

Supporting People Inspection Report

October 2006



# Supporting People Inspection

**Durham County Council**

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## Supporting People Inspections

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) has published a number of consultation papers on the developing programme and a work plan setting out what local authorities and their partners will need to achieve in order to deliver the programme effectively. All the relevant papers for Supporting People can be found on the Supporting People k-web that can be accessed through the Supporting People website: [www.spkweb.org.uk](http://www.spkweb.org.uk)

## Summary

- 1 Durham County Council is in the North East of England. It covers a large geographic area. Over 19.7 per cent of the 496,800 population is aged 65 or over. Around 1 per cent of the population are from black and minority ethnic communities (BME). The area has high levels of deprivation.
- 2 The Council is Labour controlled, holding 53 of the 63 available seats. Under the Comprehensive Performance Assessment 2005 - The Harder Test, the Council's performance was assessed as four stars (out of a possible four).
- 3 Excluding schools staff, the Council employs around 7,200 full-time equivalent staff. In 2005/06 the Council had a net revenue budget of £507 million, of which £43.6 million was allocated to Social Care and Health Services.
- 4 Durham County Council acts as the administering authority for the Supporting People programme in the area. The Council works in partnership with seven District Councils, five Primary Care Trusts recently amalgamated into one, and County Durham Probation area.
- 5 Supporting People funding available in 2006/07 is £14.36 million, (a reduction of £252,738 or 1.73 per cent on the previous year) The Council also received an administration grant of £420,406, and an additional £83,000 for a VIP Project<sup>1</sup> to re-model community alarm and warden services.
- 6 Fifty one service providers deliver a total of 290 schemes including five Home Improvement Agencies. In total, the programme funds 21,914 units of housing-related support of which 70 per cent is accommodation-based and 30 per cent is floating support.
- 7 There is under-provision of services in a number of areas including offenders and single homeless people.

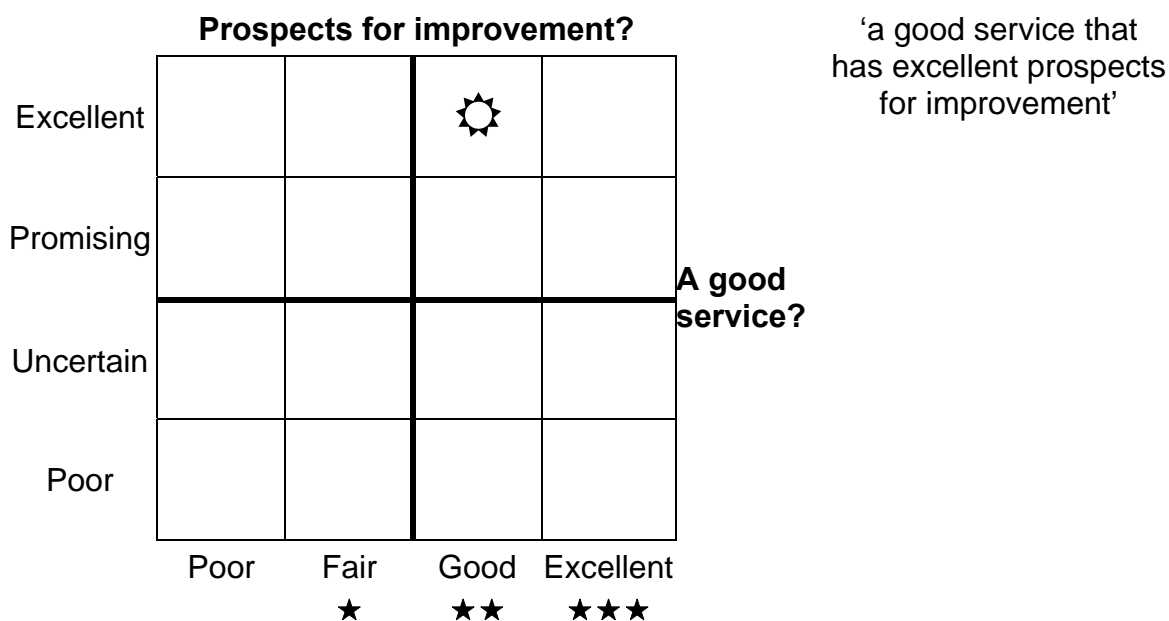
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<sup>1</sup> Eleven value improvement projects nationally were awarded additional funding in 2005 by the Department of Communities and Local Government to identify good practice, improved efficiency and improved services for clients who require housing-related support

## Scoring the service

- 8 We have assessed Durham County Council as providing a ‘good’ two-star service that has excellent prospects for improvement. Our judgements are based on the evidence obtained during the inspection and are outlined below.

**Figure 1 Scoring chart<sup>2</sup>**



Source: Audit Commission

- 9 The Supporting People programme is making good progress because of the following.
- The range and geographical coverage of housing-related support provision is improving to make services available and increase choice.
  - A wider range of services is being provided to fill gaps and enable people to be supported in their own homes.
  - Good quality baseline information is held about housing related support needs and gaps are being filled.
  - A sound decision making framework is in place to establish and underpin governance arrangements.

<sup>2</sup> 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.

- The Commissioning Body is showing leadership in tackling difficult issues such as ineligible costs and variances in community alarm and warden services.
  - A well-established and skilled Supporting People team supports delivery of the programme and ensures priorities are addressed.
  - A strong focus on Equality and Diversity issues is provided by a sub-group of the Core Strategy Group, with a strengthened focus on diversity and the physical accessibility of services in the 2006-2009 service review programme.
  - A full suite of leaflets has been produced and is available in other formats and languages on request.
  - Service providers are satisfied with arrangements, including the approach to service reviews and how they are involved.
  - A five-year strategy, agreed following extensive consultation with stakeholders, has set out clear aims for the programme, including future commissioning and service priorities. Aims of the programme are well integrated with the Council's overarching aims.
  - Robust service reviews have been carried out on all legacy services to ensure they are strategically relevant, meet required quality standards and offer good value for money.
  - Sound eligibility and value for money policies are in place.
  - Comprehensive value for money assessments supported by sector reviews have ensured that there is a consistency across contracts and improvements in quality and £2 million efficiency savings have been delivered.
  - Contracts are robustly monitored and compliance is closely tracked using IT systems.
  - Durham is active in regional and cross authority joint working, helping to ensure that there are standard approaches to key areas of work such as benchmarking.
  - Finance and programme risks are well managed. A financial plan is closely monitored and balances the budget in the medium term.
- 10** Less positive areas of the programme include the following.
- There is no focus on service users who are experiencing difficulties finding suitable accommodation to move on from supported accommodation.
  - There is under-provision of services in a number of areas including offenders and single homeless people.
  - The quality of support planning is mixed.

## 8 Supporting People Inspection | Scoring the service

- Information issues including:
  - limited availability of leaflet information in offices around the county;
  - frontline staff not always being able to adequately signpost people making enquiries; and
  - the local directory of services offers only basic service information with no mention of which services can accommodate service users with mobility problems or different language, religious or cultural needs.
- Governance issues around:
  - limited engagement of the PCT in Supporting People partnerships;
  - patchy attendance by some District Councils at the Commissioning Body and the cross authority elected members group;
  - a possible conflict for the Accountable Officer in holding the County Council vote on the Commissioning Body; and
  - clarifying the role and representation of service users and service providers on the Supporting People partnerships.

### 11 Durham's Supporting People programme has excellent prospects for delivering further improvements. We found the following strengths.

- The programme has a positive track record of delivering improvements. The profile of housing-related support provision is changing significantly, services have been extended and gaps in services are being filled.
- A total of 335 units of new service provision has been introduced including services for frail older people, people with mental health problems, single homeless people, young parents and other young people at risk.
- Services are being reshaped to more closely meet the needs of service users, for example support for people with mental health problems.
- Home Improvement Agency services for older and disabled people have been extended and are now available countywide.
- Substantial changes are being made to older persons' community alarm and warden services removing the link to tenure and introducing charging consistency and matching services to needs.
- There has been a strong shift from accommodation-based support to more flexible floating support which is not restricted by tenure.
- There is clear evidence that spending is moving towards client groups such as single homeless people identified as priorities in the five-year strategy.
- Working in partnership with District Councils on the Homeless Action Partnership, a joint protocol has been developed to provide joined up services to younger people at risk and a county-wide family mediation service.
- Robust service reviews have been completed on schedule delivering quality improvements and remodelling services to better meet the needs of vulnerable people.

- Significant value for money improvements have been achieved in the unit cost of services, delivering efficiency gains and improved outcomes for service users.
- Clear overarching aims and priorities are in place with plans to deliver both strategic and operational improvements.
- Leadership has ambition and is not afraid to tackle difficult areas.
- Performance is well managed. Both financial and risk management is strong.
- Human resource planning is good. Training needs and development opportunities are identified to ensure the team continues to have the skills needed to deliver the programme.
- IT support is reliable and offers the opportunity of further development.
- Learning features strongly in programme development and Durham is leading on a high national profile Value Improvement Project.
- Significant additional funding has been attracted to areas and services that are connected to the programme enabling more to be achieved.
- Robust procurement arrangements are in their final stages of development informed by close involvement with national and regional procurement work.

**12** Barriers to progress include:

- partnership working is challenging for the programme and in some circumstances stifles progress;
- performance management arrangements do not fully capture the outcomes that the programme delivers for service users;
- resources to deliver detailed plans are not clearly identified; and
- plans do not identify the inability of vulnerable people to move on from accommodation based services when they are ready to as a significant issue.

## Recommendations

- 13 To rise to the challenge of continuous improvement, organisations need inspection reports that offer practical pointers for improvement. Our recommendations identify the expected benefits for both local people and the organisation. In addition, we identify the approximate costs<sup>3</sup> and indicate the priority we place on each recommendation and key dates for delivering these where they are considered appropriate. In this context, the inspection team recommends that the Council shares the findings of this report with customers, service providers and councillors, and addresses all weaknesses identified in the report. The inspection team makes the following recommendations.

### **Recommendation**

*R1 Address the difficulties service users are having in finding suitable accommodation to move on from supported accommodation by:*

- *identifying the level of need to move on;*
- *identifying options for improving the availability of accommodation;*
- *continue to challenge inappropriate exclusion policies or practices;*
- *developing systems that ensure support for individuals is linked to preparing to move on ahead of their exit from the scheme; and*
- *setting targets and monitor the position regularly.*

The expected benefits of this recommendation are:

- vulnerable people will be able to move on to less intensive support or independence when they are ready to do so;
- maximum benefit will be achieved from available service provision; and
- support not being provided for longer than a person needs.

