

Inspection report

December 2004



Supporting People Programme

Coventry City Council

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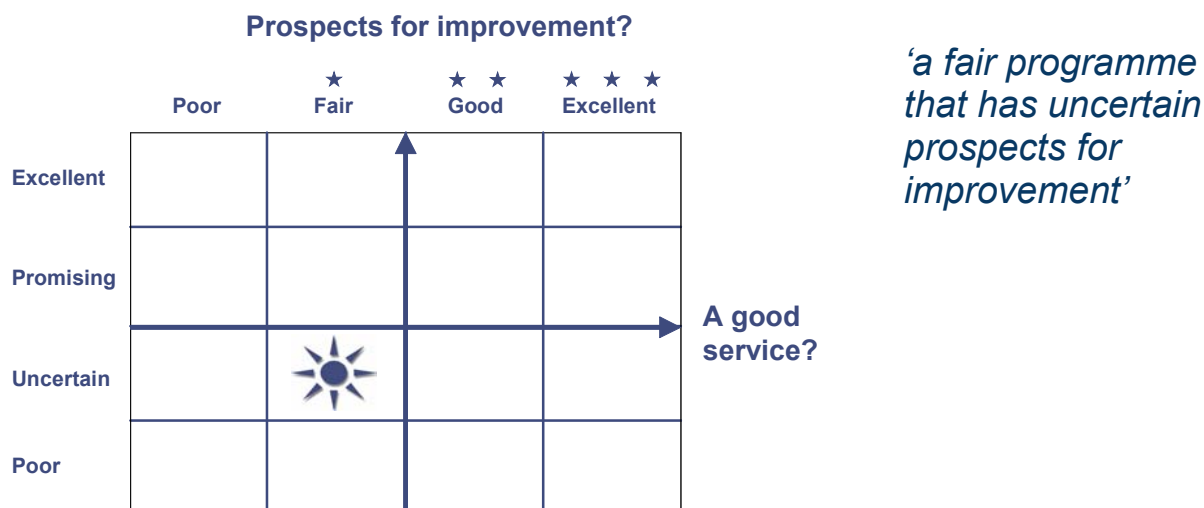
Summary

- 1 Coventry City Council is one of the seven metropolitan authorities in the West Midlands conurbation. The population is 300,848 of which 21.7 per cent are from minority ethnic communities.
- 2 The council is now led by the Conservative party who took control in the elections in June 2004, they hold 27 seats of the 54 seats, the Labour party have 22; the Liberal Democrats have 3 and the Socialist Alternative have 2 seats.
- 3 The council employs 16,000 staff across all services.
- 4 'Supporting People' is the Government's long-term policy to enable local authorities to plan, commission and provide support services which help vulnerable people to live independently. The programme went live on 1 April 2003.
- 5 The aim of the Supporting People programme is to establish a strategic, integrated policy and funding framework, delivered locally in response to identified local needs, to replace the previous complex and unco-ordinated arrangements for providing housing related support services for vulnerable people.
- 6 Coventry City Council acts as the administering local authority for the Supporting People programme in its area. The council works in partnership with Coventry primary care trust and the West Midlands probation service in commissioning Supporting People services.
- 7 Coventry City Council was inspected in the second year of the Supporting People programme and was among the 19 administering local authorities considered by the ODPM to have the highest cost services. This report therefore reflects the current context for the council as it continues to deliver the programme and focuses on determining the effectiveness of current service delivery, the value for money presented by the contracted services and the outcomes for vulnerable people.
- 8 The total amount of Supporting People funding available in 2004/05 is £16.672 million and the council receives £254,258 Supporting People administration grant to fulfil its role as the administering local authority.
- 9 The highest cost Supporting People service in Coventry at the platinum cut, which determined the final allocation of grant, was £656.34 per person per week for accommodation based support for homeless people. The lowest cost service was £1.55 a week for a community alarm service for older people.

Scoring the service

- 10 We have assessed Coventry City Council as providing a ‘fair’, one star Supporting People programme that has uncertain prospects for improvement. Our judgements are based on the evidence obtained during the inspection and are outlined below.

Scoring chart¹: Coventry City Council - Supporting People Programme



- 11 Overall, we judge that Coventry City Council is delivering a fair, one star service in its planning and delivery of the Supporting People programme. We have highlighted the following strengths in reaching this judgement:
- ◆ Some culturally specific Supporting People services have been developed.
 - ◆ Some quality outcomes for service users can be demonstrated.
 - ◆ Payments are made to service providers promptly and accurately.
 - ◆ Savings have been achieved in the first year of the programme totalling £1.2 million and significant further savings of £1.75 million have been identified in 2004/05.
 - ◆ There are some examples of effective partnership working.
- 12 However, we have identified the following weaknesses that need to be addressed:
- ◆ Not all members of the commissioning body have been proactively involved in the development of the Supporting People programme.
 - ◆ Not all contracts have been signed.
 - ◆ Progress with completing service reviews has been slow.
 - ◆ A lack of service user involvement in the development, delivery and monitoring of Supporting People services.
 - ◆ A lack of easily accessible information for users and carers about Supporting People.

¹ The scoring chart displays performance in two dimensions. The horizontal axis shows how good the service or function is now, on a scale ranging from no stars for a service that is poor (at the left-hand end) to three stars for an excellent service (right-hand end). The vertical axis shows the improvement prospects of the service, also on a four-point scale.

- ◆ Inadequate alternative arrangements for accessing the homelessness and housing advice service.

13 We have judged that the Supporting People programme has uncertain prospects for improvement. We found the following drivers for improvement:

- ◆ Corporately, the council is moving forward and has achieved an improved CPA score and social services is no longer in special measures.
- ◆ The newly elected administration has demonstrated its commitment to further modernisation of council services and the Supporting People programme.
- ◆ Performance management is improving across the council and Supporting People is integrated into the housing service's approach to performance management and monitoring.
- ◆ The council has learnt lessons from the production of the shadow strategy and has taken steps to ensure that the new five year strategy will be more specific and aimed at improving services for service users.
- ◆ The council is now more aware that many of its services under Supporting People carry a high cost and as a result service cost savings have been made and there is now extensive cost comparisons being undertaken which will lead to further cost reductions.

14 There are, however, some barriers to improvement which the council needs to resolve:

- ◆ The council and its partners have yet to fundamentally challenge whether its current Supporting People programme is delivering the right outcomes, in terms of the type of support provided to enable vulnerable people to live independently.
- ◆ The commissioning body has yet to prove itself as a strong and cohesive partnership and does not yet have a track record of driving improvements in the strategic direction of the Supporting People programme.
- ◆ The council has so far failed to consistently challenge the use of Supporting People grant to ensure that it is only paying for non housing related support services.
- ◆ There is a lack of capacity within the Supporting people team to complete all tasks on time whilst becoming more strategically involved in the development of the Supporting People programme.
- ◆ The council does not have a clear strategy for how it intends to involve service users and carers in the development, delivery and monitoring of Supporting People services.
- ◆ Relationships and communication with service providers need to be further improved.
- ◆ No new Supporting People funded services are being commissioned to replace decommissioned services or to address gaps in current service provision.

Recommendations

- 15 To rise to the challenge of continuous improvement, organisations need inspection reports that offer practical pointers for improvement. In this context, the inspection team makes the following recommendations:

Governance

- ◆ Ensure that all members of the commissioning body are proactively involved in the ongoing development of the Supporting People programme.
- ◆ Ensure that the commissioning body improves the corporate ownership and develops the strategic direction of the Supporting People programme in Coventry.
- ◆ Ensure that all commissioning body members have the appropriate skills to enable them to be effective advocates for their organisation.

Delivery arrangements

- ◆ Develop a clear set of aims and objectives for the Supporting People team.

Financial monitoring and management

- ◆ By December 2004 ensure that all contracts are signed.
- ◆ Develop detailed contingency plans for dealing with service failures or closures.

Service reviews

- ◆ Ensure that in future all reviews are completed in a timely manner and that service providers and users are kept informed about the progress of their review.

User involvement and partnership working

- ◆ Develop a clear strategy for involving service users and carers in the development, delivery and monitoring of Supporting People services.

Customer care, access to services and information

- ◆ By December 2004, develop a communications strategy that should include:
 - ◆ the production of regular information about Supporting People for users, prospective users and the general public, including clear information on the council's charging policy;
 - ◆ ensuring full use of all corporate communication mechanisms, such as the council website to publicise the Supporting People programme and services;
 - ◆ clear communication channels with all providers irrespective of whether they are members of the provider forum;
 - ◆ information for council reception staff about Supporting People and how to signpost enquiries;
 - ◆ the distribution of written information about Supporting People, including newsletters, to all relevant outlets, for example libraries, GP surgeries, advice services etc, as well as to all providers and stakeholders; and
 - ◆ ensuring that all leaflets and other information is available in community languages and other formats which meet the needs of Supporting People service users.

Diversity

- ◆ Ensure that when developing the new five year strategy there is a clear approach to assessing and meeting the needs of BME communities and other 'difficult to reach groups', such as refugees.
- ◆ Ensure that the aims and objectives contained in the new strategy reflect the corporate commitment to equalities.

16 We would like to thank the staff of Coventry City Council, particularly Jenny Hughes and the Supporting People team, who made us welcome and who met our requests efficiently and courteously.

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Report

The locality

- 17 Coventry City Council is one of the seven metropolitan authorities in the West Midlands conurbation. The population is 300,848 of which 21.7 per cent are from minority ethnic communities (other than white British); this is higher than both the regional and national average. The population of the city fell by 1.1 per cent between 1991 and 2001.
- 18 In terms of deprivation, Coventry ranks as 64th out of 354² areas in England. Unemployment is falling but at 3.4 per cent it is still higher than both the regional average of 3.0 per cent and the national average of 2.5 per cent. The main sources of employment in the city are manufacturing and the service industry and Coventry is home to Jaguar and Peugeot cars, there are also 2 universities in the city - Warwick and Coventry.

The council

- 19 The council comprises 54 councillors. The Conservative party gained control in June 2004 with 27 seats. Currently a leader and a 9 member cabinet, supported by 5 scrutiny boards govern the business of the council.
- 20 The council's overall budget for the year 2004/05 is £361.2 million. The budget for the delivery of social services is £92.3million and the budget for housing (general fund) services is £3 million.
- 21 The council's objectives as identified in the corporate plan 2004-2007 are:
- ◆ modernise the council to meet the changing needs of customers;
 - ◆ continue radical improvement programmes in social services, housing benefits and street services;
 - ◆ maintain and develop excellent education in our city;
 - ◆ narrow the gap between our most deprived communities and the better off;
 - ◆ reduce crime and the fear of crime;
 - ◆ achieve the goals of local neighbourhoods and communities and improve the city centre; and
 - ◆ work in partnership to deliver the Coventry community plan.

The Supporting People Programme

- 22 The council acts as the administering local authority (ALA) for the development and delivery of the Supporting People programme in the city.
- 23 The focus of our inspection is the Supporting People programme which is designed to meet the housing related support needs of vulnerable people including homeless people, young people at risk, vulnerable older people and offenders.
- 24 The budget for the service for 2004/05 is £16,672 million, a fall of 1.7 per cent from the previous year. In addition the council will receive £370,000 for pipeline schemes and an additional administration grant for the programme of £254,258 for 2004/05.

² 2004 Index of Deprivation where 1 is the most deprived.

- 25 Coventry City Council, in common with other Supporting People administering local authorities (ALAs), has inherited a diverse collection of previously unregulated housing related support services that have evolved in an uncoordinated manner. In Coventry it is these services that form the vast majority of services currently funded through the Supporting People grant. The challenge for the council, in partnership with health and probation, is to establish a strategy for the programme, identify priorities and ensure value for money.
- 26 Coventry City Council was inspected early in the second year of the programme and was among the 19 ALA's considered by the ODPM to have the highest service costs. This report therefore reflects the current context for the council as it continues to deliver the programme and focuses on determining the effectiveness of current service delivery, the value for money presented by the contracted services and the outcomes for vulnerable people.

How good is the service?

- 27 The assessment was based upon the following key issues:
- ◆ governance of the programme;
 - ◆ delivery arrangements including strategy and needs assessments;
 - ◆ financial monitoring and management of the grant;
 - ◆ service reviews carried out by the administering local authority;
 - ◆ value for money;
 - ◆ user involvement, partnerships with providers and others;
 - ◆ customer care, access to services and information;
 - ◆ diversity; and
 - ◆ outcomes for service users.

Governance of the programme

- 28 The ODPM 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.
- 29 Coventry has decided not to adopt the ODPM's recommended structural arrangements for the delivery of its Supporting People programme.
- 30 There is limited corporate ownership of the Supporting People programme in Coventry, with Supporting People being part of the wider policy framework which the council has developed, using the partnership board approach to strategically plan for future service delivery. However, the new corporate plan for the years

2004-2007 makes no reference to the programme and therefore the council has missed the opportunity to demonstrate how Supporting People can help to deliver some of its corporate objectives.

- 31 The local strategic partnership, known as the Coventry partnership produced a second community plan in 2003, which aims by 2010 to:

'Bring together the resources, energy and creativity of key organisations, groups, communities and people to work to meet the economic, social and environmental needs of the City of Coventry and the health and well being of its people.'

Again the current community plan makes no specific reference to Supporting People as a means of delivering its long term aims and objectives.

