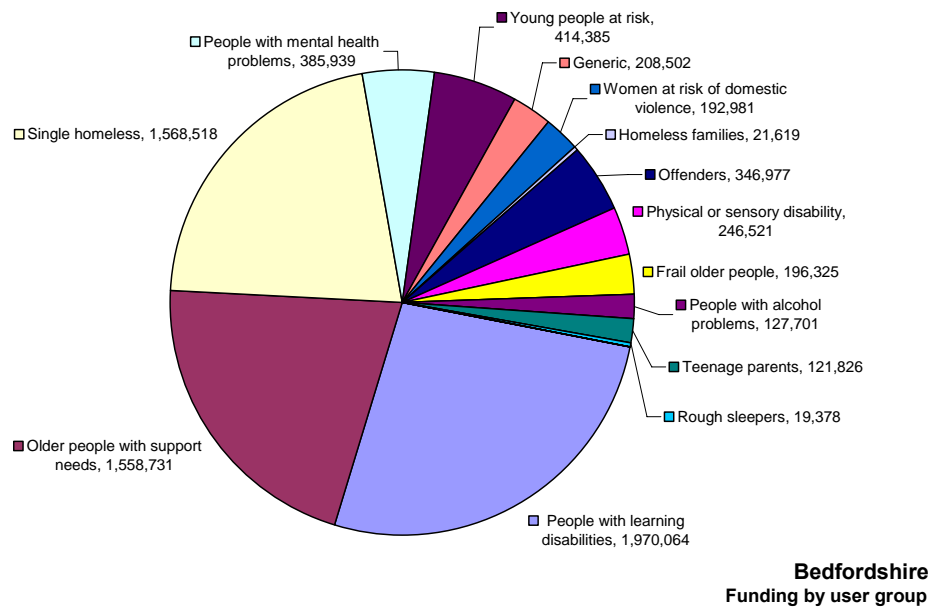
The data quoted is taken from ODPM sourced material 2003/04. This is the only data currently available. ODPM will be able to provide updated data when it becomes available and this will then be used.

Figure 6 Supporting People grant per head of population per week compared with nearest neighbours¹⁶, all county councils and all English councils (2004/05)

¹⁵ Source: Platinum cut data, ODPM November 2003

¹⁶ A comparator group of similar councils.

Figure 7 Share of spending between user groups (£000s)¹⁷



¹⁷ Source: CLG, 05/06. Excludes community alarms, home improvement agencies, leasehold schemes and pipeline services.

Figure 8 Share of spending between types of provider (£000s)¹⁸

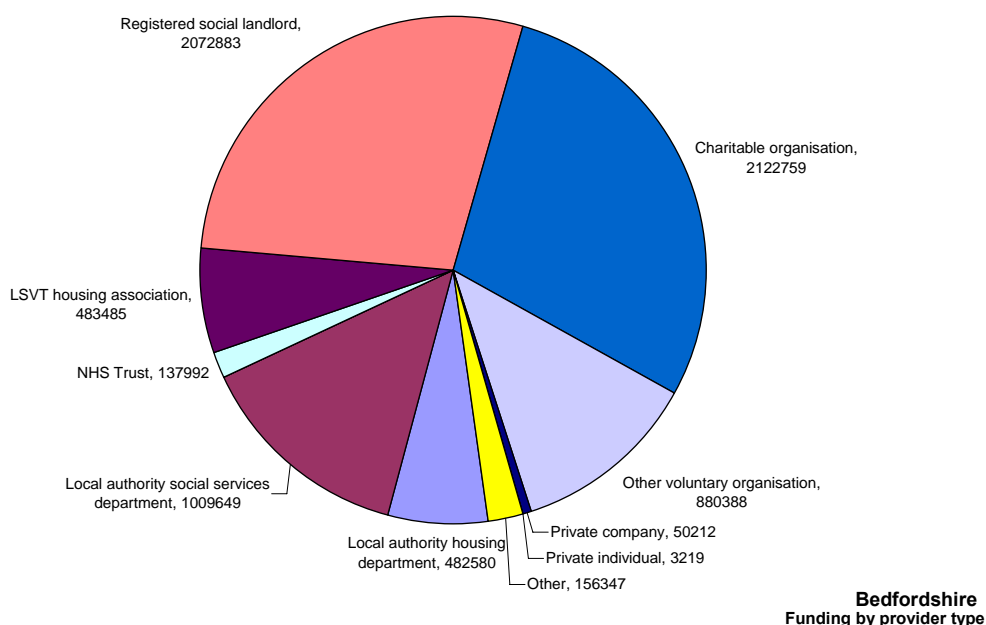


Table 4 Social Services star ratings November 2006

The table below shows the Social Services Inspectorate ratings of the Council's performance.