The implementation of this recommendation will have high impact with low costs. This should be implemented by April 2007.

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

**Recommendation**

*R2 Improve the availability of information on the Supporting People programme by:*

- *ensuring leaflets are widely distributed across the Districts and on display;*
- *improving the directory of services to include information on physical accessibility and the cultural sensitivity of services;*
- *making the council website easier to navigate for service users; and*
- *ensuring appropriate training and information for frontline staff including partner agency staff on services available, financial support and access routes.*

The expected benefits of this recommendation are:

- vulnerable people will find it easier to find out information on services;
- people will know what choices they have;
- people will be directed to services better; and
- staff will be more confident in dealing with enquiries.

The implementation of this recommendation will have high impact with low costs. This should be implemented by December 2007.

**Recommendation**

*R3 Develop the ways users are engaged with the Supporting People programme by involving service users in:*

- *critically assessing the availability of information to access services for each client group;*
- *critically assessing website information and service standards;*
- *developing services that they need and want;*
- *developing service review criteria and the assessment of services; and*
- *monitoring how well services are performing.*

The expected benefits of this recommendation are:

- information will be more suitable to customer requirements;
- service review criteria will include elements that service users consider to be important; and
- those receiving services are more closely involved in monitoring the standards of service they receive.

The implementation of this recommendation will have high impact with medium costs. This should be implemented by April 2007.

**Recommendation**

*R4 Improving governance arrangements by:*

- *ensuring the newly established single PCT is closely involved with the Supporting People partnerships;*
- *ensuring the Accountable Officer has no conflicts of interest;*
- *improving attendance by representatives at governance partnership meetings with mandated deputies;*
- *clarifying the role and representation of service users and service providers on the Supporting People partnerships; and*
- *ensuring the Commissioning Body business relates to strategic issues only.*

The expected benefits of this recommendation are:

- all partners will contribute to the development of policies and procedures; and
- partners will have a better more up to date knowledge of the Supporting People programme and the issues.

The implementation of this recommendation will have high impact with medium costs. This should be implemented by April 2007.

**Recommendation**

*R5 Further improve performance management arrangements for the Supporting People programme by:*

- *establishing and monitoring:*
  - *indicators that will measure the outcomes and benefits for service users;*
  - *indicators that will measure progress against the Supporting People five-year strategy; and*
  - *the source of resources to deliver improvement plans;*
- *tracking:*
  - *indicators that the programme shares with Health and Probation;*
  - *contributions to other local programme objectives including those of the Youth Engagement Service and Drug and Alcohol Action Team; and*
  - *progress on central and local government targets, such as reducing emergency bed days and preventing homelessness.*

The expected benefits of this recommendation are:

- the programme will know how it is progressing;
- the programme will know the contribution it is making to wider objectives;
- investment decisions will be better informed; and
- plans will be deliverable.

The implementation of this recommendation will have high impact with medium costs. This should be implemented by April 2007.

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

Dates of inspection: 14 to 24 July 2006

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# Report

## Context

### The locality

- 15 Durham is a county situated in the North East of England. It is a large, mainly rural area of 860 square miles extending from the North Sea coast in the east to the North Pennine moors in the west. There are 12 major population centres and over 300 other small towns and villages, many of them former colliery villages.
- 16 Over 19.7 per cent of the 496,800 population is aged 65 or over, significantly above the national average of 18.5 per cent. Around 1 per cent is from black and minority ethnic communities (BME), well below the national average of 10.4 per cent.
- 17 The area has high levels of deprivation reflected in the ratings of its seven districts.

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**Table 1**

	<b>Rating out of 354 councils where 1 is the most deprived</b>
Chester-le-Street District Council	116
Derwentside District Council	67
Durham City Council	128
District of Easington	7
Sedgefield Borough Council	55
Teesdale District Council	226
Wear Valley District Council	44

- 18 Over 30 per cent of the people live in Super Output Areas<sup>4</sup> classed as among the most deprived 30 per cent in the country. Unemployment levels have fallen consistently over the past 20 years. At 2.3 per cent, the current claimant count is slightly lower than the national average of 2.6 per cent. However, 26.3 per cent of the working age population are economically inactive compared to a national figure of 21.6 per cent.<sup>5</sup>
- 19 Large scale heavy industries of mining, steel production and heavy engineering have disappeared. Key employment sectors now include public administration, education and health (28.2 per cent), manufacturing (21.6 per cent) and distribution, hotels and restaurants (19.6 per cent).
- 20 As a legacy of its industrial past, the county suffers from poor health outcomes, with life expectancy for both sexes below the national average. Coronary heart disease and teenage pregnancy rates are high. Incomes are low with average weekly full time earnings of £381.20 compared to the national average of £433.10. Despite relatively low crime levels, there are local hot spots and the fear of crime is a major issue for local residents.
- 21 Of the 207,436 households in the county, 66.9 per cent are owner occupied and 25.4 per cent are social housing. To meet the government's Decent Homes Standard for their properties by 2010, district councils have taken different courses of action. Some have decided to pursue a Large Scale Voluntary Transfer to a registered social landlord or Arms Length Management Organisation, while others have retained the management of their stock in-house with investment plans to improve their condition.
- 22 Durham is a two tier local government area. Under the county level, there are seven district councils. In addition there are a large number of town and parish councils. One Primary Care Trust has recently replaced the five that previously served the county's primary health needs. Similarly one probation area, County Durham Probation, serves the whole county.

## The Council

- 23 The Council has a political structure of leader and Cabinet. It is Labour controlled with the party holding 53 of the 63 seats.
- 24 The county has an overarching strategic partnership, Durham Strategic Partnership. It sits astride the seven local strategic partnerships established within each district council area to bring together statutory, voluntary and charitable agencies.

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<sup>4</sup> Super output areas (SOAs) are a new geographic hierarchy designed to improve the reporting of small area statistics in England and Wales. Introduced in 2004, the 32,482 lower layer SOAs in England have a minimum population of 1,000 replacing measurement by electoral ward boundaries which varied markedly in size.

<sup>5</sup> Source: NOMIS. Office for National Statistics. Claimant Count June 2006

- 25** To achieve its mission to make County Durham the best place in which to live, work and bring up a family, the Council has identified four strategic corporate aims. One has a number of key objectives that link closely with the Supporting People programme.
- Aim: Promoting Strong, Healthy and Safe Communities:
    - to enhance the capacity of communities and enable people to participate in community life;
    - to support and protect vulnerable adults, young people and children;
    - to help to reduce crime and fear of crime;
    - to help to improve the health of local people; and
    - to invest in our children and young people.
- 26** In addition the Council has identified five key corporate priority areas:
- equalities and diversity;
  - performance management;
  - community engagement;
  - customer services; and
  - people strategy.
- 27** Excluding schools staff, the Council employs around 7,200 full-time equivalent staff to plan and deliver its services. In 2005/06 the Council has a net revenue budget of £507 million, of which £43.6 million is allocated to Social Care and Health Services.
- 28** A major project - the Embracing Change programme – is underway to improve the way the Council delivers its services. It is focusing on access to services, community engagement and partnership working.
- 29** In previous assessments, both County Council and service performance has performed well. For example:
- under CPA - the Harder Test 2005, the direction of travel was assessed as improving well and the Council achieved a four-star rating for overall performance, the highest rating;
  - in 2005, Adults Social Services were assessed as serving most people well with excellent capacity for improvement; and
  - in 2005, Children's Social Services were rated as serving most people well with promising capacity for improvement.

## The service

- 30** Durham County Council (DCC) acts as the administering local authority (ALA) for the Supporting People programme in the area. The Council received a Supporting People grant of £14,362,868 for 2006/07, which is a reduction of £252,738, or 1.73 per cent, on the previous year's allocation. In 2005/06, £94,005 of the grant was not spent. The Council also received an administration grant of £420,406, the same amount as the previous year. In addition, the Council secured an additional £83,000 from Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) for a Value Improvement Project (VIP) Project<sup>6</sup> to re-model community alarm and warden services.
- 31** A partnership, the Durham and Districts Supporting People partnership, is responsible for the commissioning arrangements. The team supporting the programme is located within the Council's Social Care and Health Services Department. The Supporting People team consists of ten staff made up of:
- Lead Officer;
  - Payments and Contracts Officer;
  - Project Officer – five posts;
  - Administration Co-ordinator;
  - Personal Assistant to the Lead Officer; and
  - Value Improvement Project manager.
- 32** Fifty one service providers deliver a total of 290 schemes including five Home Improvement Agencies. In total, the programme funds 21,914 units of housing-related support of which 70 per cent is accommodation-based and 30 per cent is floating support.
- 33** A breakdown of the highest proportion of spending in 2004/05 shows:
- 31.4 per cent of the budget was allocated to 310 people with a learning disability; and
  - 29.5 per cent of the budget was spent on 14,217 older people with support needs.
- 34** There is no provision for refugees or people with HIV/AIDs. Supporting People grant does not fund any services to gypsies and travellers. In addition there is under-provision of services in a number of areas including offenders and single homeless people.
- 35** The highest cost service at £505.90 per unit per week is an accommodation-based service for people with a learning disability. The lowest cost service is £0.68 a week for a community alarm service.

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<sup>6</sup> Eleven value improvement projects nationally were awarded additional funding in 2005 by the Department of Communities and Local Government to identify good practice, improved efficiency and improved services for clients who require housing-related support

36 Strategic aims are set out in the Council's five-year Supporting People Strategy as:

- needs led services;
- providing high quality services through effective monitoring and review; and
- effective partnership working.

## How good is the programme?

### Governance

- 37 Strengths outweigh weaknesses in this area. There is a commitment to the programme from the Council and the necessary governance groups have been established, underpinned by a clear decision making framework. Arrangements are in place to manage conflicts of interest and conflicts between partners. These have been particularly tested through the Value Improvement Project. A separate group has been established to make connections with the political arms of the Councils. The Commissioning Body is showing leadership and is not afraid of difficult decisions. However, patchy or non attendance by some partners limits the effectiveness of the governance partnerships. Health, the PCTs are not well engaged. Service provider and user involvement needs further development. The Accountable Officer discharges his responsibilities effectively although he has a conflict of interest in roles being responsible for the programme to the Commissioning Body and the County Council's voting representative. Cross authority working, performance management and MAPPA are effective.
- 38 The DCLG 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 Development 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; and
  - Supporting People team: delivers the local programme.