- 32 Supporting People commissioning bodies are a requirement under grant conditions and must have senior representation from the administering local authority, the local health services (usually one representative from each primary care trust) and the area probation service. Each partner body has one vote although the administering local authority has a veto where there is a demonstrable financial risk to the administering local authority.
- 33 In Coventry the elected member with responsibility for Supporting People is the cabinet portfolio holder for health and housing and the post holder also chairs the commissioning body. The current post holder has only been in post since the local elections held in June 2004 and at the time of our inspection, he had yet to attend a commissioning body meeting. It was agreed by the commissioning body in March 2004 that decisions made by the commissioning body would be reported to the cabinet so that decisions can be properly ratified by the council's political management system.
- 34 The commissioning body has been in place since January 2003 and as well as the cabinet member, its membership includes the director of social services and housing, the head of housing policy and services (who is the accountable officer), the acting assistant chief probation officer and the head of strategy, acute and specialised services – Coventry primary care trust. Meetings were taking place quarterly, but at its last meeting in June, the commissioning body agreed to start meeting every six weeks as the volume of work generated by the completion of service reviews means that more frequent meetings are required.
- 35 The commissioning body has terms of reference which sets out its purpose and functions. However, the voting arrangements for the commissioning body placed it in breach of Supporting People grant conditions, as each representative on the commissioning body had a vote, giving the city council a permanent majority, when grant conditions stipulate that each partner body should only have one vote.
- 36 We were also concerned about the accountable officers duplicity of roles, which could lead to possible conflicts of interest. The accountable officer's role is to advise the commissioning body, but in Coventry we found that the accountable officer not only gave advice, but took a full part in commissioning body meetings including voting and decision making.
- 37 It appears that the council used out of date guidance when putting together the terms of reference for the commissioning body and following our inspection it amended its terms of reference so that it now complies with grant conditions and the accountable officer role has also been changed to prevent possible conflicts of interest.
- 38 Commissioning body meetings normally have good attendance, unfortunately at the meeting we attended in June 2004, attendance was poor as the previous

cabinet member had just lost her seat in the local elections and neither representatives from the probation service and the primary care trust (PCT) attended. Decisions were made by the two city council representatives in a pragmatic manner without much challenge or debate.

- 39 When we spoke to members of the commissioning body it became apparent that it is the city council that is currently the driving force within the commissioning body and the other partners have not been proactively involved in the delivery of the Supporting People programme to date. There is high level commitment from the PCT to be come more actively engaged, but this was not evident during our discussions with the probation service.
- 40 For now, the commissioning body is heavily involved in managing the legacy of services in terms of decommissioning and reconfiguring reviewed services. They see Supporting People as a key element in delivering Coventry's vision of moving away from the use of residential care to providing support to vulnerable people in their own homes or in extra care housing schemes if appropriate.
- 41 As part of this vision the council has adopted a 'new homes for old' policy, which will replace all the council's residential care homes for older people with either housing with care schemes or dementia schemes. The new schemes are being developed and managed by housing associations.
- 42 A more complete picture of service provision is emerging as more services are reviewed. Moreover it is recognised that the emerging profile of services may well still be at variance with identified need. The commissioning body anticipates that in future some difficult decisions will need to be taken to reshape and redefine the sector as a whole.
- 43 Given that difficult decisions about de-commissioning services are starting to be made by the commissioning body, we found that the current terms of reference for the commissioning body lacks sufficient guidance on conflict resolution. The document refers to decisions being made on a unanimous vote, but offers no guidance on what should happen if unanimity cannot be achieved.
- 44 In Coventry there is no core strategy group. Such a group did meet during 2003, but was disbanded at the end of that year because the council decided it was being led and dominated by service providers and therefore was not sufficiently strategically focussed. At the time of our inspection there were no plans to replace the core strategy group as the council together with its partner bodies has established a series of partnership boards, which are made up of representatives from the city council, the PCT, the probation service, the Police, the university hospital trust, the voluntary sector and users and carers organisations.
- 45 There are currently four partnership boards covering older people, children and young people, learning disabilities and mental health. A partnership board for physical disabilities is currently being established. The aim is that in future all strategic planning for service provision will take place within partnership boards.
- 46 This will include the joint commissioning of services and pooled budgets, which in the view of senior officers, negates the need to have a separate Supporting People core strategy group, which just looks at services that are funded by the Supporting People programme, as the rationale for partnership boards is that they should take a holistic approach to commissioning and funding services from a variety of funding sources. We discuss the effectiveness of the partnership boards later in this report in the section entitled 'user involvement and partnership arrangements'.

- 47 Whilst we welcome the council's decision to establish partnership boards, we did have concerns that until they become fully effective, there is no group responsible for providing strategic direction for the Supporting People programme and ensuring that the programme is delivered efficiently and effectively, which would be the responsibility of a core strategic group. It is not appropriate that the commissioning body should take on these responsibilities.
- 48 The council responded positively to our concerns and is now in the process of establishing a core strategy group. It will comprise commissioning officers from each of the partnership boards and representatives of service providers.
- 49 The accountable officer in Coventry is the head of housing policy and services, and as well as Supporting People. He is also responsible for all the 'retained' housing services following the large scale voluntary transfer of the council's housing stock to Whitefriars housing group in 2000. Both the accountable officer and the director of social services and housing demonstrate a clear commitment to raising the profile of the Supporting People programme within the authority.

Delivery arrangements

- 50 The Supporting People team is located in the social services and housing directorate, reporting to the head of housing policy and services. In order to provide a strong team infrastructure, additional funding of approximately £100,000, over and above the ODPM's administration grant of £254,258, has been provided by the city council.
- 51 The headcount of posts in the team totals ten, however two positions are currently unfilled. The team comprises:
- ◆ Supporting People manager.
 - ◆ 4 contracts and review officers.
 - ◆ 1 finance officer (vacant).
 - ◆ 1 development officer (vacant).
 - ◆ 2 Supporting People officers.
 - ◆ 1 administration and information officer.
- 52 The Supporting People team has faced a number of challenges during the last three years. Following the departure of the original Supporting People manager to a neighbouring authority the team were effectively without a manager until the current manager was appointed in June 2003. The team has also been short staffed because of long term sickness and unfilled vacancies. This lack of stability has limited the overall progress with the Supporting People programme.
- 53 The team is now led by an enthusiastic manager and is operating more effectively, although newer team members are still being trained and as such are not yet fully effective. The ongoing vacancies within the team means that the Supporting People manager is required to undertake tasks that would normally be undertaken by the finance officer.
- 54 In general, team members appear clear about their roles and responsibilities within the Supporting People team plan. Progress towards achieving the targets in the plan is discussed at weekly team meetings and staff receive annual appraisals, although newer team members had not yet had an appraisal at the time of our inspection. The Supporting People team receives clear and supportive leadership from both the accountable officer and the director of social services and housing.

- 55 The team as a whole encompasses a range of experiences including finance, housing benefits, housing management and support providers. The council has supplemented the capacity of the team by employing an external consultant to help with the development of a service review toolkit and to provide training for contract and review officers on how to undertake service reviews.
- 56 The Supporting People shadow strategy prepared in 2002 was rated as 'good' by the ODPM and was commended for being clear and concise, easy to read and jargon free. The shadow strategy was written at the same time as the housing strategy and by the same team and so the linkages between the two documents are clear and appropriate.
- 57 At that time, the supply of services was mapped using a combination of data sources available to the authority and detailed input from the nine supported housing sub-groups that made up the supported housing forum which had existed in Coventry prior to Supporting People. These sub-groups which also led on needs profiling and analysis contain representatives from service providers, the city council, the probation service, the PCT and the voluntary sector and cover the following client groups:
- ◆ Homelessness.
 - ◆ Ex-offenders.
 - ◆ Substance abuse.
 - ◆ Older people.
 - ◆ Domestic violence.
 - ◆ Young people.
 - ◆ Mental health.
 - ◆ Physical disabilities.
 - ◆ Learning disabilities.
- 58 Because of limited resources within the Supporting People and the housing strategy teams, the council has decided to employ a consultant to prepare the new five year Supporting People strategy. The consultant being used has already produced the council's homelessness strategy and has therefore already made a number of useful contacts which can be built upon.
- 59 When we read the council's homelessness strategy, we found very few references to Supporting People and given that Coventry is currently experiencing a large increase in the number of homeless people, strategically the links between the homelessness strategy and the Supporting People programme appear weak and ill defined.
- 60 An outline project plan which will meet the ODPM deadline of March 2005 for final submission of the new five year strategy, has been agreed. However, the project plan will need refinement once the initial consultation phase has been completed.
- 61 Currently it is unclear how service users and their carers will be involved in developing the new strategy, this is a serious weakness and their involvement needs to be made much more explicit in the project plan.
- 62 At the time of our inspection the consultant had started meeting with the nine sub groups to discuss how they can be involved again in needs assessments and supply mapping. ODPM feedback on the shadow strategy has also been analysed to ensure that previous strengths are built upon and weaker areas are addressed.

- 63 Since the shadow strategy, further needs assessments and supply mapping work has either been completed or is in progress including:
- ◆ housing demand study completed by CURS³ in 2003 and currently being updated;
 - ◆ city-wide housing needs survey completed in January 2004;
 - ◆ draft black and minority ethnic housing strategy; and
 - ◆ strategy for asylum seekers and refugees in Coventry – March 2003.
- 64 This information, together with data collected from service provider's workbooks will also be included in the new strategy. A draft version of the strategy will be presented to all the partnership boards for their comments and amendments, as they will have a key role in commissioning new services to meet the identified needs in the new five year strategy. The commissioning body are very clear that they should retain the overall ownership of the strategy, and the final version of the strategy will be agreed by the commissioning body before being sent to elected members for approval.
- 65 Currently, the picture of support service provision in Coventry shows that the majority of services are accommodation based (76 per cent) and 62 per cent of accommodation based provision is for older people. As such, it is recognised that service provision as a whole does not necessarily match strategic goals at the present time.
- 66 By comparison with the profile prepared by the ODPM the city has:
- ◆ a higher number of services for young people at risk and refugees;
 - ◆ a lower number of services for people with physical disabilities, alcohol or drug problems; and
 - ◆ no provision for those with HIV/AIDS, mentally disordered offenders, rough sleepers and travellers.
- 67 When we compared the overall number of Supporting People units per 1,000 of the population we found Coventry had 11.19 units per 1,000, against a regional average of 18.47 units and a national average of 16.83 units. So currently Coventry has less Supporting People units per head of population than both the national and regional average.
- 68 Coventry is a member of the West Midlands regional implementation group (WMRIG) and benchmarking data about the supply of services and service costs will soon be available from this group thus providing an additional source of data to that provided by the ODPM.
- 69 The same group has also produced a draft service eligibility criteria, which it is hoped will be adopted by each of the 14 administering authorities in the region. In Coventry, the commissioning body has agreed that consultation on the draft criteria should be undertaken with service providers via the provider forum and this was happening at the time of our inspection.

Financial monitoring and management

- 70 A total of 71 contracts are in place, covering 267 services with 50 service providers. At the start of our inspection around 50 per cent of contracts had been

³ Centre for urban and regional studies at the University of Birmingham.

signed by service providers, but none had been signed by the council, placing it in breach of its Supporting People grant conditions.

- 71 The council told us that a combination of factors had resulted in no contracts being signed by both parties. For example some service providers were unhappy with a number of contract clauses and the Supporting People team lacked the necessary support from the council's legal services to help them to resolve these issues. The council were also concerned that the current contract termination clause laid them open to an unacceptable level of financial risk if their Supporting People funding was significantly reduced.
- 72 By the time the on site phase of our inspection had been completed, 38 contracts had been signed by both the council and service providers, leaving 33 contracts still to be signed. Grant conditions require administering local authorities to instigate service reviews where contracts remained unsigned at 31 July 2003. The council has not instigated service reviews and is therefore in a further breach of Supporting People grant conditions.
- 73 This delay in signing contracts has caused frustration amongst service providers with over half of all the service providers we contacted during our inspection stating that they were dissatisfied with the council's arrangements for negotiating contracts.
- 74 The council decided to use block gross payments for all its service providers as it was felt that this would be the most straightforward payment method, given the difficulties being experienced by the Supporting People team prior to going 'live' in April 2003. The council gave a commitment to review this within the first twelve months.
- 75 During January 2004 all service providers and users in chargeable schemes were surveyed about their preferred payment method. Following this consultation exercise, just one service provider decided to change to block subsidy payments.
- 76 Financial risks to the authority from potential cuts in the Supporting People budget are identified in the council's corporate risk register. However, the council has not assessed the ongoing risk of continuing to pay the majority of service providers using block gross payments, which places all the financial risk onto the council, as it is responsible for collecting charges from service users who pay a contribution towards the cost of their support services.
- 77 In addition, the council has been slow to develop detailed contingency plans to deal with the risk of service closure or failure.
- 78 The IT system used by the Supporting People team ensures that payments are both accurate and timely and there is a clear audit trail in place which details how each batch of payments have been made. The majority of providers we contacted were satisfied (78 per cent) with the payment system.
- 79 Management and monitoring of the Supporting People grant is being carried out in a satisfactory manner, helped partly by the Supporting People manager's previous financial experience and a very positive working relationship with the directorate's finance officer. Currently, the Supporting People manager is authorising all payments, a task that will be delegated to the Supporting People finance officer, once they are appointed. Financial update reports on grant spending are presented to the commissioning body at each meeting.
- 80 A fairer charging policy is in place and assessments are carried by the same staff who undertake fairer charging assessments for community care services and service users are billed four weeks in arrears. There are currently 184 service users who pay a contribution towards their support costs and the income from

this amounts to approximately £377,000 per annum which is returned to the Supporting People budget.