	Serving people well?	Prospects for improvement?	Performance rating (CPA equivalent)
Adults' Services	Most	Promising	★★ (n)
Children's Services	Good	Good	

¹⁸ Source: CLG, 05/06. Excludes community alarms, home improvement agencies, leasehold schemes and pipeline services.

Social services performance indicators

Table 5 Performance Assessment Framework indicators 2005/06

The table below shows how the Council's social services performed on indicators relevant to Supporting People.

Bedfordshire	
Significantly above average (•••••)	Adults with mental health problems helped to live at home (C31) Adults with learning disabilities helped to live at home (C80) Percentage of items of equipment and adaptations delivered within seven working days (D54)
Above average (••••)	Adults and older people receiving a statement of their needs and how they will be met (D39) Adults with physical disabilities helped to live at home (C29) Older people helped to live at home (C32) Delayed transfers of care (D41)
Average (•••)	Adults and older clients receiving a review as a percentage of those receiving a service (D40) Adults and older people receiving direct payments at 31 March per 100,000 population aged 18 or over (C51) Employment, education and training for care leavers (A4)
Below average (••)	
Significantly below average (•)	

Best value performance indicators

Table 6 Performance on relevant indicators in 2005/06 compared with county councils

The table below shows how the Council performed on best value performance indicators relevant to Supporting People.

Bedfordshire	
Within the best 25 per cent	The level of the equality standard for local government to which the authority conforms (BV2)
Average	
Within the worst 25 per cent	

Table 7 District council performance on relevant indicators in 2005/06

The tables below shows how district councils in Bedfordshire performed on best value performance indicators relevant to Supporting People, compared with all district councils.

Bedford	
Within the best 25 per cent	The level of the equality standard for local government to which the authority conforms (BV2) Length of stay in bed and breakfast accommodation (BV183a) Average time for processing new housing benefit claims (BV78a) Domestic violence refuge places (BV225)
Average	Length of stay in hostel accommodation (BV183b)
Within the worst 25 per cent	

Mid Bedfordshire	
Within the best 25 per cent	The level of the equality standard for local government to which the authority conforms (BV2) Length of stay in hostel accommodation (BV183b) Average time for processing new housing benefit claims (BV78a) Domestic violence refuge places (BV225)
Average	Length of stay in bed and breakfast accommodation (BV183a)
Within the worst 25 per cent	
South Bedfordshire	
Within the best 25 per cent	The level of the equality standard for local government to which the authority conforms (BV2) Council homes which did not meet the decent homes standard (BV184a) Domestic violence refuge places (BV225)
Average	Length of stay in bed and breakfast accommodation (BV183a) Length of stay in hostel accommodation (BV183b) Average time for processing new housing benefit claims (BV78a)
Within the worst 25 per cent	Energy efficiency of local authority owned dwellings (BV63)

Appendix 2 – Reality checks undertaken

- 1 When we went on site we carried out a number of different checks, building on the work described above, in order to get a full picture of how good the service is. These on-site reality checks were designed to gather evidence about what it is like to use the service and to see how well it works. Our reality checks included:
 - a questionnaire survey which was sent to all providers of housing related support services;
 - a focus group with providers of housing related support;
 - visits to supported housing schemes to talk to service users, scheme managers and frontline staff;
 - a desk top review of service review files and complaints;
 - mystery shopping exercises to test how easy it is to access services;
 - a review of information for service users including printed leaflets and the Council's website;
 - observation of Commissioning Body and Core Strategy Group meetings;
 - interviews with key staff and stakeholders within the County Council, the borough and district councils, the primary care trust and the probation service; and
 - interviews with councillors.

Appendix 3 – Positive practice

'The Commission will identify and promote good practice. Every inspection will look for examples of good practice and innovation, and for creative ways to overcome barriers and resistance to change or make better use of resources'. (Seeing is Believing)

Mentoring scheme

- 1 Bedfordshire County Council has a mentoring arrangement which is allowing Commissioning Body members to make use of their specific skills and expertise to add value to the work of the Supporting People team. Five Commissioning Body members are mentoring staff members on performance management, contracts, commissioning, the single assessment framework, service user involvement and diversity. Those members also present reports to the Commissioning Body on those work streams. This is involving Board members more closely in the programme and also helping to develop staff skills.

Supporting People partnership guide

- 2 Bedfordshire County Council has developed a partnership guide for the Supporting People programme which is a comprehensive and useful resource. The content was widely consulted upon and it brings together key information in one place. Both Commissioning Body and Core Strategy Group members have indicated that this is providing a useful reference tool, particularly for new members.

Rent deposit scheme with support

- 3 Bedford Borough Council's rent deposit scheme includes a Bedfordshire Supporting People funded floating support element. The scheme has assisted 195 households since it began three years ago. The scheme is helping to increase people's housing options by accessing the private rented sector and aiding tenancy sustainment.