## **Corporate commitment**

- 39** There is commitment to the Supporting People programme from the Council. This is mainly in time from officers and councillors, although the programme can, and does, call upon support from specialist corporate sections such as legal, finance and personnel. The Durham and Districts Supporting People partnership is seen by the county as one of the more successful county, district and other agency partnerships and there is support for the programme at senior level. Additional groups have been established, such as the Cross Authority Elected Members group and the finance sub-group to ensure that there are good links between the programme and the political representatives of the both the County Council and the Districts. As a result there is a more widespread understanding of the programme.
- 40** A clear and comprehensive decision making framework has been developed for the programme. This document, developed with consultancy support, sets out the structure of the partnership and governance groups detailing their purpose; terms of reference and voting arrangements; how conflicts of interest are to be dealt with; a protocol to deal with conflicts between partners and with service providers; a clear scheme of delegation for decision making and how performance is to be managed. All partners have agreed the framework which provides a solid base for the development of the Supporting People programme.
- 41** Links have been made with other strategic planning groups. There is a complex network of strategic groups dealing with county and cross agency service development. Through its officer and councillor representatives, the Supporting People programme has good links with most groups and there is a good understanding of the benefits the programme can deliver. For example there are links with the Learning Disability Partnership, the Older People's Modernisation Group, the Community Equipment Board; the Community Safety Partnership and both the Durham Strategic Partnership and the seven Local Strategic Partnerships. Supporting People is integrated into strategic planning arrangements.

## **Commissioning Body**

- 42** There is a sound base for the Commissioning Body. Its membership and terms of reference are clearly set out in the decision making framework. Procedures are in place to deal with conflicts of interest although it has not highlighted the conflict in the Accountable Officer's role. There is evidence to show that conflicts are declared. Most of the members, including District Council and Adult and Social Care members have a conflict as they have responsibility for the provision of housing related support. It is competently chaired by a District Council representative. Mediation arrangements, although untested, can be called upon in the event of a dispute between partners which cannot be resolved by the Commissioning Body.

- 43 There is evidence of clear decision-making by the Commissioning Body. Examples include the decommissioning of services following service review, addressing the ineligibility of some services and putting in place a staged withdrawal of Supporting People grant to be replaced by funding from proper budget sources, sound budget management and increasing the levels of support across the County despite funding reductions. The partnership is tackling difficult issues to improve value for money and the outcomes achieved from the Supporting People grant. In addition the Commissioning Body has not shied away from undertaking a difficult and contentious project to remodel community alarm and warden services.
- 44 Attendance is mixed and this limits the effectiveness of the partnership. In the main attendance by District Council representatives is good although for a small number attendance has been patchy. While it is clear that there is disagreement on various elements of the programme, debate and challenges to policies and plans are adding value as the end results are more robust. Some representatives feel that the move to separate Commissioning Body responsibilities from the previous dual purpose Durham Housing and Neighbourhood Group has been a positive one. Previous agendas were too long and much of the meeting was focused on broader housing issues. The group can now concentrate on its responsibilities as a Commissioning Body.
- 45 Health is not well engaged with the programme. Previously Durham's five Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) had agreed for one person to represent them at Commissioning Body meetings. Even with this rationalised approach, between April 2005 and March 2006, PCTs were represented at only 5 of the 11 scheduled meetings. In the current state of PCT reorganisation, with limited capacity and competing demands on time, the Commissioning Body has not been a priority for attendance. PCT representatives are involved with the Supporting People programme and its priorities through other multi-agency planning groups such as the Older Person's Modernisation Group, the Learning Disability and Mental Health Partnership Boards. Greater capacity to attend Commissioning Body meetings is expected once the single, merged, county-wide PCT is fully established. Supporting People managers are working with health partners to strengthen strategic and operational links. Without attendance, PCTs cannot contribute fully to strategic planning.
- 46 Probation is fully engaged. They are now actively represented at senior management level on the CB but it has been a challenge to have their voice heard. Meeting clashes have not facilitated probation attendance and the voting arrangements left them feeling marginalised. The situation has improved and Probation believe that they have succeeded in raising awareness of offender needs and how these link with public protection, albeit slowly.

- 47 Commissioning Body business is not always at a strategic level. Meetings are organised monthly with busy and detailed agendas. This is most noticeable around the Value Improvement Project. As a high profile and politically sensitive project, it is understandable that the important decisions need full debate and consideration. However, despite a Project Board having been established, debate around the detail still takes place at the Commissioning Body. At the meeting on the 29 June 2006, 23 recommendations were considered on the VIP project. In part this is the result of a desire by the District Councils to influence all the decisions and in part a concern by the County Council to be open and transparent and allow debate around all the emerging issues. Historically there have been tensions between the County Council and District Councils, most noticeably around local government re-organisation. The Value Improvement Project adds to these tensions where changes to valued local services, some of which are provided by District Councils, are proposed by a partnership administered by the County Council. Attention is not always focused on the overarching programme issues.
- 48 The purpose and representation of providers and service users on Commissioning Body needs to be clarified. While the service user representative has links to older people's groups, there are no links to other client groups. Nor is it clear how both the service user and service provider representatives obtain views from the groups they represent and feedback information.
- 49 Performance management for the programme is relatively well developed. Quarterly exception reports are provided with comprehensive annual assessment of progress. Although more needs to be done to further develop outcome measures for each client group, work that is in progress at a national level, reports give a good understanding of what the programme is achieving.

### **Core Strategy group**

- 50 The Core Strategy group is well established with an effective sub-group structure. The group has operated since the beginning of the partnership and has a wide membership, including Probation, District Council representatives and service providers. Four sub-groups develop and report back progress on Finance, Strategy Implementation, Equality and Diversity, and Home Improvement Agencies. Achievements include strong financial management, the development of a clear five-year Supporting People strategy by the DCLG deadline, and the extension of home improvement agency coverage across the county. Widespread membership ensures that there is a broad base for policy development and that most points of view are represented.
- 51 An Equality and Diversity sub-group addresses diversity issues within the Supporting People programme. The group represents a variety of stakeholders from service providers and users to other diversity groups such as the local race equality council. The group meet regularly and have canvassed all providers to establish how effectively diversity issues are addressed in the region and completed impact assessments. The group has made a number of improvements around access issues such a resource manual for BME groups and training courses for issues such as HIV.

- 52 The Core Strategy Group has clear terms of reference and cross-partnership representation, strengthened by the addition of three provider representatives. Attendance has been regular and consistent, which has allowed the group to effectively tackle the detailed work of the partnership agenda. Senior commissioning managers from the different Adults Services needs groups sit on the Core Strategy Group and there is good evidence that Children's Services are fully engaged in the Supporting People programme. Service users are not however represented on the group. The Core Strategy Group is chaired by the Country Council's Accountable Officer, with a Vice Chair from the Districts.
- 53 The Primary Care Trust and the Drug and Alcohol Action Team are not regular attendees at Core Strategy Group meetings. This again reflects the current transitional position of both these bodies and the Council is well aware of the need for this to improve. This will ensure health, drug and alcohol concerns are properly represented.
- 54 Service providers are not clear about who represents them. Their representatives were selected by self nomination and contribute well to debate. However, the link with the group that they are representing is not clearly established, there is no system by which representatives take service provider views forward or feedback information to providers at the Inclusive Forum. Service providers were unable to identify their representatives. Without these links, representation cannot be effective.

### **Value improvement project**

- 55 A recognised project management decision making structure has been established to manage the project. Using the PRINCE 2 project management methodology, a project board has been established with District and County Council representation to oversee changes to alarm and warden services for older people. A tender evaluation board has also been established to consider response to the recently advertised tender. Membership of both has the approval of the Commissioning Body and DCLG who oversee the project. Decisions are therefore considered at an appropriate level.
- 56 However, service user interests are not independently represented. One of the three key roles of the project board is to represent the interests of service users. This is currently fulfilled by a District Council representative. While there is no evidence to suggest that their interests have not been adequately represented, independent representation avoiding the connection to service provision will avoid this perception and ensure that service user interests are central to project development.

### **Accountable Officer**

- 57 The Accountable Officer is of sufficient seniority to raise the profile of the programme and to ensure there are adequate resources to implement it effectively. The Accountable Officer is Head of Adults Services. In addition to chairing the Core Strategy Group, he attends the Commissioning Body in a voting capacity and provides the link between the programme and the Cross Authority Elected Member Forum.

- 58 The Accountable Officer has potential conflicts of role and interest. As the County Council's voting member on the Commissioning Body the Accountable Officer is responsible for strategic commissioning decisions. This may conflict with the role of Accountable Officer which is accountable to the Commissioning Body to provide the skills and resources required to implement the programme and its commissioning decisions. In addition, as Head of Adult Services, the officer is responsible for some service provision, for example to people with a Learning Disability. In this regard, this is the same position as many other Commissioning Body members who are also providers of services. Conflicts can make the role more difficult to discharge.
- 59 Supporting People is being effectively championed with widespread understanding of the programme and links into virtually all relevant planning groups, the local strategic partnership structures and partner agencies. This is achieved in part by links made by those officers and councillors involved in the programme who are also involved in other planning groups. For example, officers sit on the Mental Health Local Implementation Team, the Crime and Disorder Partnership, the PCT Leadership Group and the Homeless Action Partnership. This helps to ensure effective co-ordination of Supporting People and mainstream services and promotes positive outcomes for service users.

### **Councillor involvement**

- 60 Progress on the programme is monitored by the Social Care and Health Portfolio holder who is closely involved with the programme, attends the Cross Authority elected member group and receives regular reports on how the programme is progressing.
- 61 Councillors throughout Durham are involved with the Supporting People programme. There is a dedicated County and District Council elected members group which meets regularly to discuss progress and issues arising. Senior councillors from Durham's District Councils and the County Council's portfolio holder attend the group with officer support. It is an important and valued part of the programme providing information and opportunity to air differences. The group assists in connecting the Supporting People programme with the political structures in the County and District Councils and understanding cross boundary tensions. Its purpose is clearly set out in the decision making framework and is successful in improving understanding.
- 62 Patchy attendance limits the effectiveness of the cross authority elected member group. Not all councils attend regularly or send deputies and, although invited, Probation and PCT board members do not attend. Four councils have only been represented at seven or less meetings out of fourteen organised between June 2004 and June 2006. With variable communication channels from the group back to districts and agencies, issues are not always fully understood or communicated widely. This can lead to misunderstandings or a lack of awareness of issues under discussion.

## **Cross-authority partnership working**

- 63 Durham plays an active part in cross authority and regional arrangement to develop Supporting People. Durham is a regular attendee at meetings, is very receptive to information sharing and joint working, and takes a lead role in some areas such as benchmarking. Cross authority arrangements have secured a number of achievements, including reliable regional benchmarking data to support value for money assessments, sharing good practice on policies, multi-agency protocols to help meet the housing needs of offenders, and a cross authority statement of purpose. More work is in progress under a co-ordination plan including research into the needs of gypsies and travellers, contract monitoring and service user consultation. More cross authority work is required in a number of areas, including joint commissioning and outcome focused performance management.