- 81 The council has achieved savings in the first year of the Supporting People programme. These were in addition to the required efficiency savings of 2.5 per cent that were required by the ODPM, which amounted to £424,000 in 2003/04 and will total £429,000 in 2004/05. At the end of 2003/04 the council achieved savings of £1.2 million, a sum which was carried forward and used in part to pay a 3 per cent inflation increase to service providers in 2004/05.
- 82 These savings were achieved by:
- ◆ receipt of a late grant payment from the ODPM of £700,000;
 - ◆ late establishment of some pipeline schemes; and
 - ◆ lower levels than anticipated of bad debts.
- 83 Projections indicate that further savings will be made during 2004/05 which could amount to £65,000 these will be added to the carried forward amount from 2003/04 and will be used to help pay for anticipated budget reductions in 2005/06.

Service reviews

- 84 ODPM guidance requires administering local authorities (ALA's) to review all services funded through Supporting People within three years starting from 1 April 2003. ALA's are required to produce a service review timetable together with a rationale to explain how the reviews have been prioritised. Progress with the service review timetable is submitted to ODPM through their regular performance reviews.
- 85 The original service review timetable was based upon a mixture of perceived risk, high cost and new services. The timetable was amended following consultation with the commissioning body and now focuses on ensuring that all 'high cost' services will be reviewed during 2004/05. The council plan to have completed all service reviews by the end of 2005. So far five reviews have been completed and another eight are in progress, and several of these will be considered at the next meeting of the commissioning body, which are now to be held every six weeks due to the increased workload generated by service reviews.
- 86 Analysis shows that the service reviews either completed or currently in progress represent only 36 per cent of the annual Supporting People budget. However, projected savings from one review alone could be as much as £535,000 and for completed reviews where de-commissioning has been recommended savings of over £511,000 are expected making a total of over £1 million.
- 87 The council used an external consultant to develop the service review toolkit and to provide ongoing staff training to the contract and review officers who undertake service reviews. This consultant has also been retained to help with ongoing reviews until March 2005.
- 88 We found clear policies and procedures in place for undertaking service reviews and evidence that procedures have been adapted to take into account emerging good practice. However, the lack of an effective appeals procedure was a serious weakness, which the council was in the process of addressing and following our inspection the council adopted a comprehensive appeals procedure.
- 89 The skills and capacity of the contract and review officers is augmented by the use of other city council staff who act as mentors or advisers when undertaking reviews of more specialist services. Nevertheless we did receive comments from

a few service providers that reviews were being undertaken by officers who did not demonstrate relevant skills for the client group or service.

- 90 It was clear from reading the service review reports produced by the contract and review officers that their skills are still developing in this area, however, recent reports are more focussed and robust.
- 91 The service review timetable has been reviewed as previously mentioned, however, progress with undertaking and completing reviews appears slow, and some reviews that were commenced in October 2003 have still not been completed, nine months after they commenced.
- 92 These delays has led to a number of service providers commenting to us that they do not understand how the review process works and they are not being kept informed about the progress of their review. Also several service providers have wrongly presumed that because the Supporting People team have continued to make payments to the scheme, the review has been completed satisfactorily.
- 93 These problems appeared to be compounded by a lack of clear timetabling information for service providers. Currently, they receive 28 days notice that a service review is about to start, but no information about how long each stage will take and no target completion date. There are no targets in place for the Supporting People team to aim for with regard to completing service reviews.
- 94 The Supporting People team reacted quickly to our criticism and have introduced a review timetabling template which will be used in all future reviews and clearly details the different stages of the review process and the time needed to undertake each stage. Based on this, reviews should take no longer than six months to complete, which still appears to us to be a lengthy timescale.
- 95 The commissioning body makes the final decision on the outcome of all service reviews, based upon a recommendation made by the Supporting People team and again we had concerns about potential conflicts of interest with the accountable officer presenting review reports to the commissioning body and then being part of the decision making process. Following our inspection the terms of reference were amended so that the accountable officer no longer has voting rights.
- 96 De-commissioning has been recommended for a number of services, based on concerns about quality of service and lack of eligibility for Supporting People funding. The commissioning body has been prepared to take difficult decisions, such as agreeing to decommission services for BME clients based on poor service outcomes.
- 97 There was no formal appeals mechanism in place, so without a clear and transparent appeals procedure, it was difficult for service providers or service users to challenge the outcome of a review. Service providers, who are unhappy with the outcome of their reviews, have made written representations to the commissioning body, which were being considered at the time of our inspection.
- 98 No provision currently exists for reviews to be internally or externally moderated. We consider that this would provide a useful additional dimension and source of feedback to the review process.
- 99 In order to involve service users in scheme reviews, the contract and review officers use the guidance and positive practice issued by the ODPM and feedback from service users is included in the final report that is considered by the commissioning body. What is not clear is how the information collected from service users will be taken into account when preparing the new five year strategy.

- 100 The following case study demonstrates a positive outcome from a service review and demonstrates that the commissioning body is prepared to make difficult decisions.

Supporting People Case Study 1

Service User Group: Women at risk of domestic violence

Type of Service: Accommodation based

Key Players: Service provider, housing association (landlord of accommodation)

Issues to be addressed:

- ◆ No support or counselling services being provided and inadequate support plans.
- ◆ Service users post being intercepted.
- ◆ Service users belongings being withheld and were being used by other service users.
- ◆ Staff accessing service users bedrooms without consent.
- ◆ Service users subjected to intimidation and threatening behaviour from staff.
- ◆ Service provider allowing other service user groups to use this accommodation such as single homeless women and refugees.

Outcomes for Service User:

- ◆ Following consultation with the commissioning body, the council issued an immediate suspension notice, so that Supporting People grant payments were suspended until the service review had been formally completed.
- ◆ The Supporting People team arranged with other local service providers for alternative accommodation to be made available to service users.
- ◆ The recommendation to the commissioning body is that this service should be de-commissioned subject to any appeal lodged by the service provider.

Value for money

- 101 In order to make an assessment of whether or not the housing related support services in Coventry represent value for money it is necessary to first have an understanding of the background and history of the existing picture of provision and its related price.
- 102 At the time of our inspection the highest cost Supporting People service in Coventry was £613.33 per person per week for accommodation based support for offenders or people at risk of offending and a review of this service is due to start in August 2004. The lowest cost service was £1.44 a week for a community alarm service for older people.
- 103 Coventry City Council has been identified by the ODPM as one of 19 local authorities having the highest cost services. Costs rose by approximately £2.36 million between the 'golden' and 'platinum' cuts, at December 2002 and July 2003 respectively. These 'cuts' were used by the ODPM to determine the size of the Supporting People budget nationally and formed the basis of submissions by the ODPM to the Treasury.

- 104 The reasons for Coventry's high costs appear twofold. Firstly, there are especially high costs associated with particular client groups, with the result that half of the total budget was being spent on just 20 per cent of the provision. These groups were:
- ◆ Learning disability – 18.4 per cent of the budget on 7.5 per cent of provision.
 - ◆ Mental health – 16.8 per cent of the budget on 7.6 per cent of provision.
 - ◆ Homeless people – 14 per cent of the budget on 5.7 per cent of provision.
- 105 Secondly, Coventry had higher overall unit costs for both accommodation based and floating support services compared to both regional and national averages:
- ◆ Average cost for all services in Coventry - £101.01 per week.
 - ◆ Average regional cost - £37.32 per week.
 - ◆ Average national cost - £47.46 per week.
- 106 The reasons given by the council for the increase in costs between the 'golden' and 'platinum' cuts were:
- ◆ some schemes were missing from the 'golden' cut due to late identification of relevant schemes by service providers and in some cases the housing benefit section;
 - ◆ around 20 new schemes were developed between the 'golden' and 'platinum' cuts, a number of which were floating support schemes, which had been identified as an area of under provision in the shadow strategy; and
 - ◆ some new schemes were not fully occupied at the 'golden' cut and so displayed their occupancy (and therefore cost) below capacity.
- 107 Housing benefit is a locally determined benefit and the city council as a metropolitan authority were responsible for assessing claims for transitional housing benefit (THB) - the main vehicle used by the ODPM for sizing the eventual Supporting People pot. The hostels team in the housing benefit section were the team responsible for processing THB claims. Service providers were asked to provide detailed breakdowns of their costs and these were benchmarked against similar established schemes in Coventry and elsewhere locally to help assess the appropriateness of scheme costs.
- 108 All higher cost schemes were referred to a panel, which included representatives from housing benefits, Supporting People team, Coventry law centre, social services commissioning staff, the council's finance team and the voluntary sector. This panel were responsible for making the final decision on whether the scheme qualified for THB. The council has confirmed that some high cost schemes were agreed as they were considered to be 'one-off' schemes that were providing a much needed service that was not being provided by another service provider in Coventry. It is also apparent that THB was incorrectly paid in some cases to fund schemes that were providing care services as opposed to housing related support services.
- 109 Despite this level of scrutiny, Coventry still failed to achieve a balanced Supporting People programme, with the majority of services being funded through THB being accommodation based schemes and with no provision at all for some service user groups, for example, mentally disordered offenders and people with HIV/AIDS, despite their needs being identified in the shadow Supporting People strategy.

- 110 The commissioning body, the accountable officer and the Supporting People team are all highly motivated to challenge what they have identified as high cost services and all services have been mapped against value for money tables to show the outliers which show that the costs of some services are up to 603 per cent above the national average cost. All high cost services have now been prioritised for early review.
- 111 The council has also used national data distributed by the ODPM which contains descriptive statistics for all the primary client groups by type of service and accommodation type. This has helped Coventry to benchmark its own costs against national cost indicators and appears to us to be a robust dataset for the council to use. Benchmarking data on regional costs is currently being developed by the WMRIG and Coventry is also collecting data from authorities in the East Midlands.
- 112 Outside of the formal service review programme, the council has used this data to negotiate either a reduction in costs with some service providers or providing additional units for the same cost.
- 113 The council has also undertaken a review of its sheltered housing service, which is provided at 12 sheltered housing schemes owned by Whitefriars housing group but managed and staffed by social services. This review has led to a new service structure which has resulted in savings of £225,000 being made from the Supporting People grant. In addition the council has identified some schemes where 'cost shunting' has taken place and this resulted in inappropriate services being funded by Supporting People grant.
- 114 In total over £735,000 worth of savings could be made during 2004/05 outside of the formal service review programme, which as previously mentioned, could generate an additional £1 million of savings if all service review recommendations are implemented.
- 115 The Supporting People team are also offering advice to one service provider about reducing their costs, after they approached the council with concerns that their costs were higher than other local service providers.
- 116 Currently payments are made to service providers based on the contracted number of units, no reductions are made if the service provider has vacant units or if staffing levels reduce significantly. The Supporting People team are aware that they must start moving towards more occupancy based payments so that they can demonstrate that they are only paying for services that are actually being delivered.
- 117 However, at present there appears to be no plans to move away from block gross payments and new contracts are being issued using the same method of payment.
- 118 There is recognition by the council that there is scope for further economies and efficiency gains over time, and that the authority is behind some other authorities in the number of reviews it has undertaken. Its ability to challenge high cost services has been affected by the staffing difficulties described earlier in this report. However, senior officers are confident that as experience grows the Supporting People team will develop a more sophisticated approach to assessing value for money.
- 119 Whilst we acknowledge that the council is placing a lot of emphasis on identifying high cost services, we judge that the council needs to do more to identify and robustly challenge schemes where Supporting People grant is being used inappropriately to fund personal care services which are ineligible for Supporting People funding.

- 120 A number of schemes we visited as part of the inspection were not currently offering value for money. Examples of these were:
- ◆ Services where it is not clear what additional services are being offered that justifies higher than average costs – where is the added value?
 - ◆ Services being provided for clients whose needs are lower level or reducing but who are occupying high cost spaces due to a lack of ability to move on to general needs housing, with support as required.
 - ◆ Services where it is clear that Supporting People monies are funding services which are not housing related support, although service providers told us that without this high level of support the service users would not be able to live independently. Who should be funding these services?
- 121 Cross authority work to improve procurement or commissioning arrangements for Supporting People services is not yet well developed, but the work being undertaken by the WMRIG to establish regional eligibility criteria is a positive development.

User involvement and partnership arrangements

- 122 The council acknowledges that so far it has failed to effectively involve service users and their carers in the development of the Supporting People programme.
- 123 There is no inclusive forum in place and so far the council has not made best use of existing groups who are already actively engaged with the council. The council has recognised that this is an area of weakness and the social services and housing directorate had published a draft customer and carer participation strategy which was out for consultation at the time of our inspection and has subsequently been adopted.
- 124 The aim of the strategy is to ensure that customers of the directorate and their carers are empowered to affect decisions that may be made at an individual or service level and that they are involved in shaping services for the future. And to enable the council to understand how current performance is experienced by customers so it can be improved.
- 125 As previously detailed in this report, individual service users are involved in the service review process and some consultation has been undertaken around how service users should be charged for Supporting People services. Apart from these limited examples, the Supporting People team had done nothing to actively engage with service users and their carers.
- 126 Officers were adamant that service users and their carers would be involved in the consultation process for the production of the five year strategy. However, at the time of our inspection, there was no service user involvement plan in place, detailing how this would be achieved and given the council's past record of achievement we had some doubts about the resources available to ensure this would be achieved. Following our inspection the Supporting People team have developed a service user questionnaire, the results from which will be fed into the development of the new five year strategy.
- 127 The council's relationship with service providers is mixed. Most service providers we contacted during the course of our inspection were satisfied with the methods of payment, the information provided about charging arrangements and recent training on the new workbooks. However, many described the communication arrangements with the Supporting People team as being poor and listed problems with getting replies to e-mails and telephone enquiries. They also complained that meetings were arranged at short notice and documents were often requested on an ad-hoc basis and without a clear reason.

- 128 A number of service providers were unhappy about the service review process and told us that they had not received any feedback from scheme visits weeks after the visit had taken place. We were also contacted by service providers who claimed they had not been notified about the outcomes of their service review, even though we were shown documents that indicated that the commissioning body had already made a decision about the future of their service.
- 129 Service providers were involved in the development of the Supporting People shadow strategy as members of the nine supported housing sub-groups that made up the supported housing forum and as members of the now defunct core strategy group. As previously detailed in this report, these sub-groups are now involved in the development of the new five year strategy.
- 130 The council has now established a provider forum, which involves all service providers in Coventry. It is the intention that once properly established, this forum will be run independently by service providers with initial administrative support being provided by the Supporting People team. During our inspection, we attended a meeting of this forum at which a 'terms of reference' for this group was being discussed. A forum for floating support service providers has also been established by the providers themselves, without the support of the Supporting People team.
- 131 At the time of our inspection, both these forums had only met twice, so we were unable to judge their effectiveness in providing a forum for the dissemination of information and improved communications between providers and the Supporting People team and the promotion of positive practice.
- 132 Inside the council we saw good evidence of partnership working with regard to the Supporting People programme. Officers from the Supporting People team and the housing strategy team were working together closely on the new five year strategy and were involving colleagues from social services who are responsible for commissioning services.
- 133 We were also satisfied that there is a level playing field being maintained between internal and external service providers, with the director of social services and housing in particular demonstrating a clear commitment to maintaining the independence of the Supporting People team.
- 134 We found the establishment of partnership boards in Coventry to be a positive development. The council has a clear vision of how these partnership boards will operate and there is a clear commitment that in future all social care services, including Supporting People services will be commissioned via these boards. We found high level support for these boards from both officers and elected members at the council and from senior managers at the PCT.
- 135 There are currently four partnership boards covering older people, children and young people, learning disabilities and mental health. A partnership board for physical disabilities is currently being established. Partnership boards include representatives from the city council, the PCT, the probation service, the Police, the university hospital trust, the voluntary sector and users and carers organisations.
- 136 Each partnership board has its own manager whose post is jointly funded by the participating agencies and each partnership board is currently at different stages within its development. For example, the learning disabilities board is co-chaired by a service user and has produced a joint commissioning strategy, which was designed with service users in mind. One of the key themes within this strategy is housing and a key action identified for 2004/05 is 'contributing to the development of Coventry's Supporting People and housing strategies'.

- 137 During our inspection we observed a meeting of the older person's board, which is still in the early stages of its development, nevertheless it has clearly established a widespread and diverse membership. It is chaired effectively by the chief executive of the PCT and it is currently in the process of developing an older peoples strategy for Coventry.
- 138 A steering group which consists of the chief executive's of the city council, the PCT and the hospital trust, together with the directors of education and social services meet regularly to ensure that the partnership boards are working effectively.
- 139 We found that the operational arrangements for the multi-agency public protection panel in Coventry to be effective, however, it was unclear how issues of a strategic nature raised by this group were being picked up and fed back into the Supporting People strategy.

Customer care, access to services and information

- 140 The council's overall approach to providing information about and access to the Supporting People programme is poor. During our inspection we visited various locations including council offices, the citizens advice bureau and Connexions to look for information about Supporting People. We were disappointed to find that none of the locations we visited had any information about Supporting People, although at some locations we did information about local service providers. Although reception staff were helpful, they had very limited knowledge or understanding of the Supporting People programme. .
- 141 As previously mentioned, there is no information and consultation strategy in place for Supporting People, so it is unclear what plans the council has to improve the information available for service users, their carers and service providers.
- 142 The council had not yet produced any leaflets about Supporting People. A draft leaflet was being prepared at the time of our inspection, but the draft copy we were shown was very basic in its content and did not contain any information in pictorial form for service users with learning disabilities. We were told that the leaflet, once printed, would be available in other languages and formats, such as Braille and audio tape.
- 143 The council produced one Supporting People newsletter in August 2002, which appears to have been aimed at service providers. The Supporting People team have plans to introduce a quarterly newsletter for service providers starting in August 2004, however, there appears to be no plans at present to produce a newsletter or other regular information for service users or their carers. Following our inspection we were sent a copy of the first newsletter which was finally sent out in October 2004.
- 144 We looked at the council's website to see what information there was about Supporting People. We found it very difficult to find the information, which was at least twelve months out of date. Again plans are in place to update this information on a regular basis, starting in August 2004. Following our inspection, the information on the council's website was updated, but not by the target date of August 2004. The current information displayed is comprehensive and easily located.
- 145 During our inspection we also found that the council had closed its housing advice centre whilst refurbishments were being undertaken. In our view the alternative arrangements that had been made for customers were inadequate. A sign had been placed on the doors of the centre advising customers that the centre was closed for the next sixteen weeks and to ring a number if they needed

advice or assistance. Repeated calls to the number listed during normal working hours were not answered. This sign was written in English only.

- 146 We saw a number of people visit the centre who were obviously confused about where to go and who they should contact. No information about the office closure appeared on the council's website. Alternative arrangements had been made for customers who had housing benefits queries, they were redirected to the Town Hall, but again the sign was printed in English only.
- 147 We also rang the council's emergency out of hour's telephone number and our call was answered quickly. The member of staff was polite and very helpful and gave us sound advice about accessing temporary accommodation in the city.
- 148 During our inspection we spoke to a number of young people at the local Connexions office. They were very positive about the help and advice they had received from the Connexions service, in relation to finding accommodation and support services, which included good signposting to service providers in Coventry. A typical comment was:

'You can trust them to help you'.

However, their experiences when contacting the council for help were much less positive and resulted in them expressing mistrust and saying:

'It's a waste of time going there cos they can't do anything'.

- 149 Coventry has a large asylum and refugee population and estimates show that around 3,000 asylum seekers are placed annually in Coventry by the national asylum seekers service (NASS). Of these, it is estimated that around 1,000 a year will remain in Coventry, if granted refugee status or exceptional leave to remain and the total population could be as high as 5,000.
- 150 We found no information available for refugees who may be entitled to access Supporting People funded services. The council does fund the Coventry refugee centre, who provides advice, advocacy and other services for asylum seekers and refugees, but this should not be the only source of information available for refugees who make a substantial contribution to Coventry's culturally diverse community.
- 151 The council has a charging policy in place, which follows the 'fairer charging' guidance. However, this policy is not reproduced in leaflet form for use by service users, their carers and advocates and the charging policy document does not appear to be available in other formats or languages.
- 152 The majority of service providers we contacted during our inspection were dissatisfied with the council's provision of information about Supporting People for service users.
- 153 In June 2000 it became a requirement for unitary authorities and certain other public bodies to produce a local charter entitled 'better care, higher standards', for anyone aged 18 or over in England who has difficulties associated with old age, long term illness or disability and for carers who support people in these circumstances. The charter sets out standards for services in health, housing and social services and indicates what to do if these expectations are not met. As such these are key departmental documents designed to empower users and give authorities a tool against which they can monitor performance based on the views of users and carers. The charter should be updated annually.
- 154 It was disappointing to note that the Coventry 'better care, higher standards' charter makes no reference to Supporting People and has not been revised since 2000. This represents a lost opportunity to promote joined up working between

services, to encourage user engagement and to make public services more accessible. Following our inspection an updated version of the charter was published in October 2004 which contains some useful information about Supporting People services.

- 155 There is no directory of Supporting People services available in Coventry, which would help service users and their carers' access services and provide valuable information to service providers and advice agencies. We did find, however, good evidence of networking taking place amongst service providers in Coventry to assist individual service users with accessing appropriate services.

Diversity

- 156 Coventry City Council has a corporate commitment to the diversity agenda and agreed its first equality strategy in April 2003. A cabinet member is responsible for monitoring the effectiveness of this strategy and for recommending changes and improvements to the cabinet. Each cabinet member is also responsible for ensuring that diversity issues are incorporated into the service planning process for the service area for which they are responsible.
- 157 The equality strategy includes the race equality scheme, the disability equality policy, the equal opportunities policy and a policy for work with older people. The council aims to achieve level 3 of the equalities standard during 2004/05 and level 4 the following year. To reach level 3 the council has set a range of equalities objectives and targets within each directorate's operational plan.
- 158 The local strategic partnership - Coventry partnership, has just produced a leaflet entitled 'Facts, Myths, Truths and Stories' which provides useful information about asylum seekers and refugees in Coventry, which the partnership hopes will reinforce Coventry's reputation for peace, reconciliation and tolerance.
- 159 The vision statement and objectives included in the Supporting People shadow strategy do not reflect this corporate commitment to the equality agenda as neither make explicit reference to ensuring that equality and diversity is at the heart of the Supporting People programme in Coventry. The vision is:

'To enable local people who need support to improve the quality of their life by promoting independence and individual well being through the provision of well planned, high quality and value for money support services'.

And the three key objectives are:

- ◆ Provision of high quality services through effective funding, monitoring and review.
 - ◆ To provide accurate and current intelligence to inform strategy development.
 - ◆ Ensure efficient and effective partnership working to deliver the Supporting People programme and to contribute to other strategies and policies.
- 160 The supply mapping exercise undertaken for the shadow strategy did identify some BME specific services, but also identified key gaps in provision, especially for younger people and those with learning difficulties. There were also gaps for certain minorities such as those from the Chinese community, which have no specific support services.
- 161 The supply mapping exercise also identified that there was no service provision for travellers or people with HIV/AIDS.
- 162 However, since the publication of the shadow strategy the council has undertaken further research into equalities related issues, as detailed earlier in this report, and this has resulted in the production of draft black and minority

ethnic housing strategy and a strategy for asylum seekers and refugees in Coventry.

- 163 The Supporting People team will be collecting information from service providers about the ethnic origin of service users and this information will also be fed into the new five year strategy.
- 164 Further mapping will be undertaken as part of the preparations for the new five year strategy. However, as previously mentioned it is unclear how service users and their carers will be involved in developing the new strategy and this is particularly important for traditionally 'difficult to reach' groups such as people from minority ethnic communities and travellers.
- 165 There are a number of culturally specific services funded by Supporting People grant in Coventry these include:
- ◆ Floating Support schemes for refugees – 101 units.
 - ◆ Accommodation for Asian women at risk of domestic violence – 10 units.
 - ◆ Accommodation for homeless African Caribbean men – 4 units.
 - ◆ Accommodation for Asian elders – 13 units.
 - ◆ Accommodation for Irish elders – 11 units.

Outcomes for service users

- 166 The shadow Supporting People strategy set out key outcomes for clients of each of the nine housing sub-groups for example:
- ◆ Develop floating support schemes for women at risk of domestic violence.
 - ◆ Invest in new housing with care and dementia schemes for older people.
 - ◆ Develop accommodation for Asian men with mental health problems.
- 167 Since its introduction in April 2003, the Supporting People programme, (sometimes in collaboration with other funding streams) has led to better outcomes for a number of service users in Coventry, some examples of which are:
- ◆ the availability of housing with care and dementia schemes has increased, four schemes have already opened and another five are planned through Coventry's 'new homes for old' strategy;
 - ◆ a range of floating support schemes have been put in place, increasing the overall percentage of floating support from 13 to 24 per cent;
 - ◆ the Foyer scheme has opened providing 63 units of accommodation and life skills training; and
 - ◆ a common referrals process is now being used between health and social services which assists service users who move regularly between service providers.
- 168 Poor services are being decommissioned as a result of the review process and where appropriate, alternative arrangements have been made for service users, before the decision to suspend grant payments was made.
- 169 We found support plans in place at most of the schemes we visited, the most notable exception was at a 200 bed hostel run by a locally based housing association, where staff admitted to being 'overwhelmed' by the number of support plans they needed to keep up to date, bearing in mind that some service users only stayed for a couple of nights.

- 170 The majority of service users we spoke to during our inspection were satisfied with the services they received.
- 171 However, we also found some areas where outcomes for service users are poor. The council's overall approach to providing information about and access to Supporting People services is poor and service users and their carers are disadvantaged as a result.
- 172 Currently service users have no voice. The council has not invested sufficient time and resources in actively involving service users and their carers, with the result being they have not been involved in the Supporting People programme so far. It is unclear how they will be involved in the development of the new five year Supporting People strategy, the monitoring of existing services and the development of future service provision.
- 173 The service review process is slow and is not delivering tangible outcomes for service users. Even when services are recommended for decommissioning we could see no evidence that new services are being commissioned to fill the gaps left by these services. Nor could we see robust plans in place to commission new services to meet identified gaps, using the savings being generated from service reviews and other cost cutting measures. The council can, however, identify other funding sources that have contributed to the provision of support services for vulnerable people.
- 174 The council has been slow to undertake robust risk assessments of Supporting People funded services and as a result has failed to develop detailed contingency plans to deal with the risk of service closure or failure.
- 175 The following case study demonstrates a positive outcome for one particular service user and illustrates that some quality outcomes for service users are being achieved in Coventry.