## **Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements**

- 64 MAPPA<sup>7</sup> in Durham are working effectively. Accommodation for offenders posing a high risk of harm is sometimes resolved through housing authority attendance at MAPPA. Providers attend MAPPA where required for specific cases and a direct access provider was noted as having good relationships with the joint police and probation Public Protection Unit, taking a high proportion of offenders, including those posing higher risks of harm. There are good working relationships with housing providers and other accommodation services through MAPPA.

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<sup>7</sup> Multi Agency Protection Panel arrangements (MAPPA) were set up in England and Wales in 2001. Police and Probation take the leading role with other agencies such as housing, health and social services. Agencies share information to ensure accurate assessments of risk are made about potentially dangerous offenders and plans put in place to robustly manage those risks.

## Delivery arrangements

- 65 Delivery arrangements are a strength of the programme. The Supporting People team is competent, skilled and well equipped to discharge their duties. There are good relations and communications with service providers. Sound eligibility criteria have been developed and contract management is robust. A clear five-year strategy is in place developed on a good understanding of local needs. Where there are gaps in information on needs, plans are in place to address them. Performance and risks are well managed and there are plans in place to take the programme forward. Identification of resources and SMART<sup>8</sup> outcome measures are areas in need of improvement.

## Corporate commitment

- 66 There is a clear commitment to the effective delivery of the programme. While no additional finances have been provided to support the administration of the programme, the Supporting People team can call upon a range of corporate expertise, such as legal, health and safety, and risk management. The Council has created the structures required to deliver the programme. Supporting People is integrated into the Council's wider planning groups.

## Supporting People team

- 67 The Supporting People team is of sufficient size to deal with the administrative and developmental requirements of the programme. All major milestones have been achieved. Officers have been recruited from local authority and voluntary sector backgrounds with the skills and experience required to deliver the programme. They are enthusiastic and committed.
- 68 Team members are appropriately supervised. They receive monthly supervision, annual appraisal reviews; participate in weekly team meetings and a programme of business and developmental 'away days'. Appraisals are closely linked to the development requirements of staff to ensure they remain properly equipped with the necessary skills to deliver improvements to the programme. Six staff have been trained in project management. Part of the administration grant is set aside to meet the development needs of staff. Skills are shared ensuring a strong and knowledgeable team.
- 69 The team structure has changed to reflect the changing requirements and to address the local needs of the programme. Officers have designated areas of responsibility; covering geographical areas and specialist functions. For example a finance officer has responsibility for the production of contracts, performance management reports and the operation of the four weekly IT based payments system. Another officer has responsibility for the criminal justice elements of the programme. Agencies were complimentary of the clarity that this structure offered.

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<sup>8</sup> SMART stands for Specific, Objectives should specify what they want to achieve: Measurable – You should be able to measure whether you are meeting the objectives or not: Achievable - Are the objectives you set, achievable and attainable? Realistic – Can you realistically achieve the objectives with the resources you have?: Timely – When do you want to achieve the set objectives?

## Grant conditions and eligibility

- 70 Sound eligibility criteria have been developed in consultation with stakeholders including service providers. These are necessary to provide clarity to officers and service providers about activities that can be properly funded by the grant. The Council is fully complying with grant conditions laid down by DCLG.
- 71 Contracts are monitored in a rigorous and robust manner which has led to the decommissioning of some services and the reconfiguration of others. DCLG returns are monitored closely to ensure service providers are complying with contract requirements. The monitoring has led to a number of changes, for example, all staff in contact with service users have to have enhanced Criminal Record Bureau checks.
- 72 Longer term contracts are in place for the majority of services. Those services affected by the Value Improvement Project or where there are other issues have shorter contracts. No interim contracts remain. Contracts are now more closely related to an assessment of the strategic relevance and quality of the service.
- 73 Services providing care and support are currently not jointly managed or reviewed. The Supporting People team hope to establish joint reviews and co-ordinate contract start and termination dates. Presently services are reviewed and managed through the service review process. Separate contracts for care and support are assessed through the review process and have linked up with adults and community services to review joint areas of the contract such as financial areas. The benefits of joint management and review are not yet realised.

## Work planning

- 74 Clear service improvement plans are in place to deliver continued improvements. The 2006/07 Action Plan clearly identifies the actions required to address the issues and priorities identified for the programme for this year. The plan includes details of the officer responsible and timescales. A lower level team plan identifies core activities for the team around partnership, outcomes, targets, and performance indicators. This plan focuses on processes; holding meetings, production of newsletters and the number of team meetings. Plans ensure effort is co-ordinated and focused.
- 75 Plans do not estimate the resources required to deliver actions or have SMART measures in place. The 2006/07 Action Plan does not estimate the resources required to deliver actions, nor does it include measures or targets to demonstrate success. The costs of delivering individual or collective actions are not estimated in the plan. Intended outcomes are shown but these are broad statements and include no specific measures or targets. In the team plan targets measure process rather than outcomes. Without identification of resources, plans may be undeliverable and the impact of actions will not be known without outcome measures.

- 76 Procurement arrangements for Supporting People services are not yet fully in place. A commissioning and decommissioning policy and process is being finalised and will build on learning from the Value Improvement Project in relation to effective procurement options. New provision has been developed through the DCLG pipeline process or through negotiation with specialist service providers. Until they are in place, the programme has no service specific guidelines to ensure commissioning delivers value for money.
- 77 The Council has been pro-active in seeking to improve the way the programme is delivered. Independent research into the way the programme was being delivered was undertaken in 2004. Lessons learned informed adjustments in the way the programme is delivered. While the exercise has not been repeated since 2004, Equality and Diversity impact assessments have been carried out on the service review programme by a panel made up of providers, stakeholders and service users. As a result the programme was revised and strengthened.

### **Needs mapping and analysis**

- 78 Good information on the housing related support needs of the majority of Supporting People client groups has been gathered and analysed as part of the five-year strategy. This includes information on the learning disability sector, homeless people and people with HIV/Aids and others. As part of the regional Housing and Returning Prisoners (HARP) protocol, designed to reduce homelessness amongst those returning from custody, probation collect data regarding offender accommodation status at the start and end of sentence and feed this into the local authority homelessness monitoring project. Robust homeless monitoring and tracking arrangements are in place in throughout the county through a jointly funded project delivered by Centrepoin. The Youth Engagement Service contributes to continuing analysis of young people's housing related support needs through provision of data to an independent co-ordinator, as part of the HARP protocol. Service providers and partners have contributed to this information pool. Learning from service reviews is also included.
- 79 Gaps in information are known and action is being taken to ensure that some of these gaps are filled. For example a major research project has been commissioned to understand the needs of gypsies and travellers which make up the biggest minority group in Durham. Research will ensure that needs are identified and prioritised.
- 80 Although there is a good range of information about most key client groups, more work is required to understand the supported housing needs of groups, such as offenders, people with substance misuse problems and people whose first language is not English.

## Five-year strategy

- 81** The five-year strategy has clear objectives and priorities for service development. The strategy includes three high level objectives and more detailed immediate priorities in the annual Action Plan. Stakeholders including partner agencies, service providers, councillors and service users were involved in the development of the five-year strategy. Meetings were held to allow service providers to discuss key priorities for different client groups. The strategy and annual plan were agreed by all partners, including Probation and Health representatives. The strategy was submitted to DCLG by the 31 March 2006 deadline date. Clarity over direction is important for effective delivery and this has been achieved.
- 82** Strong links are made with other Council strategies. The five-year strategy makes clear links with other strategies, such as the District Councils housing and homelessness strategies to show how the two are interrelated. Close links have been established with the Homelessness Action Partnership which includes representation from all housing departments, Supporting People, Social Care and Health, Drug and Alcohol Action Team, Youth Engagement Service and support providers. Joint priorities from the Housing and Homelessness strategies have been agreed to deliver the common objectives and improve services for homeless people in County Durham. In addition the Supporting People team has assisted other agencies, such as the county-wide Community Safety co-ordinators to develop their own priorities and improve services. Co-ordination is vital to having maximum impact.

## Performance monitoring and management

- 83** Performance is well managed. Strategy implementation is monitored by the Supporting People team and by quarterly Strategy Implementation Group meetings, the sub-group of the Core Strategy Group. Quarterly progress is also reported to the Commissioning Body and the Cross Authority Elected Members Group. Performance is being closely monitored.
- 84** A comprehensive framework is in place to capture performance. In addition to quarterly reports, an annual report pulls together performance information across a range of indicators measuring contract compliance, service provider performance, the Supporting People team, financial and non financial indicators. Capturing and collating performance enable the Supporting People governing bodies to understand what progress it is making and where it may be under-performing.
- 85** Not all performance measures are yet in place to measure the impact of the programme. Outcome measures for individual client groups, shared targets and tracking trends on relevant existing performance measures, such as BVPIs, PAF and other agency indicators are not yet in place.

- 86 Finances overall are well managed. A robust medium term financial plan is in place which identifies the significant new resource requirements for scheme development, such as expansion of the Derwentside Direct Access Unit in the coming year. Anticipated budget savings through service reviews and other areas such as reductions in funding for extra care are forecast. The plan forecasts to balance the budget until 2007/08.

### **Fairer charging**

- 87 A clear fairer charging policy is in place for the Supporting People programme. It sets out the basis on which charges will be applied and those groups of people who are eligible for charging. It is aligned to charging for domestic care services. Applicants also receive a full welfare benefits assessment for those who apply. Service standards are in place to make sure they are processed promptly. This will ensure that vulnerable people are helped to claim all benefits to which they are entitled and receive them quickly.
- 88 The Council has processed a higher than average number of fairer charging applications. Research carried out by the team shows Durham, at between 500 and 600 applications, to have processed considerably more than in other county councils. Arrangements are in place for the fairer charging option to be explained to applicants through the housing application process. Promotion of fairer charging arrangements is being refreshed with the roll out by District Council area of a briefing note for service providers together with a leaflet to send to service users. No analysis has been made of the take up of fairer charging claims to inform the promotional activity. More could be achieved by promoting its availability.