Supporting People Case Study 2

Service User Group: Older people with support needs

Type of Service: Home improvement agency

Key Players: Service provider and a local voluntary group

Issue to be addressed:

- ◆ Mr O is 93 years of age and he moved to England from Eire as a young person. He now lives in a private rented accommodation, and has been in the same property for 30 years.
- ◆ Mr O is very independent but very isolated due to no family or close friends, but he is in contact with a local voluntary group, who referred him to the home improvement agency.
- ◆ Mr O is of poor health he suffers from high blood pressure and he is diabetic, his mobility is poor, due to his age.
- ◆ The initial visit to Mr O was carried out in May 04, and the state of the property was found to be of urgent need of a blitz and maintenance repairs, the gas fire in lounge was found to be in poor working order, and there was no record of any regular gas service checks, the kitchen sink unit was in a state of collapse and the hot tap to the sink had seized, after further inspection around the house it was found that there were electric cables across the floor, due to insufficient plug sockets and the floor boards were rotten in certain areas and dangerous.

Outcome for Service User:

- ◆ As a result of the visit, the officer from the home improvement agency arranged to meet with the landlady to discuss the works to be carried out to the property, which are as a landlady her responsibility.
- ◆ Contact was also made with social services who have agreed to supply and fit a phone and line, and to pay the regular rental charges.
- ◆ A life line call alarm system has also been installed.
- ◆ A gas service check was also arranged.
- ◆ Applications were made to local charities to assist with funding to purchase new carpets, bed and washing machine.
- ◆ After communication with an advocacy of the local voluntary group, higher attendance allowance has been granted which will enable Mr O to have ongoing help with household chores.

Summary

176 Overall, we judge that Coventry City Council is delivering a fair, one star service in its planning and delivery of the Supporting People programme. We have highlighted the following strengths in reaching this judgement:

- ◆ Payments are made to providers promptly and accurately.
- ◆ Savings have been achieved in the first year of the programme totalling £1.2 million and significant further savings of £1.75 million have been identified in 2004/05.
- ◆ There are some examples of effective partnership working.
- ◆ Some culturally specific Supporting People services have been developed.
- ◆ Some quality outcomes for service users can be demonstrated.

177 However, we have identified the following weaknesses that need to be addressed:

- ◆ Not all members of the commissioning body have been proactively involved in the development of the Supporting People programme.
- ◆ Not all contracts have been signed.
- ◆ Progress with completing service reviews has been slow.
- ◆ A lack of service user involvement in the development, delivery and monitoring of Supporting People services.
- ◆ A lack of easily accessible information for users and carers about Supporting People.
- ◆ Inadequate alternative arrangements for accessing the homelessness and housing advice service.

What are the prospects for improvement to the service?

What is the evidence of service improvement?

- 178 Despite the difficulties experienced by the Supporting People team, the programme went live as planned on 1 April 2003 and the shadow strategy was rated as 'Good'. The introduction of a new computer system has enabled all payments to be made accurately and on time. However, the council has failed to ensure that data is available in a timely manner and has failed on four separate occasions to provide milestone returns, reporting quarterly progress, to the ODPM as required.
- 179 Clear procedures and guidance are in place for undertaking service reviews and there is evidence that procedures have been adapted that take into account emerging good practice. As a result, service reviews have been completed and have pointed out the need for a robust appeals process. At the time of our inspection legal advice was being sought and a procedure has now been introduced. The council is continuing to review the current contract conditions for service providers who remain unhappy about some of the contract conditions.
- 180 Savings have been made from both service reviews and from negotiations with service providers, some high cost services are being challenged and poor services are being decommissioned. Difficult decisions have been taken by the commissioning body.
- 181 However, the review process is slow, with some service reviews taking over nine months to complete. These delays are having a negative impact on both service providers and users as they are not being kept informed about the progress of service reviews. In addition a substantial number of contracts still remain unsigned at the time of our inspection which is a further disincentive to service providers.
- 182 The council has failed to take the opportunity presented by service reviews to look at changing the type of contract being offered to service providers, which with the exception of one, are all block gross, which is resulting in an ongoing financial risk being borne by the authority.
- 183 The council is aware that many of its services under Supporting People continue to be high cost and at the time of our inspection, it had started to challenge a number of these high cost services, with the result that service costs have been reduced. However, the council has not yet fundamentally challenged all services to ensure that they are providing housing related support services, rather than ineligible personal care services.
- 184 Given the previous lack of consistent leadership that plagued the Supporting People programme in its early days, the council seems to have expended a great deal of effort and energy but has seen few improved user outcomes until recently. Overall, the council's approach to involving service users and carers is weak and the lack of an information and consultation strategy for Supporting People is a serious weakness.
- 185 Corporately, the council has improved its comprehensive performance assessment (CPA) score from poor to weak in 2004 and social services is now out of special measures and has been rated as a one star service.
- 186 A number of national performance indicators, such as the number of older people who are admitted into residential or nursing care and the numbers of adults with physical disabilities or mental health problems who are helped to live at home are significantly above average. However, the council's performance on processing

housing benefit claims and the length of time homeless people spend in bed and breakfast accommodation is in the bottom 25 per cent of authorities.

- 187 The council has been slow to implement some of the recommendations from previous inspections. The Audit Commission inspection of the homelessness and housing advice service recommended in May 2002 that priority should be given to redesigning and improving the reception facilities at its housing advice centre. However, improvements had just begun during the week we were on site, over two years after the original inspection of this service had taken place.

How good are the current improvement plans?

- 188 There is limited corporate ownership of Supporting People in Coventry, with the council's cabinet member for housing and health chairing the commissioning body. However, there is no reference made to this substantial funding stream in either the council's corporate plan or the local community plan. This is a missed opportunity for the council to clearly demonstrate how Supporting People can help to deliver some of its corporate objectives.
- 189 The Supporting People shadow strategy fails to reflect the corporate commitment to diversity, again another missed opportunity to demonstrate the strategic relevance of the Supporting People programme.
- 190 Linkages between the homelessness strategy and the Supporting People programme are weak and given that Coventry is currently having to cope with a growing homelessness problem, this lack of strategic cohesion is a serious weakness.
- 191 A key improvement plan for the Supporting People programme is the new five year strategy, which will replace the shadow strategy in guiding how services will be delivered and shaped in the future.
- 192 The council has learnt lessons from the production of the shadow strategy and has taken steps in recent months to ensure that the new five year strategy will be more specific. For example, the new strategy will highlight the barriers to securing accommodation and will include information on acceptances and the reasons for refusing referrals so that the impact on service users can be measured.
- 193 The Supporting People team recognise that they need to improve the strategic focus of their work in order that they can make a fuller contribution to the development of future plans and strategies.
- 194 There is a team plan in place for Supporting People which supports the housing policy and services operational plan and in turn makes links upwards to the council's vision, values and corporate objectives, by using a balanced scorecard approach.
- 195 The team plan contains a number of targets to be achieved during the year, however, not all targets are SMART⁴ and some tasks that the Supporting People team told us needed to be addressed during the year are missing, for example undertaking risk assessments of Supporting People services and producing contingency plans for services that close or are decommissioned.
- 196 Performance management has not been a priority in the council until recently, but although a relatively new system, it now shows signs of improvement and there is a better understanding of how performance management information can help

⁴ SMART - Specific, Measurable, Agreed, Realistic and Timebound.

improve services. However, it will take time for this new system to become fully embedded.

- 197 Performance against national and local performance indicators are monitored on a quarterly basis during management team meetings. The Supporting People team have weekly meetings at which team targets and performance in general is discussed. However, not all targets are achieved. For example during 2003/04 the team target was to complete 12 service reviews, however, only 5 were completed.

Will improvements be delivered?

- 198 The aims of the Supporting People service are included within the overall aims and objectives of the retained housing service. The overall aim is:

'To ensure decent homes, housing choice and support for Coventry citizens'.

- 199 The service objectives for 2004/05 are:

- ◆ achieve quality and best value in service delivery;
- ◆ maximise understanding of Coventry's housing market and assess, monitor and review regularly housing needs across all tenures;
- ◆ achieve level 3 of the equalities standard for local government;
- ◆ increase the range, supply and choice of housing across all tenures;
- ◆ improve the standard of housing across all tenures through targeted investment, intervention and support;
- ◆ meet the distinct needs of all vulnerable groups, improve the homelessness service and increase the provision of suitable housing related services to people requiring care and support; and
- ◆ work in partnership with residents and other agencies to develop safe, healthy and sustainable communities where people choose to live.

- 200 None of these objectives specifically relate to the Supporting People service and it would help focus the team to have its own set of specific aims and objectives which are clearly linked to the corporate objectives and which have been agreed by the commissioning body and service users.

- 201 The commissioning body has yet to prove itself as a strong and cohesive partnership and as such it is not yet operating as a driver for improvement. The council and its partners have yet to fundamentally challenge whether the current Supporting People programme is delivering the right outcomes, in terms of the type of support provided to enable vulnerable people to live independently.

- 202 To date the local PCT and probation service representatives have not contributed fully to the development of the Supporting People programme. Without their active and ongoing participation and willingness to be equal partners, services for vulnerable people under the Supporting People programme will not be sufficient to meet their needs now or in the future.

- 203 During the course of our inspection we also learnt that the commissioning body representatives from the PCT and the probation service were to be replaced because of internal re-organisations within their respective organisations. In addition, the new cabinet member lacks detailed knowledge about Supporting People. In view of this emerging skills gap, all the partner bodies need to take immediate action to ensure that their representatives on the commissioning body have the right skills and experience to enable them to be effective advocates for

their organisation. Since our inspection, the new members have joined the commissioning body and appropriate training has been offered.

- 204 We found that the lack of a core strategy group meant that the overall governance structure in Coventry is not as robust as in other authorities we have inspected and until the partnership boards are fully developed, some interim measure needs to be put in place to ensure the efficient and effective development and delivery of the Supporting People programme. The council has reacted positively to our concerns and plans are now in place to establish a core strategy group.
- 205 As previously mentioned, we found no evidence that new Supporting People services are being commissioned to fill the gaps left by decommissioned services. However, the new draft Supporting People strategy contains details of future commissioning priorities for each of the client groups, although these priorities have yet to be costed.
- 206 Relationships and communication with service providers need to be improved. The future success of the Supporting People programme will largely depend upon the commitment of the council to improve communication and working relationships with service providers to engender the necessary level of mutual co-operation and trust and since our inspection we have seen evidence which shows that the council is committed to improving its relationship with service providers through improved communication and training.
- 207 The Supporting People team are becoming more effective and as team members complete their training the team will be able to operate at an increased capacity. However, a number of improvements we saw during our inspection were very new and will take time to become embedded.
- 208 We did have concerns that ongoing staff vacancies meant that the Supporting People manager is still undertaking a number of inappropriate tasks and the teams performance in completing service reviews in a timely manner is still a cause for concern.
- 209 Enhancement to the Supporting People IT system, was due in August 2004, which would allow service providers to have access to their payment records and all information held about their schemes. The system will also generate automatic requests to service providers for their workbooks, which will help improve the efficiency of the monitoring arrangements. However, following our inspection we found that this enhancement had been delayed and will not now be in place until December 2004.
- 210 As a council, Coventry has recognised its past failings and is now taking rapid steps to address them through its new corporate plan which has key targets for improving services, and steps have been taken for example, to improve housing benefits which, although is improving slowly, has a record of poor service.
- 211 A newly elected conservative administration is committed to further modernisation of council services and the view of elected Members is that the recent changes in political control will not negatively influence the priority given to Supporting People. Common opinion is that there are no political intentions to cut funding 'unless forced to do so by ODPM'.
- 212 Arrangements for partnership boards are clear, but they are still in the early stages of defining delegations of responsibility and pooling resources. A housing partnership board will be developed from the local strategic partnership housing theme group, which will become the strategic housing forum in Coventry.

Summary

- 213 We have judged that the Supporting People programme has uncertain prospects for improvement. We found the following drivers for improvement:
- ◆ Corporately, the council is moving forward and has achieved an improved CPA score and social services are no longer in special measures.
 - ◆ The newly elected administration has demonstrated its commitment to further modernisation of council services and the Supporting People programme.
 - ◆ Performance management is improving across the council and Supporting People is integrated into the housing service's approach to performance management and monitoring.
 - ◆ The council has learnt lessons from the production of the shadow strategy and has taken steps to ensure that the new five year strategy will be more specific and aimed at improving services for service users.
 - ◆ The council is now more aware that many of its services under Supporting People carry a high cost and as a result service cost savings have been made and there is now extensive cost comparisons being undertaken which will lead to further cost reductions.
- 214 There are, however, some barriers to improvement which the council needs to resolve:
- ◆ The council and its partners have yet to fundamentally challenge whether its current Supporting People programme is delivering the right outcomes, in terms of the type of support provided to enable vulnerable people to live independently.
 - ◆ The commissioning body has yet to prove itself as a strong and cohesive partnership and does not yet have a track record of driving improvements in the strategic direction of the Supporting People programme.
 - ◆ The council has so far failed to consistently challenge the use of Supporting People grant to pay for non housing related support services.
 - ◆ The Supporting People team lack specific aims and objectives.
 - ◆ There is a lack of capacity within the Supporting People team to complete all tasks on time whilst becoming more strategically involved in the development of the Supporting People programme.
 - ◆ The council does not have a clear strategy for how it intends to involve service users and carers in the development, delivery and monitoring of Supporting People services.
 - ◆ Relationships and communication with service providers need to be further improved.
 - ◆ No new services are being commissioned to replace decommissioned services or to address gaps in current service provision.

Appendices

The purpose of an inspection is to make two judgements. The first is how good is the service being inspected? The second is what are the prospects for improvement? We carried out a range of activities to enable us to reach our judgements.

Documents reviewed

Before going on site and during our visit, we reviewed various documents that the council provided for us. These included:

- ◆ Supporting People Shadow Strategy.
- ◆ A variety of other strategy documents including the housing and homelessness strategies, community plan, corporate modernisation and improvement plan.
- ◆ Service review timetable.
- ◆ Better Care, Higher Standards document.
- ◆ Terms of reference for commissioning body.
- ◆ Minutes from relevant meetings.

Reality checks undertaken

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. We also followed up on issues relating to the management of the review and the improvements flowing from it. Our reality checks included:

- ◆ Interviews and focus groups with key staff.
- ◆ Visits to 14 service providers and 8 desk top service reviews.
- ◆ Interviews and focus group with service users.
- ◆ Visits to council offices, Citizens Advice Bureau and Connexions.
- ◆ Observation of commissioning body meeting.
- ◆ Observation of Older People's Partnership Board meeting.

List of people interviewed

We met a range of people involved with the service:

John Bolton	Director of Social Services and Housing
Stephen Rudge	Head of Housing Policy and Services
Jenny Hughes	Supporting People Manager
Ayaz Maqsood	Housing Strategy Manager
Ross Woodward	Business Systems Officer
Fraser Murray	Asylum and Refugee Co-ordinator

Jennifer Fitzgerald	Contracts and Review Officer
Neil Byrne	Contracts and Review Officer
Raj Sandhu	Contracts and Review Officer
Helen Fountain	Contracts and Review Officer
Moira Quinn	Supporting People Officer
Claire Burton	Supporting People Officer
Richard Mager	Administration and Information Officer
Harpal Sohal	Administration and Information Officer
Guy Wardle	Housing Consultant
Councillor Russell Field	Chair of Scrutiny Committee 2
Councillor Andy Matchet	Cabinet Member for Health and Housing
Colin Merker	Director of Mental Health, Coventry PCT
Peter Hodder	Director of Primary Care, Coventry PCT
Laurence Tennant	Chief Executive, Coventry PCT
David Hearnden	Service Manager – Commissioning and Development
Paul Wells	Health Inclusion Manager, Coventry PCT
Helen Simpson	Finance Officer –Social Services and Housing
Pat Moore	Domestic Violence Co-ordinator
Pat Royle	Acting Assistant Chief Probation Officer – West Midlands Probation Service
Chris Colleen	Manager- Public Protection Team – West Midlands Probation Service
Andy Pepper, Angie Parks & Ian Darnell	Youth Offending Team
Jane Reading	Principal Housing Benefits Officer
Graham Sayers	Head of Benefits and Advice
Julie Patterson	Quality and Audit Officer – Housing Benefits
Kathie Martin	Home Improvement Agency Manager – Orbit HA
Sandra Evans	National Housing Federation

Rebecca Roberts

Coventry Refugee Centre, Re-settlement Project Co-ordinator

Focus Group

Social Services Commissioning Managers

Focus Group

Service Users

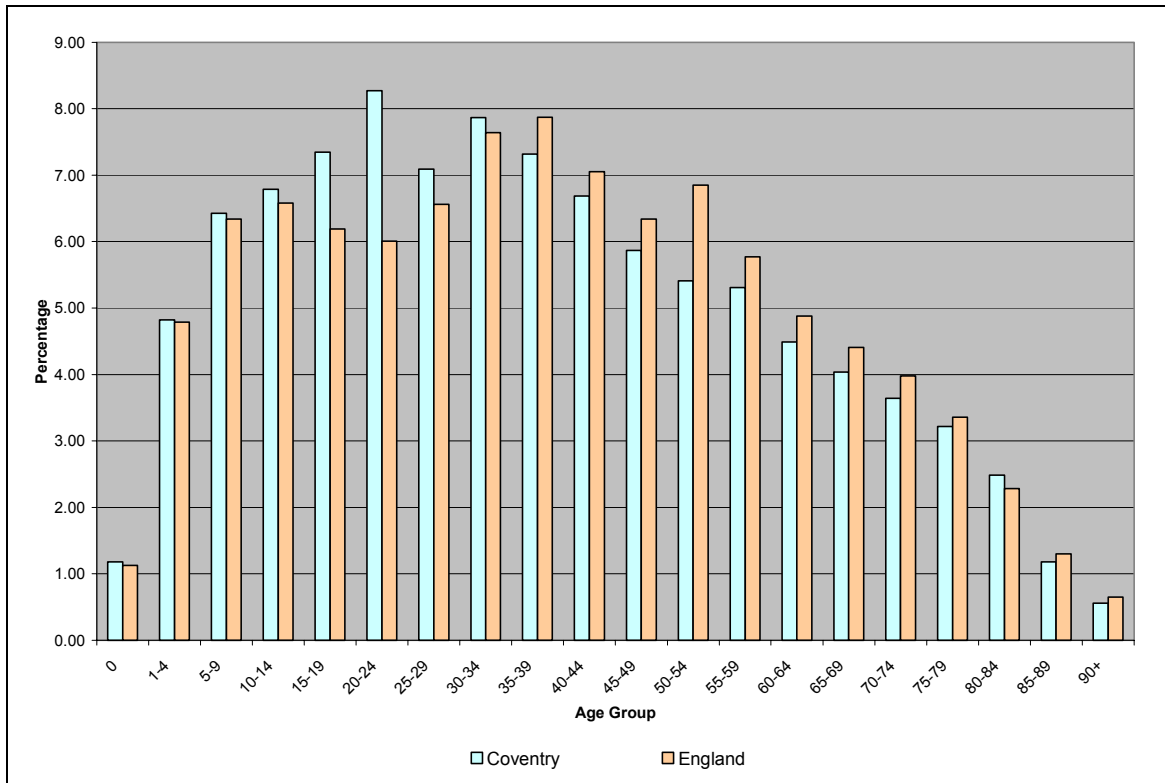
Demographic information

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

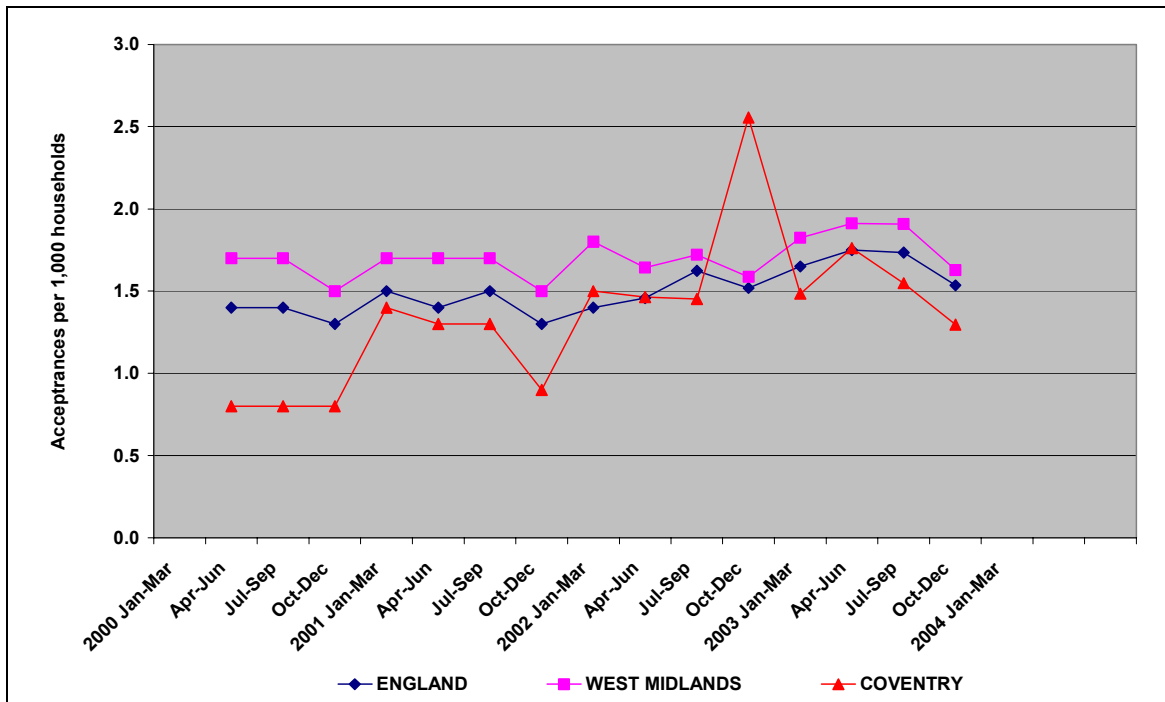
Measure	Coventry	England
Population (mid-2002)	304,800	-
Percentage of the population aged 65+ (mid-2002)	15.13	15.9
Percentage from minority ethnic groups (all groups other than White – British 2002)	21.68	12.5
Percentage unemployment (claimant count rate April 2003)	3.5	2.6
Deprivation Index (1 highest, 354 lowest) ⁵	64	-

⁵ 2004 Deprivation Index, average ward score for the authority.

Percentage of the population in each age group compared with England



Households accepted as homeless between 1999 and 2003 compared with the region and England (acceptances per 1,000 households)



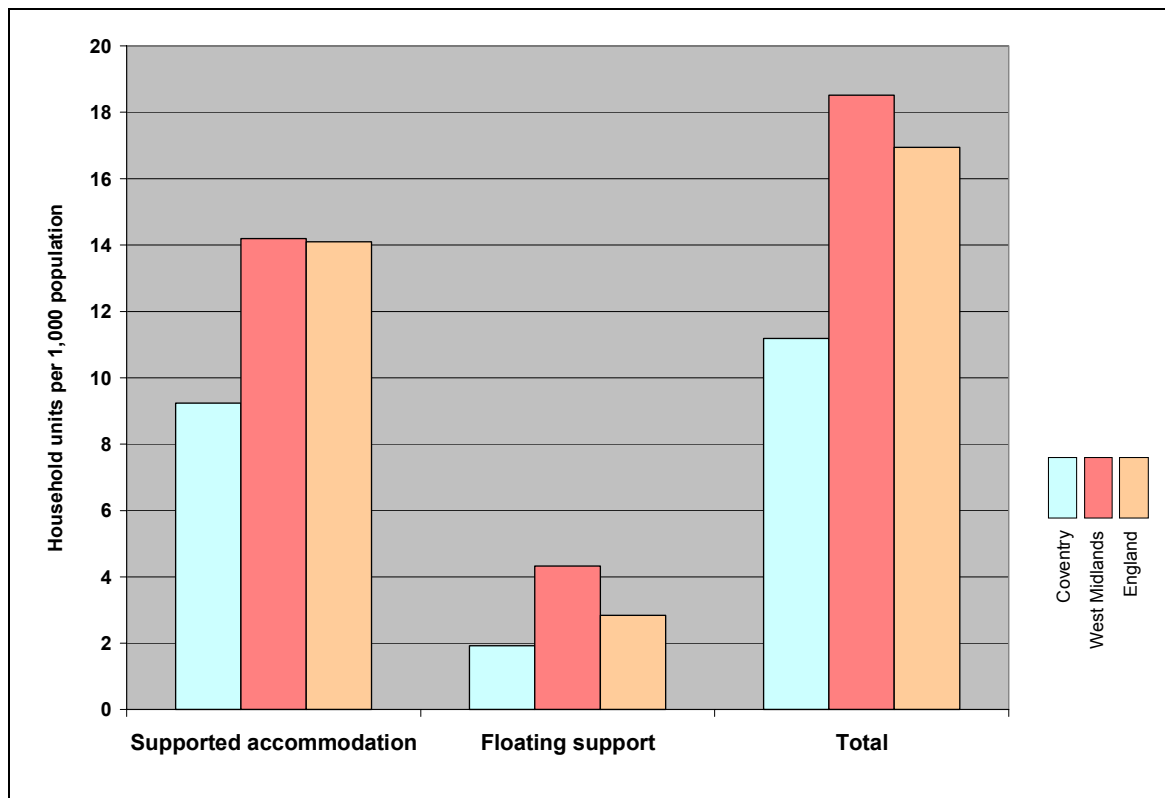
Performance information

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.