### **Relationships with providers**

- 89 The Supporting People team has a good relationship with service providers. Service providers who attended the focus group were positive about the management and delivery of the Supporting People programme in Durham. A satisfaction survey of service providers carried out as part of this inspection found high levels of satisfaction with most aspects of the programme. In ten out of 13 areas, over 80 per cent of the 31 respondents were either satisfied or very satisfied with implementation arrangements. Over 70 per cent of service providers are satisfied with value for money assessments and contract negotiations. Service providers are generally satisfied with the way the programme is being implemented.
- 90 Service providers rate the Supporting People team highly. They feel that the team is accessible, easy to contact and provide prompt and accurate responses to queries. Training has been provided to improve understanding of the programme, for example to frontline social workers, on housing related support for vulnerable people. Service providers consider the Supporting People team are responsive to changing needs with an understanding of organisations concerns. Payments are made on time and are accompanied by charging schedules. There is confidence in administration arrangements.

- 91 Despite no inflationary increases and a budgetary cut in 2004 service providers consider reductions to have been introduced in a fair and appropriate manner. Service providers were consulted on reductions and were given the option to make a special case if their scheme was under threat. Annual changes have been sensitively handled.
- 92 Effective arrangements are in place to involve service providers and keep them informed. A bi-monthly inclusive forum meets periodically for all stakeholders including internal and external service providers, other agencies including the voluntary and charity sectors, service users and carers. It provides opportunities for service providers to participate in information sharing and policy development.

### **Cross-authority working**

- 93 Durham plays a leading role in regional and sub-regional Supporting People groups. Durham is actively involved in the Tees Valley and Durham Cross Authority Group, the Regional Implementation Group and in establishing a regional home Improvement Agency group. Durham Supporting People has taken the lead on the regional Home Improvement Agency Group. Key outcomes have included the sharing and development of monitoring and review practice and benchmarking the costs of services. A programme of further work is in place including the development of service user involvement.

### **Risk management**

- 94 Sound arrangements are in place to manage risks to the programme. A range of risk assessments have been undertaken including a financial risk assessment, strategic and partnership risks, and risk assessment in service reviews. Risks to the Value Improvement Project have been identified and are updated monthly. Results feed into departmental and corporate risk registers. Effective management of risks and contingency planning protects the programme from disruption.

### **ODPM SPLS data upload**

- 95 Accurate information, including milestones and SPLS data uploads and performance monitoring information is submitted to DCLG on time. Implementation of the new IT system has resulted in a very high level of accuracy and reliability of such returns.

## Service reviews

- 96 Strengths significantly outweigh areas for improvement in this area. There is a well developed and robust service review process and it is applied fairly across all legacy services. Service users and service providers have been well engaged and there are high levels of satisfaction amongst service providers. Sound quality assurance arrangements are in place ensuring consistent and equal treatment of internal and external service providers. This is not externally validated. The review programme has delivered clear outcomes in improved quality and more strategically relevant services. An updated programme of reviews is in place for 2006-2009 targeting low performance and applying a stronger focus on equality and diversity issues.
- 97 The service review programme was based on a clear rationale. It focused firstly on the largest client group sectors and high cost, such as services to people with learning disabilities. The approach was based on a risk assessment carried out by the Core Strategy Group, which also identified the Older Persons Sector as a priority for reviews. Floating support was reviewed as a further grouping to allow for cross sector and cross service level comparisons in a strategic review. This ensured that ineligible services were targeted early in the programme.
- 98 Full reviews and validation visits were completed on all 283 services and approved by the Commissioning Body by the DCLG deadline of 31 March 2006. This ensured that all legacy services have been assessed for their strategic relevance, quality and value for money to ensure grant is spent in the right places and that where necessary action is taken to drive standards up.
- 99 A soundly based programme of service reviews has been developed for 2006-2009. It is targeting areas of most concern, commencing with schemes where concerns regarding quality or eligibility remain from the first review programme, or where schemes are relatively new. The programme was developed in consultation with providers and stakeholders, through discussion at Core Strategy Group and the Commissioning Body, with a strengthened focus on equality and diversity issues. A review of Learning Disability provision is scheduled for January to June 2008, in order to ensure that unit cost adjustments have been appropriately implemented and that the balance of care to support is correctly meeting the needs of service users. This will continue the drive to improve services.
- 100 Service providers are actively encouraged to use the quality assessment framework as a self-assessment tool to drive improvement. The service review and monitoring policy requires service providers to complete documentation every year and use the Quality Assessment Framework to help them improve services. Service providers can submit an improved self-assessment at any time. They are clear about the areas which need to improve to secure a higher quality rating.
- 101 Clear and easily understood procedures have been developed for service reviews. Service providers are given sufficient notice of reviews and details of the review process. A useful checklist has been developed to ensure consistent and timely action is taken in the planning and delivery of service reviews.

- 102** Service reviews are thorough and robust. Stakeholders are given an opportunity to comment on the strategic relevance of services. Validation visits have been carried out on all reviews to check services on the ground. No reviews have been based purely on a desk top assessment. Service review files are well kept and evidence that the Quality Assessment Framework (QAF) has been correctly applied. Outcomes from the review process are fed back to providers verbally on the day of validation and to service users within days, with draft reports being produced within 28 days. Service reviews identify best practice, which is shared with providers. Those services who fall short of the required standards know what they have to do to improve them.
- 103** Services users are fully involved in service reviews. A leaflet has been developed to explain the process to them and to include them from the outset. Engagement can take a variety of forms: one-to-one interviews, focus groups or questionnaire depending on the communication needs of the service users. Remodelling options are discussed with service users prior to final decisions. Good engagement has meant that service user views have informed the assessment process and helped to identify areas for improvement.
- 104** Service providers were generally positive about the reviews and the support provided to them. They consider the team to be helpful in preparing them for self-assessments, validation visits and value for money assessments. Service providers express significant levels - 73 to 86 per cent - of satisfaction with most aspects of the service review process.
- 105** Feedback and follow up to the reviews is timely and comprehensive. Action plans are agreed in response to service reviews, improvement plans are followed up to check progress and service improvements are evident. Action Plans are tracked through the Supporting People IT system which makes the follow up system robust. In total 51 action plans were issued following the first tranche of service reviews, to almost 60 per cent of service providers to improve quality standards to QAF level C and above. Quality standards have improved.
- 106** The Council is supportive to those service providers who need assistance to reach required service standards. For example, one valued specialist service is receiving significant additional support to help it build the capacity to improve services to the quality standards required. Close monitoring, coaching and training and realistic incremental improvement targets are in place to give the service provider time and opportunity to improve from a low base. Rolling short term contracts give the team flexibility to withdraw funding if progress is not made quickly enough. Closure of service that meets specialist local needs is therefore avoided.
- 107** Durham CC is taking advantage of some systems to reduce the demands on service providers. Of 45 service providers required to undertake accreditation 14 were fully passported via other Supporting People authorities. To ensure service providers meet local standards, Quality Assessment Framework ratings assessed by other councils have not been accepted in instances where a service provider supplies services in different council areas. Consistent standards are applied within the Durham area.

- 108 Robust internal moderation arrangements are in place to ensure an equal degree of rigour is applied in service reviews. Reviews are carried out in pairs, and findings are considered at various different stages. Initially the review officers present their findings and judgements to the review team, the Supporting People lead officer reviews all service reviews, reports are considered by the Finance Sub Group of the Core Strategy Group and finally a summary is approved by the Commissioning Body. Questions can be raised at any stage. Consistent standards are therefore applied.
- 109 There is no external validation of standards. There has been no shadowing of service reviews outside of the Durham area or use of another Council's service review resources to ensure standards within Durham are consistent. This is a missed opportunity to learn from others, receive feedback and bring a consistency of treatment for service providers across the region.
- 110 The team has the necessary skills to carry out reviews. Officers are drawn from a variety of local government and voluntary sector backgrounds. They have access to training, such as project management, to further develop their skills. Where particular communication skills have been required, the team has used secondments. A person with specialist skills in communicating with people with Learning Disabilities was seconded to the team to help with service reviews in that sector.
- 111 The opportunity to review services jointly with others has not yet been taken. This may have involved a review of both housing related support and personal care services provided by the same service provider or may be a large service provider who provides services that span Durham's boundary. Joined up reviews have therefore not taken place although they are planned for services to people with a learning disability and working with Probation in the next round of reviews.
- 112 Service reviews have not yet been used to capture and drive improvements in the cultural sensitivity and accessibility of housing related support provision. Checks have been made on the accessibility of communal areas and the availability of Equal Opportunity policies. However reviews have not yet pushed providers into developing services that are fully accessible to people with mobility problems and can adapt to people who for example speak different languages, have different religious beliefs or dietary requirements. Nor has this information been captured and made publicly available to enable service users to exercise choice.
- 113 Partner agencies have a limited involvement in service reviews. They do not actively participate in the service review exercise. Partners in social care, health and probation have however been involved as stakeholders in service reviews, providing commissioning feedback to review officers as part of the preparatory work, desk-top review and the validation visit. In addition findings from reviews have been shared with partners.
- 114 A transparent three stage appeals process is in place. Few appeals have been received although the letter notifying the outcome draws service providers' attention to its availability. If this fails to resolve the issue, service providers can access mediation arrangements. No service providers have taken this route so far.

**115** Outcomes from the service review process are clear and include:

- overall quality improvements for 20 service providers;
- improvements in the unit price across most client groups;
- a move away from tenure based support where previously 18,611 units of support were accommodation based with only 3,050 floating support units. Now there are 10,504 units of accommodation based support and 11,333 units of floating support;
- 20 services have been remodelled. For example several floating support schemes have been created to support people with learning disabilities moving from schemes with a high degree of support;
- five services have been decommissioned; and
- £2 million efficiency savings have been identified.

Through these outcomes the Commissioning Body is able to maintain similar levels of strategically relevant, quality services that are value for money despite budget cuts and no inflationary award.

## Value for money

- 116 Strengths outweigh areas for improvement. The Council is delivering improvements in the unit costs of services, service quality and improving the effectiveness of services. Robust value for money and eligibility policies are in place and have been applied through the service review process. Through the cross authority group, Durham take a lead on collating benchmarking data which provides reliable cost comparisons. Administration costs need to be justified through the Council's internal procedures. Not all opportunities are however taken; there are no joint reviews of services and no cross authority joint procurement.

### How do costs compare?

- 117 Based on figures supplied to the ODPM for the Platinum Cut in 2003, the average unit cost of services in Durham was below average, even when community alarms and sheltered housing are excluded. These figures precede work carried out by the Council through their service review programme.