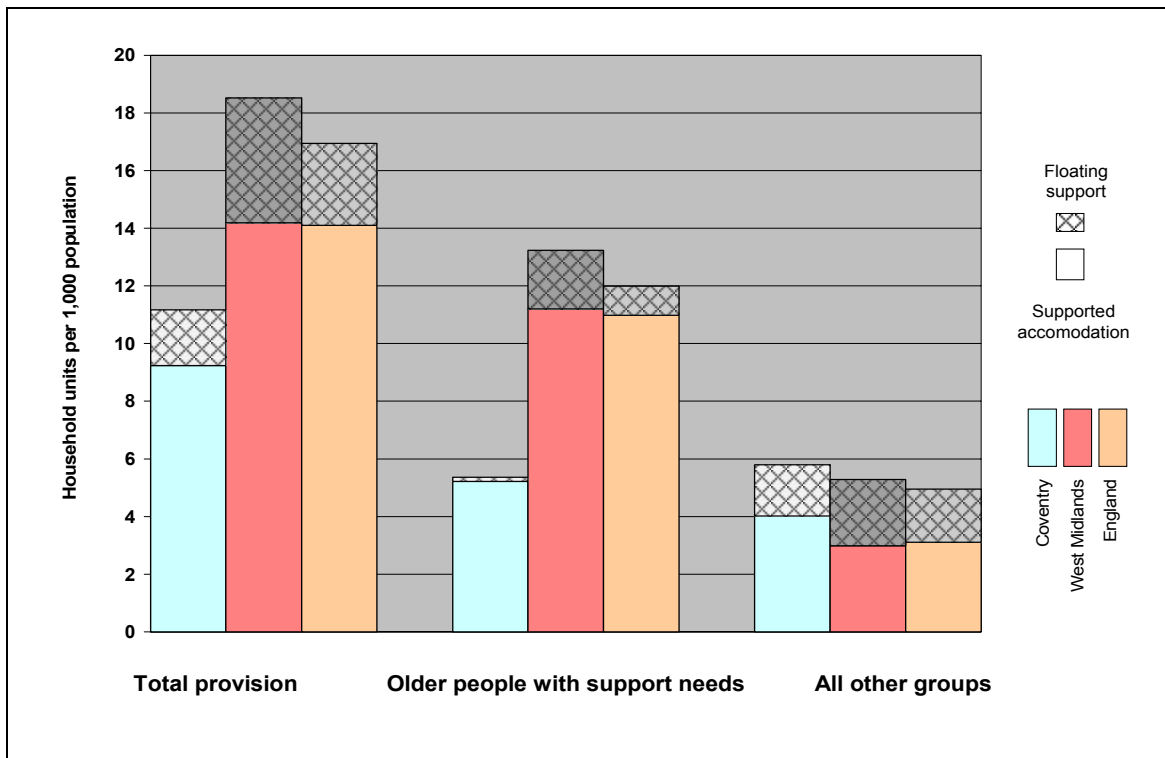
Supporting People data

Total service provision funded through Supporting People⁶

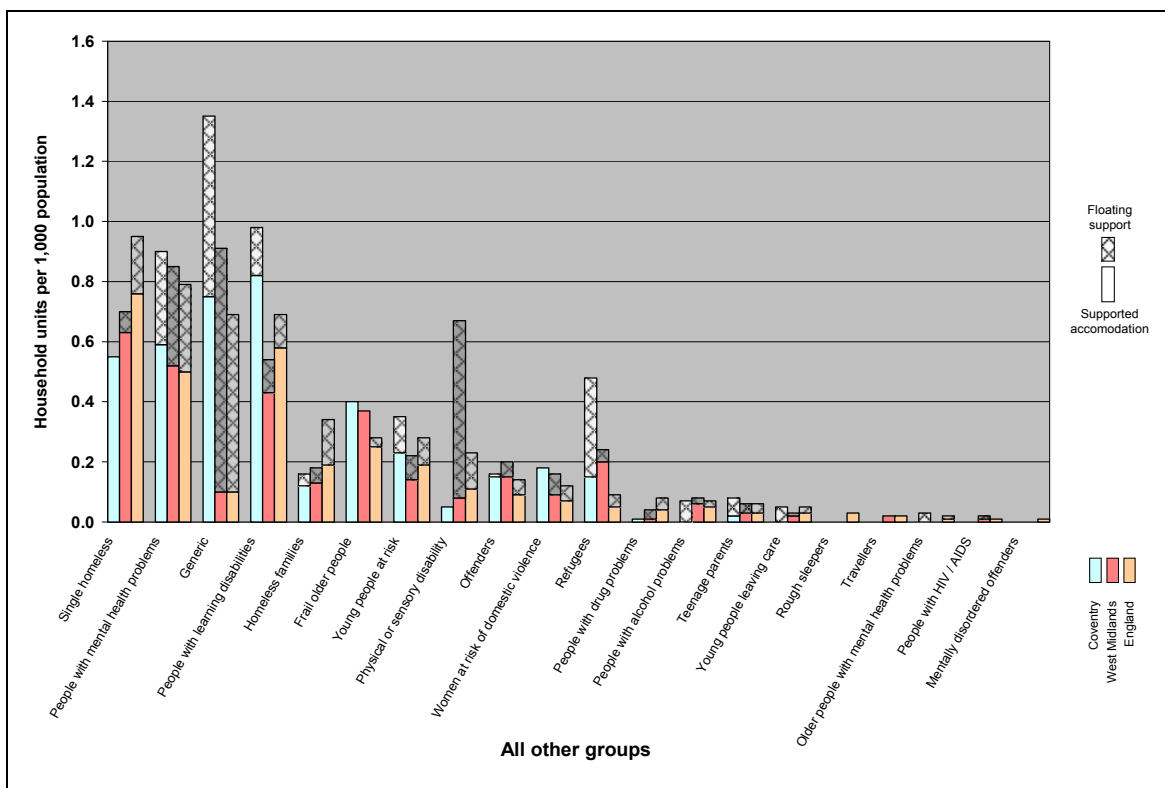


⁶ Source: Platinum cut data, ODPM November 2003. Excludes community alarms, home improvement agencies, leasehold schemes and pipeline services.

Services for older people with support needs compared with the region and England⁷



Services for other groups compared with the region and England⁸



⁷ Source: Platinum cut data, ODPM November 2003. Excludes community alarms, home improvement agencies, leasehold schemes and pipeline services.

⁸ Source: Platinum cut data, ODPM November 2003. Excludes community alarms, home improvement agencies, leasehold schemes and pipeline services.

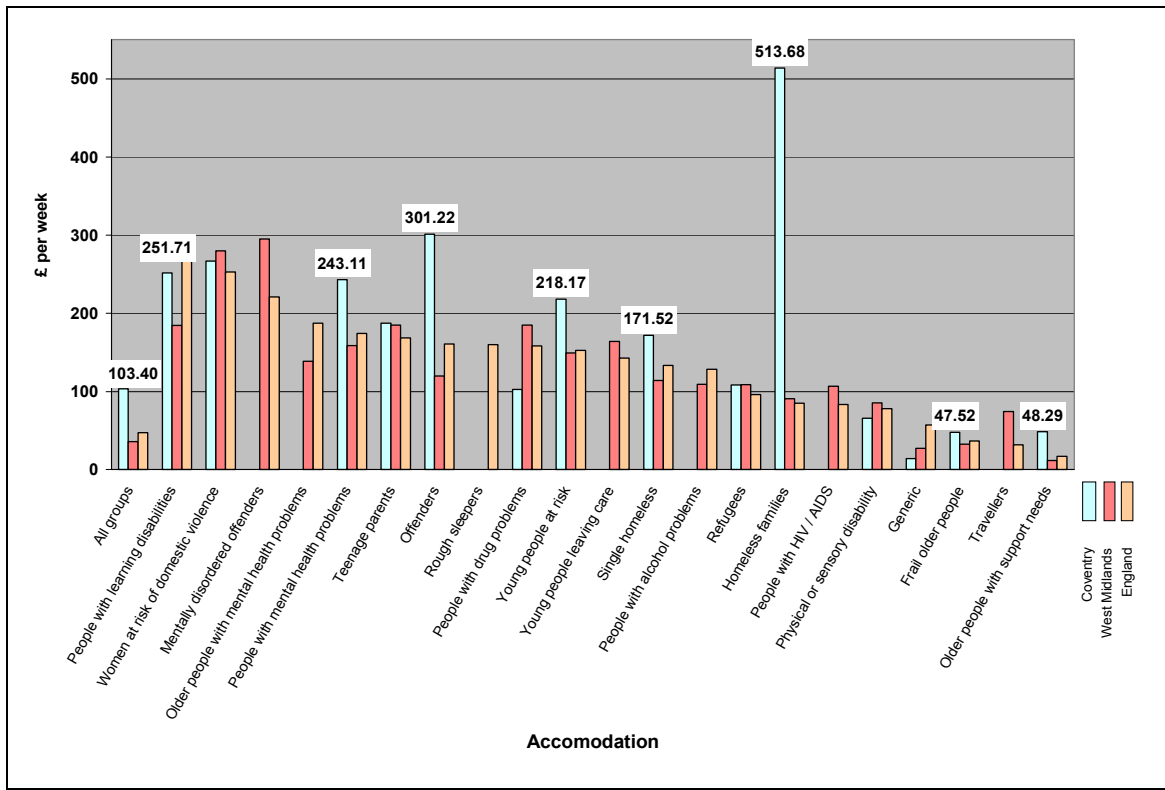
Funding for Supporting People in 2003/04

	Final Supporting People grant 2003/04	Pipeline allocation June 2003	Administration grant 2003/04
Coventry	£ 16,257,193	£ 445,664	£ 264,578.05

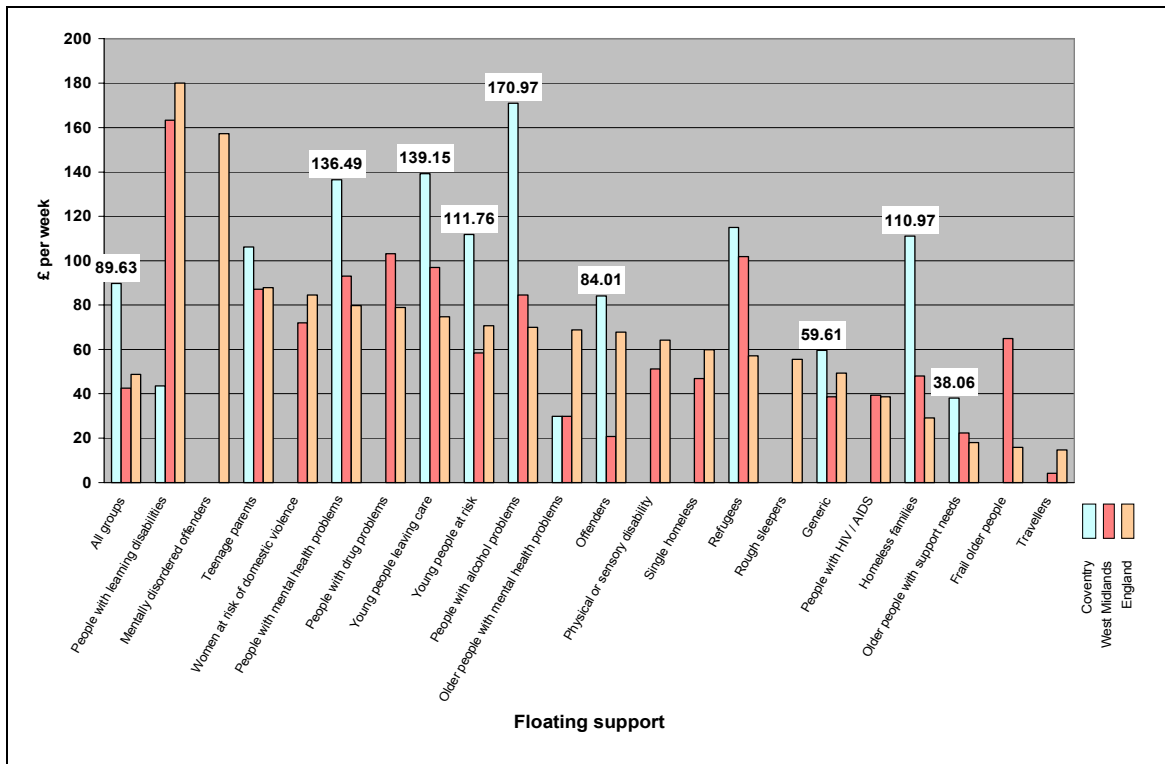
Unit costs of Supporting People services in 2003/04 (£ per week)

	Per head of population	Per unit	Per unit excluding community alarms	Per unit excluding community alarms & sheltered housing
Coventry	£ 1.03	£ 64.18	£ 64.18	£ 80.35
West Midlands	£ 0.62	£ 23.18	£ 28.17	£ 63.88
England	£ 0.70	£ 28.30	£ 34.71	£ 76.37

Unit costs of supported accommodation compared with the region and England (labels show costs in the highest 25 per cent)⁹

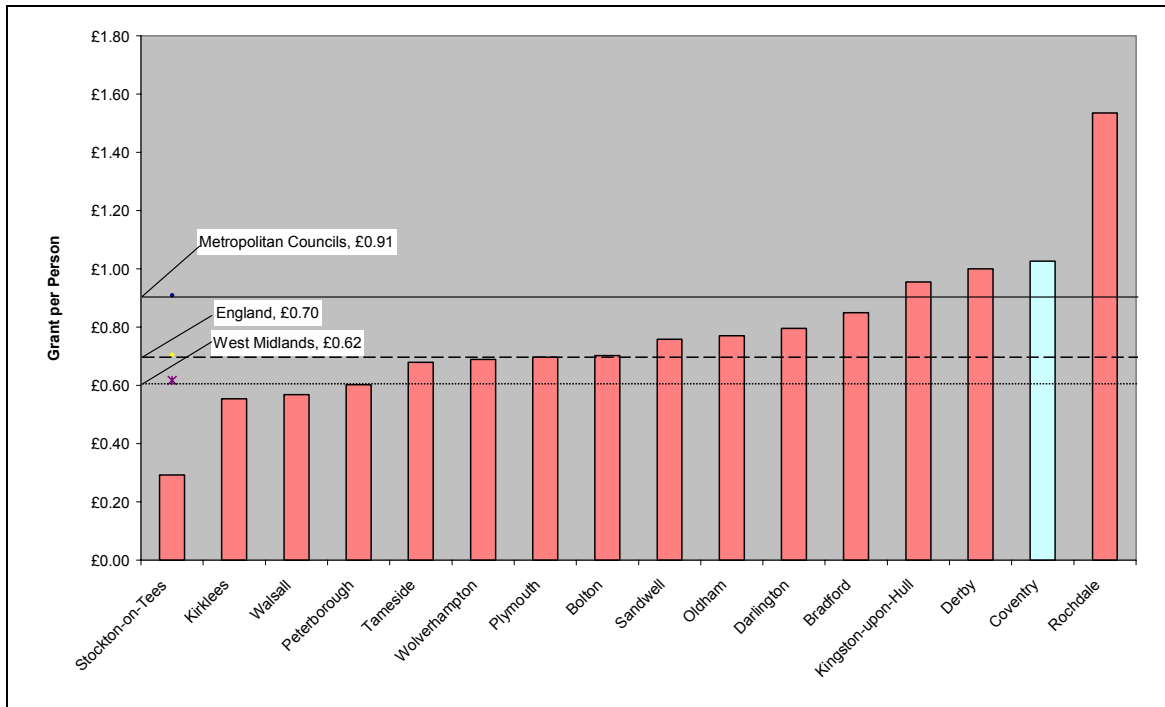


Unit costs of floating support services compared with the region and England (labels show costs in the highest 25 per cent)

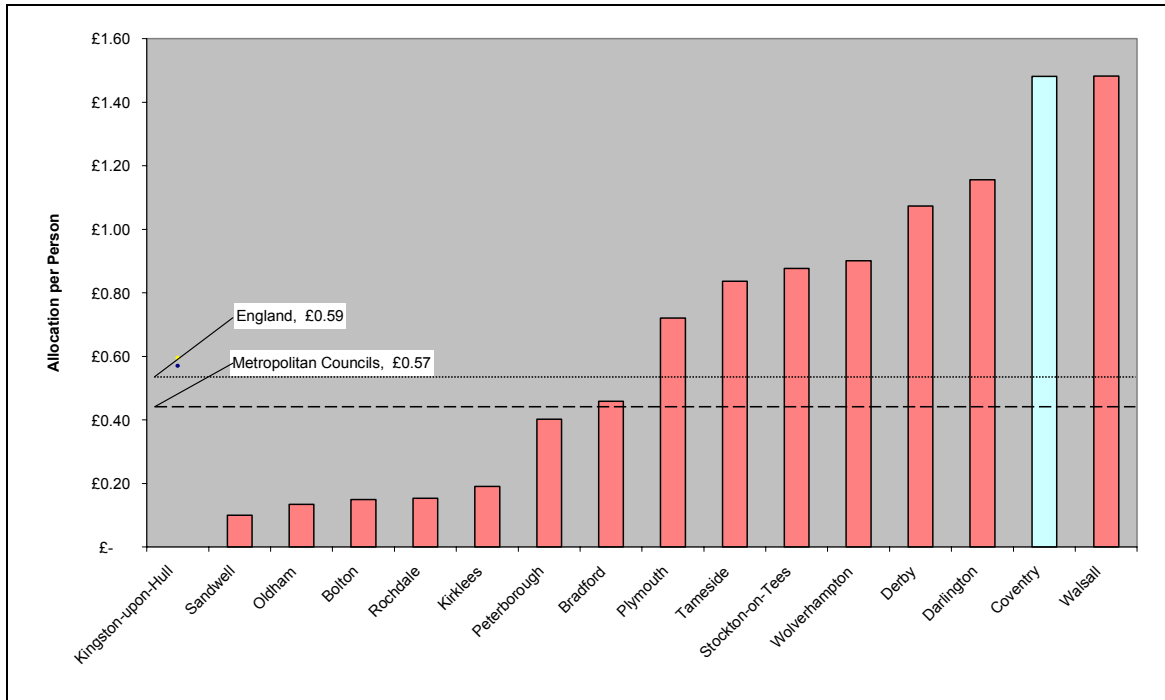


⁹ Source: Platinum cut data, ODPM November 2003. Excludes community alarms, home improvement agencies, leasehold schemes and pipeline services.

Supporting People grant per head of population per week compared with nearest neighbours¹⁰, all metropolitan councils and all English councils (2003/04)

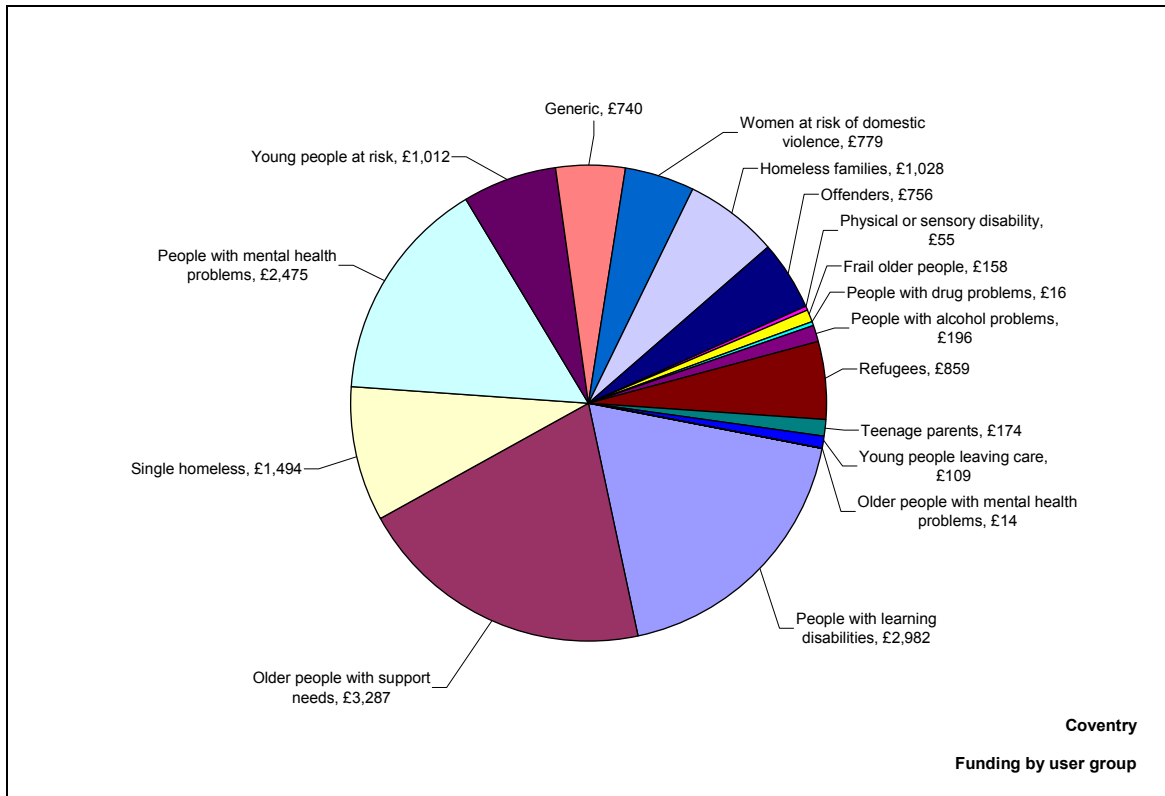


Pipeline allocation per head of population compared with nearest neighbours, all metropolitan councils and all English councils

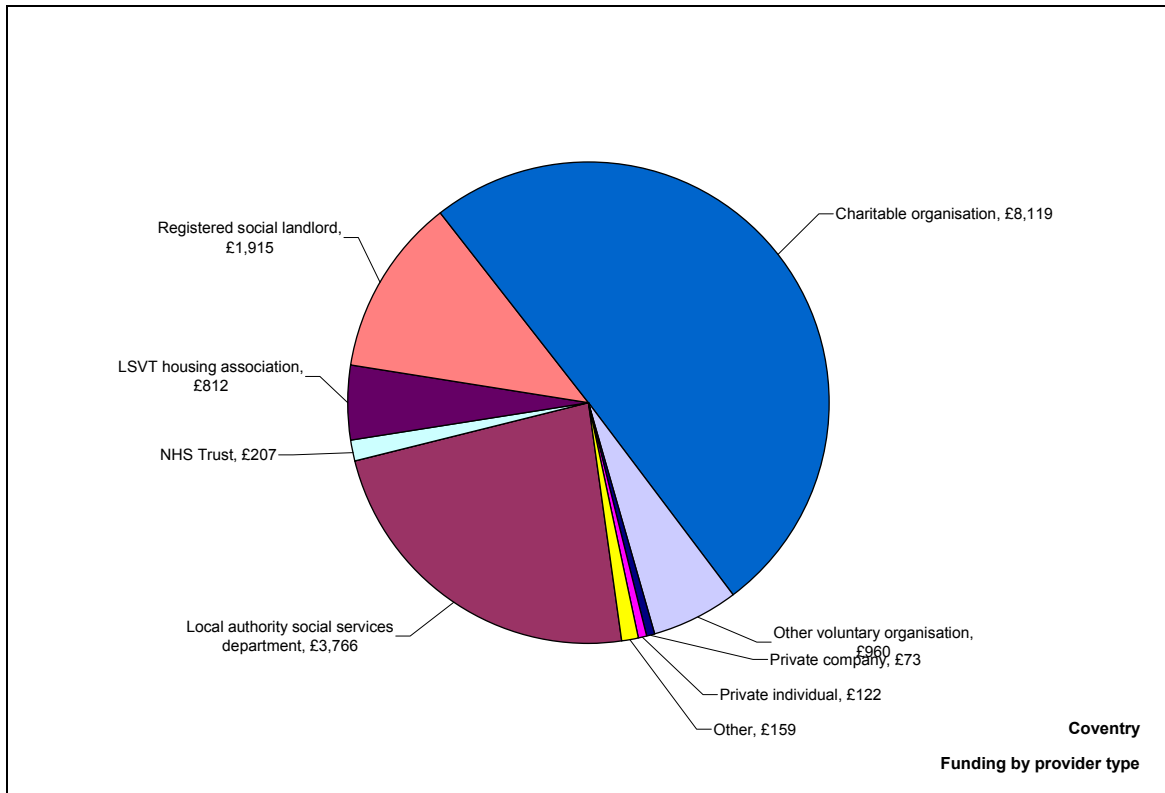


¹⁰ A comparator group of similar councils.

Share of spending between user groups (£000s)



Share of spending between types of provider (£000s)



Social Services star ratings 2004

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	★★★
Children's Services	Some	Promising	(3)

Social services performance indicators

Performance Assessment Framework indicators 2003/04

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

Coventry	
Significantly above average (★★★★)	Employment, education & training for care leavers (A4) Admissions of older people to residential or nursing care (C26) Admissions of adults aged 18-64 to residential or nursing care (C27) Adults with physical disabilities helped to live at home (C29) Adults with learning disabilities helped to live at home (C30) Adults with mental health problems helped to live at home (C31)
Above average (★★★)	
Average (★★)	Emergency psychiatric re-admissions (A6) Delayed discharges for older people (D41)
Below average (★)	Older people helped to live at home (C32)
Significantly below average (●)	

Best value performance indicators

Performance on relevant indicators in 2002/03 compared with metropolitan councils

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

Coventry	
Within the best 25 per cent	Domestic violence refuge places (BV176)
Average	The level of the equality standard for local government to which the authority conforms (BV2) Length of stay in hostel accommodation (BV183b)
Within the worst 25 per cent	Length of stay in bed and breakfast accommodation (BV183a) Average time for processing new housing benefit claims (BV78a)

Supporting People – Housing related support services

'Supporting People' is the Government's long-term policy to enable local authorities to plan, commission and provide 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 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 support services with housing, social services, health and the probation service. Negotiation and consultation is also required with 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 programme allows for greater diversity of provision tailored to individual needs and delivered in a local strategic context. For example:

- ◆ support services for people from black and minority ethnic (BME) communities whose needs have previously not been met in an appropriate or timely manner;
- ◆ support services for vulnerable older people who wish to live independently, including those in sheltered housing;
- ◆ temporary hostel accommodation – including probation hostels and those providing support for women fleeing domestic violence;
- ◆ support services for people with mental health problems and learning difficulties;
- ◆ floating support to a range of vulnerable people including young people leaving care; and
- ◆ home improvement agency services whose work includes providing practical support to older owner occupiers to enable them to live independently.

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) has published a number of consultation papers on the developing programme and a work plan setting out what local Authorities would 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