**Table 2**

	Per head of population	Per unit	Per unit excluding community alarms	Per unit excluding community alarms and sheltered housing
Durham	£ 0.59	£ 12.48	£ 13.25	£ 29.65
North East	£ 0.72	£ 17.86	£ 24.71	£ 62.45
England	£ 0.70	£ 28.30	£ 34.71	£ 76.37

- 118 Figures provided by the Supporting People team shown below demonstrate progress being made. Improvements can clearly be seen in the average unit cost of services often achieved by expanding the capacity of the service.

**Table 3**

Durham unit cost	2003/04	2006/07
Average Accommodation based service unit cost	£ 229.59	£ 215.42
Average floating support unit cost	£ 100.53	£ 92.75

### How is value for money managed?

- 119** The Council has adopted a sound approach to assess value for money as part of the service review process. The value for money policy includes a weighted scoring framework that brings together components such as quality, cost, outcomes for service users and user satisfaction levels. The policy was developed in consultation with partners and other stakeholders including service providers. The approach has been cited by SITRA<sup>9</sup> as good practice. As a result around 75 per cent of service providers are satisfied with the Supporting People programme's approach to value for money assessment.
- 120** Exceptions are built into the assessment process for specialist services. The scoring matrix of the value for money policy adds a weighted score for services that may have additional costs due to the specialised nature of their services. The process is flexible to accommodate exceptions to the rule and the complexity of some services.
- 121** The Council has established a clear policy on eligibility for Supporting People funding. Developed in consultation with stakeholders, the policy is well set out and easy to read. It makes clear the distinction between support and personal care, support and health care, support and housing management. The policy has been applied by service review officers and ineligible funding has been identified. Around £2 million of care services have been identified in services delivered to clients with a learning disability. More has been identified in extra care provision and negotiations are in their final stages as to the precise amount. Arrangements are in place to transfer funding responsibilities to the relevant Social Care and Health budget.
- 122** A sector based approach has been followed to ensure there is a consistency and fairness in contracting rates. Separate exercises have been carried out for floating support services and accommodation based services. Low, medium, high and intensive bands were established and services which fell above the upper limit cost for each band were subjected to greater scrutiny. Following negotiations changes were made to most services which reduced the unit cost of provision. For example the unit cost of a scheme providing floating support services to young people at risk fell from £113.42 a week to £74 a week. Other schemes had increases in capacity thereby reducing the unit cost.
- 123** The Council is also involved in a major DCLG sponsored Value Improvement Project which aims to bring some consistency to services, costs and charges for community alarm and warden services in Durham. The project has involved external consultancy, detailed work with the Regional Centre of Procurement Excellence and participation in national and regional seminars. The project is moving into its implementation phase and will introduce major change in costs and matching services to needs in this sector.

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<sup>9</sup> SITRA is an umbrella organisation committed to raising standards in the housing, care and support sectors. It provides training, consultancy and information to the supported housing sector.

- 124 Appropriate comparisons are carried out to establish reliable benchmarked costs. Service costs are benchmarked against other provision locally and through the benchmarking work of the Durham and Tees Valley Cross Authority Group. Durham leads on the development of this benchmarking data which provides reliable, sub-regional, cost comparisons. A combination of these figures and national information has been used during the service review process and subsequent activity with service providers. Consequently, benchmarking information has assisted the process of negotiating revised unit costs in many circumstances.
- 125 Administration costs of the programme are not benchmarked. Accurate comparisons cannot therefore be drawn on the relative costs of staffing, accommodation, IT support or training. While costs may be affected by local circumstances, benchmarking would highlight areas where costs are significantly high or low for further investigation.
- 126 Administrative costs have however been subjected to existing county value for money procedures. Salary levels are generally comparable with others in the region. Staffing of the team has remained relatively stable. On recruitment, gradings for posts were advised by the County Council's Human Resources department, to be in line with other employees of the Council with similar levels of responsibility.
- 127 A new integrated IT system has been procured using DCC tendering processes. The new system is a specialist software package for the Supporting People programme and has enabled savings to be made in staff resources needed to support administrative arrangements. Payments to service providers are made electronically. Options were considered for accommodation and the least cost, most appropriate option was selected. Costs have been justified.
- 128 Not all opportunities have been taken to ensure the maximum is achieved from the resources available. There have been no joint reviews of services, which may provide both care and housing related support, or may provide services across county boundaries. Nor has there been any cross authority joint procurement of services which may deliver economies of scale.
- 129 Targets for efficiencies are set every year as part of the medium term financial plan. The plan forecasts savings to be achieved through service reviews and delivered from withdrawing funding for ineligible services. These need to be, and are, achieved to enable the plan to balance over the medium term.

## Service user involvement

**130** Strengths here are balanced with areas for improvement. The Council has effective links with a wide range of client groups, although not yet all. Service users are consulted on policy developments and representatives attend the Supporting People governance partnership meetings. They are well engaged in service reviews and there is an action plan to develop arrangements which is monitored by the Core Strategy Group although service users are not represented on this group. Further work is needed to ensure all client groups are able to influence policy developments and that representatives feed back information. More needs to be done if service user engagement is to extend beyond consultation and participation.

**131** The programme has effective links into a wide range of existing user groups including:

- the county-wide network for Service User/Carer Forums;
- the Age Concern Local User Groups;
- the Learning Disability Parliament and Consultation network; and
- MO's Army (Moving On Service User Group for Young People).

Service users have contributed to policy and service developments such as the eligibility criteria, needs mapping and the development of the five-year strategy.

**132** Service users have been closely involved in mapping needs. For example, some focused consultation was undertaken with young people receiving floating support services, older people receiving community alarm and warden services, service users with mental health problems in acute hospitals; and the Learning Disabilities Parliament using a questionnaire with county-wide and local groups to inform strategy development. Needs mapping activity was broadly based.

**133** Service users are involved in the governance structures of the programme although it is unclear how representative they are or how they feed back to the people they are representing. An older person's service user representative attends the Commissioning Body, and a Service User Carer Forum representative and a SHAID service user representative sits on the Equality and Diversity sub-group of the Core Strategy Group. However it is not clear how or whether individuals represent the cross section of client groups who benefit from the programme.

**134** The team is well connected with service user led events which take place within the county. Representatives attend forums such as the Homelessness Forum with SHAID in Derwentside and an 'All Our Tomorrows' event organised for Older Peoples services. This ensures that Supporting People is included in the development of policies and plans throughout the county.

- 135 Inclusive forums are organised bi-monthly which include participation by service users. Views feed into priorities determined for the five-year strategy and Annual Action Plan. A dedicated service user event was organised to discuss the draft national Supporting People strategy. Individual and collated service user views were fed back to the DCLG.
- 136 Links with some hard to reach groups needs further development. For example links with offenders and people with substance misuse problems are not well developed. In addition, connections to minority ethnic groups, other than gypsies and travellers, are weak although connections are being developed with an emerging group of Eastern European workers. Without input, needs information is incomplete and it is difficult to ensure services that people need are developed.
- 137 Service users have been appropriately engaged in service reviews. Using different techniques appropriate to the particular circumstances and the communication abilities of individuals, service user views have been captured as a fundamental part of the service review process. These include one to one interviews, focus groups, questionnaires and specialist support. Service user views have therefore been central to the review and feedback is used to help shape scheme redevelopment, for example, new domestic violence refuge services.
- 138 Service users have also been involved in some evaluation and analysis of the Supporting People programme delivery. Service users were involved in impact assessments which evaluated Supporting People policies and procedures and resulted in action plans to improve the way the programme is delivered. Feedback has also changed the approach to service reviews and validation. Interviews are carried out at the start of the review process and inform the areas due for scrutiny. Delivery arrangements are more relevant to service user needs.
- 139 Improving service user involvement features strongly in service delivery although measures are not in place to assess how effective improvement activity is. A service user action plan forms part of the five-year strategy and it is clear that Durham CC is making progress against the key actions, such as establishing the housing related support needs of travellers and gypsies. However there are no clear outcome focused measures in place against which progress can be measured. Nor is there any periodic overall evaluation of how well this aspect of the programme is developing.

- 140** Service user involvement does not yet extend to the Council's aspirations of delegation and devolution<sup>10</sup>. Engagement currently is focused around consultation and some degree of participation. However, service users are not, for example, actively involved as participants in service reviews, deciding what criteria are important in the evaluation of services or delegated a budget to develop their involvement. More needs to be done if higher levels of service user involvement are to be achieved.
- 141** Developing service user involvement is one of the areas of activity that the cross authority group is seeking to develop. However it is too early to see any real tangible outcomes from this work.

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<sup>10</sup> As described in the 2005-2010, five-year strategy: Delegation - providing a framework, and people are then left to decide for themselves; Devolution - providing resources, and people decide how to use them.

## Access to services and information

- 142** Areas for improvement are balanced with strengths. A full suite of leaflets has been produced and are available in other formats and languages on request. Regular newsletter and bulletins keep stakeholders well informed. However, leaflet literature is not widely available across the county and frontline staff are not always signposting enquiries adequately. The Council's website is not easy for vulnerable people to navigate and the local directory of housing related support services is basic.
- 143** A range of good quality straightforward information is available to service users and potential service users. These include a short summary of the five-year strategy, a general Supporting People leaflet, a Paying for Support Services leaflet and 'The Supporting People Review and You' leaflet. The information is well presented and easy to understand. A corporate complaints procedure is used for Supporting People complaints; this has a leaflet that is easy to read. Information tailored to meet the needs of existing and potential service users helps access to the services people require.
- 144** However not all information is presented in such an easy to understand way. Correspondence to applicants for fairer charging is not in 'Plain English' and does not indicate if it is available in other formats. Applicants for fairer charging are sent a standard letter to inform them of the outcome of their application. It is not in 'Plain English' and uses words and phrases which are likely to be unfamiliar to applicants such as 'disposable income'. Terms like 'complainant' in the County's complaints leaflet suggests something negative and official and may deter vulnerable people from making a complaint.
- 145** Leaflets are not always available in the network of council offices in the County and District network. District Council reception areas did not always include leaflets on Supporting People or charging arrangements. Leaflets are not, for example, made available through the Citizen's Advice Bureau network and little information was found in the District Office network. The County is unaware of the likely take up of fairer charging and no targets are set on the number or percentage of clients making successful claims. Charging arrangements are explained to new service users when they enquire about and sign up to tenancies and the above average number of applications shows that Durham is partially successful in reaching eligible people. However all opportunities to promote assistance are not being taken. With a large geographical area, information needs to be available in outlying council offices as this is many remote customers first point of contact.
- 146** Not all frontline staff dealing with the public are aware of Supporting People services and able to effectively direct people to the appropriate help. District Council receptionists were very willing to help but often lacked even basic knowledge about the Supporting People programme. Signposting was not always adequate and there is little knowledge of the directory of housing related support services. This makes it difficult for people to access services.

- 147** Information is available on request in formats suitable to a service users needs. Supporting People leaflets are available in large print, Braille and on audio cassette. Leaflets are also available in other languages. Some carry a strapline in different Asian languages such as Punjabi and Hindi offering this choice. In response to an influx of eastern European workers, leaflets also include the strapline in Russian, Latvian, Lithuanian and Polish. There is one example of a service review report provided in Braille at the request of a service user. Key information is available on tape and CD for those with sensory support needs. People with particular communication requirements are offered information in a format suitable for their needs.
- 148** Feedback is easy for service users to understand. Feedback to people with learning disabilities makes use of picture formats to aid understanding in line with CSCI positive practice. Feedback to service users following a service review takes a short easy to read summary format with information on where to access the full report. Service users are better able to understand what the result of the service review is and what contribution they have made.
- 149** Regular newsletters and bulletins keep service providers and other agencies up to date with changes to the Supporting People programme and upcoming events and issues. The bi-monthly newsletter is easy to understand and service providers consider they are kept well informed.
- 150** The Council website is not easy for vulnerable service users to navigate. The website contains a lot of information on Supporting People policies, procedures and services. It often redirects service users to the DCLG site for information. The site is not focused on the service user; for example an enquiry on women's aid information did not provide a link to services available.
- 151** The Council's local directory of housing related support services is limited in the information it provides. It provides a list and contact details for all the housing related support services available in the county. However it makes no mention of the services available, how to access them or whether services are accessible to people with mobility problems and can accommodate other religions or dietary requirements. A number of other directories provide information for some client groups and some areas of the county. For example Centrepont provide a directory of services for young people, there are mental health directories of services for people served by two of the PCTs, there is a North East Substance misuse directory. The provision of information is patchy and not well co-ordinated. The local directory of housing support services does little to improve that position.
- 152** A joint protocol has been developed to help young homeless people access the services they need. District councils, floating support providers and Durham County Council (Children's Services, Education and Connexions) including the Supporting People programme have worked together to develop a protocol on how to deal with young people. Whatever their point of access, their needs are assessed and services put in place with funding resolved between the three parties. This means that services are put in place quickly to meet the needs of young people.

- 153 The Council has recently updated its Joint Charter for Long Term Care to include information on housing related support. Better Care: Higher Standards is the Government's recommended national Charter for adults who need long term care or support. The local charter provides information on what services are available, how to access them, and what standards can be expected. The Council has been slow to include Supporting People services in the Charter which was updated in July 2006. The benefits derived from including Supporting People services have had little time to have any impact.

## Diversity

- 154** Strengths in the Council's approach to diversity outweigh weaknesses. Good information is available on the housing related support needs of the diverse communities in the county. There are gaps and action is being taken to plug them. A strong focus on Equality and Diversity issues is provided by a sub-group of the Core Strategy Group, although measures to demonstrate how effective it is are not in place. Some services have been expanded to meet the needs of diverse groups in Durham and address rural issues. However links with BME communities are not strong and information on the cultural sensitivity and accessibility of existing services is not widely available.
- 155** The Council has a good understanding of the demographic profile of the area and how it is changing. The programme has drawn on baseline information provided by Government Office North East; corporate information and from District Councils. Data is supplemented from the Durham and Darlington Race Equality Council, Supporting People client records data and countywide homelessness, monitoring data. Solid baseline information informs strategic planning.
- 156** The Council know where gaps in needs information are. For example there are gaps in information on the housing related support needs of gypsies and travellers, people with substance misuse problems and for offenders. Action is being taken to plug these gaps. For example, research has been commissioned to understand the housing and support needs of gypsies and travellers who reside or pass through the county.
- 157** Equality and diversity is a priority for the programme. The Equality and Diversity sub-group of the Core Strategy Group was established specifically to improve engagement, produce improved needs data and to provide training and awareness raising across the partnership. The group represents a variety of stakeholders including service providers, service users and the Race Equality Council. The group meets regularly and has canvassed all providers to establish how effectively diversity issues are addressed in the region and complete impact assessments on policies and procedures. The group has made a number of improvements around access issues such a resource manual for BME groups and training courses for issues such as HIV. Equality and diversity was included as a topic on a recent Inclusive forum meeting to raise awareness of providers.
- 158** The effectiveness of Durham's diversity work is not being captured. Durham Supporting People programme has taken equality and diversity seriously and achieved around needs analysis, prioritisation and identifying work to address needs. However there are no measures or system in place to capture the delivery of real outcomes for hard to reach groups. Without this, the Council will not know how well it is doing.

- 159** The County Council has a clear commitment to diversity at a corporate level. It has already achieved Level 2 of the local government equality standard and aims to achieve Level 3 in 2006/07. Relevance reviews are carried out for all major policy and service developments through the Equality and Diversity sub-group are undertaking for the Supporting People programme. These help to ensure that new initiatives reflect the needs of different communities.
- 160** The Supporting People programme works closely with local agencies and groups. The Supporting People team holds quarterly meetings with the Durham and Darlington REC and participates in other groups such as the county-wide and local domestic violence forums. The Council use the REC website for sharing information with minority groups and to advertise Supporting People job vacancies. BMEspark<sup>11</sup> newsletters, information and training opportunities are brought to the attention of service providers. Supporting People team members have also participated in consultation events regarding homelessness, sensory impairment, and older people's services. Supporting People are involved in corporate events, such as the Disability Have your Say Day, to promote services and learn more on people's needs. The team are in touch with local events to take advantage of opportunities to learn and promote services.
- 161** Links with BME communities are not strong. As there are small numbers of people from ethnic communities in the county, indirect links are made through the Durham and Darlington REC. Better links exist with the main ethnic group of gypsies and travellers through the County Council's gypsy and traveller liaison workers. Some links have been established through District Council work with emerging migrant worker communities. However, without a network of direct links into minority communities, their needs may not be fully understood.
- 162** Some services have been expanded to meet the needs of diverse groups in Durham. For example services to people fleeing domestic violence have been expanded and more are to be introduced shortly, such as a newly built refuge in Easington. More accommodation and floating support is available to young people at risk. These services have been developed to address existing need in the community and provide a better range of provision.
- 163** The Council is working with others to improve the provision of services to meet diverse needs. For example in Durham a scheme to provide support for people who are homeless and misuse substances has been jointly commissioned with the Drug and Alcohol Action Team, and a scheme in Derwentside has been jointly commissioned with the District Council and Neighbourhood Renewal Funding to address the needs of excluded young people.

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<sup>11</sup> BMEspark is an initiative of DCLG's national Supporting People programme. It brings together expertise and experience for commissioning authorities and service providers who are responding to the needs of black and minority ethnic communities in Supporting People.

- 164** The physical accessibility of housing related support schemes has not yet been fully addressed by the programme. None of the schemes visited by the inspection team had access arrangements that complied with the Disability Discrimination Act. The issue has not been highlighted in service review reports nor informed the strategic planning of services. Information on the physical accessibility of services is not publicly available. New scheme developments are however accessible and a stronger focus is to be placed on this issue in the next phase of service reviews. Accessibility continues to present a barrier to vulnerable people who have mobility problems.
- 165** Rural issues are being addressed by the Supporting People programme. A number of contracts have been amended to extend coverage across wider geographic areas, particularly the more remote areas. Home Improvement Agency services and family mediation services are now available countywide. Alarm and warden services are being extended to cover Teesdale and the link to tenure has been removed for services provided in Wear Valley and Sedgefield District Council areas.
- 166** The County Council has interpreter arrangements in place so that people who do not use English as their first language can communicate their requirements effectively. Service providers are able to access these arrangements which service users can use.
- 167** Advocacy services for adults are well developed and funded. Contracts are in place with the Citizens Advice Bureau and other agencies for the provision of advocacy on a personal and representative basis. Vulnerable people have access to independent advice and representation.

## Outcomes for service users

- 168** Durham's Supporting People programme is delivering positive outcomes for vulnerable local people. The programme is changing to provide a broader range of support that is more flexible and more closely designed to address individual housing related support needs. Choice has increased and there are significant changes in capacity for some client groups. Support planning is mixed and the lack of suitable accommodation to enable service users to move on is a significant constraint.
- 169** Individual service users are benefiting from changes that the Supporting People programme is bringing. Benefits include:
- extension of floating support services for teenage parents across the south of the County;
  - expansion of Home Improvement Agency services for disabled and older people to cover the whole county, with new services in Wear Valley, Durham and Chester-le-Street and Teesdale;
  - re-modelling of a range of services to better meet individual's needs;
  - a new Extra Care scheme for older people with dementia in Sedgefield;
  - Supported Lodgings scheme for care leavers;
  - a wider range of youth homelessness services; and
  - wider availability of floating support for people suffering domestic violence.
- 170** Since 2003, 335 units of new service provision have been introduced. These include:
- 243 units of extra care accommodation for frail elderly people;
  - 47 units of accommodation based support for older people;
  - 25 units of floating support for teenage parents;
  - 12 units of accommodation based support for young people at risk;
  - 6 units of accommodation based support for single homeless people; and
  - 2 units of accommodation based support for people with mental health problems.

Development is in line with strategic priorities.

- 171** Services that were not strategically relevant or were of unacceptable quality have been decommissioned. In total five schemes were affected with the funding for two schemes transferring to different sources. Service users no longer receive poor quality services and ineligible services are no longer supported.

- 172** Service users are benefiting from improvements in service quality. Many of the Supporting People funded schemes have made significant qualitative improvements as a result of the review, validation and action planning process using the QAF as template for focused, structured development. Service reviews have assessed all service providers against a range of quality measures including health and safety, protection from abuse, involvement in service delivery and recognition of diverse needs. Fifty-one action plans have been issued to improve quality standards and overall improvements are evidenced in 20 schemes. Five services still falling below overall QAF level C rating are being supported and improvements tightly monitored. Better quality services increase individual's quality of life and life chances.
- 173** Over 20 services were remodelled following service review to provide more services or ones that better address vulnerable client needs. Additional units of support through expansion of floating support and accommodation based services across sectors as a result of re-modelling. For example:
- a service for young people at risk has changed to ensure that young people leave an accommodation based service with more support in the community;
  - a failing floating support service was remodelled into an accommodation based service to meet the needs of young people accessing the service; and
  - floating support is now available in some district areas for older people across tenure rather than only to specific sheltered accommodation and more units of support have been made available.
- 174** Choice has increased for service users. For example service users can now choose between accommodation based and floating support services, particularly for young people's services, older people and learning disability. A range of specialist and generic schemes are available, including some that offer different levels of service for floating support tailored to individual needs.
- 175** A local connection barrier is not placed in the way of vulnerable people accessing services. The Commissioning Body confirmed that a 'local connection' requirement is not necessary to access Supporting People funded services.
- 176** A number of significant service capacity changes can be identified including:
- floating support for teenage parents has increased from five units in April 2003 to 30 units;
  - frail elderly extra care services have increased by 243 units due to the implementation of six extra care schemes; and
  - remodelling of accommodation based to floating support for older people, offering cross tenure services of approximately 8,000 units.

Overall, services tied to accommodation have fallen from 18,611 units to 10,504 units, whereas floating support has increased from 3,050 to 11,333 units or 52 per cent of current provision. Floating support increases choice and flexibility of provision by enabling people to access housing-related support without moving home.

- 177 The quality of support planning is mixed. All service users now have a personal support plan. In general the standard of support planning is adequate although there are examples of support plans not having a clear focus on increasing or maintaining an individuals' ability to live independently. There were other examples of periodic reviews of support plans not being carried out, or carried out on time. Move on is not always being addressed through the support planning process. Training has been provided to some service providers by Supporting People team members and good practice examples from within and outside the county have been shared. In addition two Inclusive Forums have focused on the value and methods of support planning. However, other than service review, there is no mechanism in place to ensure support plans are reviewed on time and used appropriately. These deficiencies limit the impact services have on the individual and on the programme itself.
- 178 The lack of suitable accommodation or the necessary support is a significant issue preventing people moving on to other accommodation when they are ready to do so. Individuals have difficulties obtaining tenancies from social housing providers particularly for unpopular groups such as substance users. Two out of every three service providers responding to the Audit Commission survey indicated they were dissatisfied with arrangements for their service users to move on. The potential of the programme to benefit vulnerable service users is reduced if services are full and people cannot move on to suitable accommodation. This lack of move on accommodation also silts up existing provision making it impossible for new users to gain access to the services.
- 179 Move on has been recognised as an issue by the partnership and service providers but it not clear how effective their actions are. A Homelessness Action Partnership is in place which is a partnership of seven District Councils, Durham County Council, Supporting People and Centrepoint. The partnership has developed an action plan for 2005-2010 to co-ordinate and develop activity. It is not however clear whether the issue of move on has been quantified for the Supporting People programme, how mainstream social housing policies have been challenged, and what impact partnership activities are having. Action is being taken but individuals continue to experience problems.
- 180 Good performance management arrangements are in place but they do not fully capture the outcomes the programme delivers for service users. National key performance indicators and indicators on service provider performance are collected and reported to the Core Strategy Group and Commissioning Body. However, there are no refined indicators that identify outcomes by individual client group. The DCLG is carrying out work nationally that will help the Council to introduce a nationally agreed suite of outcome based performance indicators. Without such a system, it is difficult for the programme to monitor trends or effectively measure achievement.
- 181 Inspectors made visits to a range of service providers, including older people's services, a unit for teenage mothers, hostels for people with mental health issues, and many others. At each service, we heard stories about individual tenants, and enclose these as examples.

**182** Case study 1 - Miss A

Miss A is a teenage single parent setting up home for the first time. She initially needed housing related support to claim relevant benefits and to maintain her tenancy. This included teaching Miss A how to budget, plan her shopping and manage her bills. Following a chip-pan fire, she was given support to claim a one-off discretionary grant to redecorate and replace damaged kitchen equipment.

Miss A is coping very well; she has completed all the goals identified on her Support Plan and was comfortable to recently move on from the support service.

**183** Case study 2 - Mr C

Mr C has cerebral palsy, is wheel-chair dependent and has mild learning disabilities. He lived in residential accommodation for a number of years before moving into a shared living scheme.

When he first moved in he had few of the skills required to live independently. He can manage his own personal care but didn't have any household management skills such as cooking, cleaning, laundry or shopping. Since moving in, Mr C has developed many of these skills. He can cook light meals and snacks using the microwave. He can use the dishwasher and washing machine, and is able to contribute to housework and cleaning.

Whilst living in residential care, Mr C always dreamed of living independently but thought it wouldn't be possible. He really enjoys living more independently and appreciates the freedom and privacy it affords him at the same time as offering security and support.

**Summary**

**184** Overall, we judge that Durham is making good progress implementing and developing the Supporting People programme.

**185** A robust decision making framework is in place for the programme with partnership structures that are well established and include councillors. The Commissioning Body is showing leadership and is not afraid of difficult decisions. Delivery arrangements are strong. There are good relations and communications with service providers. Sound eligibility and value for money policies have been developed and contract management is robust. A clear five-year strategy is in place developed on a good understanding of local needs. Gaps in information are being filled. Performance and risks are well managed. Legacy services have been rigorously reviewed ahead of the required DCLG deadline. Improvements have been achieved in the quality of services and significant efficiency savings delivered. Durham takes the lead on collating cross authority benchmarking data which provides reliable cost comparisons.

- 186** Positive outcomes are being delivered for vulnerable people in the county as housing-related support provision is reshaped to provide greater flexibility and choice that better meet the needs of Durham's communities. Some new services have been developed, others expanded and some remodelled in line with the strategic priorities of the programme. A strong focus on Equality and Diversity issues is provided by a sub-group of the Core Strategy Group, although measures to demonstrate how effective it is are not in place. A full suite of leaflets has been produced and is available in other formats and languages on demand.
- 187** Areas in need of improvement include improving the engagement of the PCT, consistent attendance of all District Councils in the governance bodies and clarification of the representation of service providers and users on governance partnership groups. The Council's website is not easy for vulnerable people to navigate and the local directory of housing related support services is basic. Issues around the physical accessibility of schemes providing services are still to be addressed. Leaflet information is not always available in council offices throughout the county and enquiries were not always adequately signposted. Support planning is mixed and the lack of suitable accommodation to enable service users to move on from accommodation based services is a significant constraint.

## What are the prospects for improvement?

### What is the track record in delivering improvement?

- 188** The Council has a very positive track record on improvement. There are clear changes in the level, breadth and nature of provision that provide a greater range of support for vulnerable people in Durham. Value for money improvements are also evident.
- 189** Durham's Supporting People programme has a good record of delivering on time. DCLG implementation milestones have been achieved in the required timescales. All legacy services have been robustly reviewed within the timescale set by DCLG and without additional support. The five-year strategy was developed along with stakeholders, approved by all partners and submitted to DCLG by the end of March 2005.
- 190** In line with strategic priorities, the programme is broadening and extending the pattern of housing related support provision in the county. A total of 335 units of new service provision have been introduced including services for frail elderly people, people with mental health problems, single homeless people, young parents and other young people at risk. Services continue to be delivered and expanded within a shrinking budget. No services have been lost.
- 191** Services are being reshaped to meet the needs of service users. For example a service for people with mental health problems moved from shared living to self contained accommodation in a more suitable location, another remodelled from accommodation based provision to floating support available across tenures. Services have been developed to help vulnerable people through the various stages of crisis, from intensive accommodation based provision to lighter touch floating support in the first few months of living independently. Provision for people suffering domestic violence has increased and three new refuges are to be opened. There has been a strong shift from accommodation based support to more flexible floating support which is not restricted by tenure.
- 192** In addition there has been considerable progress at making housing related support services available across the whole of the county. Extending Home Improvement Agency coverage is the best example of this with new HIA services in Wear Valley, Durham and Chester-le-Street and Teesdale. Another example is the extension of floating support for teenage parents across the south of the County.
- 193** There is clear evidence that spending is moving towards client groups identified as priorities in the five-year strategy. In 2003/04, 32 per cent of the grant was spent on services for people with learning disabilities and 32 per cent on services for older people. In 2006/07 these amounts had fallen to 26.6 per cent and 27 per cent of the grant. Services for single homeless people, extra care for older people, young parents and home improvement agencies have seen increases in the percentage of the grant allocated to them.

- 194 Through working in partnership with District Councils on the Homeless Action Partnership, a joint protocol has been developed to provide joined up services to younger people at risk and a county-wide family mediation service has been introduced. Supporting People is contributing to other partnership work to address the needs of local people.
- 195 Improvements in value for money have been delivered by the programme through service and sector reviews. For example average accommodation unit costs are down from £229.43 to £215.42 a week. In addition the quality of services provided has increased.
- 196 The Supporting People partnership is tackling difficult issues to improve value for money and outcomes from the Supporting People grant. Examples include the withdrawal of grant for ineligible care services and the extensive older people's care and alarm services which are to be tested against the market as part of the Value Improvement Project, for which Durham's Supporting People programme secured additional DCLG financial support.
- 197 Progress on the Value Improvement Project has fallen behind its original timetable. In part this is due to difficulties experienced in partnership working and in part due to changing procurement arrangements to implement the programme. The impact however increases the risk of weakening support for the project.
- 198 Some areas of need remain unmet and other areas have yet to have needs fully assessed. For example people with alcohol problems and offenders have unmet need, support for teenage parents is not county-wide, and the housing related support needs of gypsies and travellers are still being assessed. The Supporting People programme is aware of these gaps. With limited funding available for the development of services, the Supporting People programme undertakes a prioritisation exercise each year to ensure priorities are relevant and reflect the latest information available.
- 199 Supporting People operates in an environment that has a positive track record and is supportive of improvement. Durham County Council is a high rated four-star council which is improving well according to the Audit Commission's comprehensive performance assessment. In addition Supporting People operates alongside adult social services which was rated by CSCI in 2005 as serving most people well with excellent capacity for improvement. Supporting People programme operates in an environment of ambition and achievement.

### **How is performance managed?**

- 200 Performance management arrangements are well developed. The programme has clear aims based on solid baseline information, action plans in place to deliver improvements and a comprehensive system to manage performance. Financial and risk management are both strong. The Commissioning Body is showing leadership and an appetite to tackle difficult issues. However, estimates are not made of the detailed resources needed to deliver action plans and user focused outcome measures need to be further developed to track programme improvements.

- 201** The five-year strategy sets a clear direction with explicit priorities. It is based on a detailed analysis of robust housing related support needs information. Although gaps exist, the Council recognises where the gaps are and is taking action to address them. Its priorities fit well with Durham CC corporate priorities for vulnerable. It is clear what the programme is trying to achieve.
- 202** A robust system is in place to review priorities in consultation with partners and stakeholders aligned to budget setting. Priority setting meetings begin in September 2006 to enable priorities to be renewed in the light of new information, emerging needs and linked to budgets. The programme is not yet clear what its lowest priorities are which, although sensitive, it will need to be clear about if services are to shrink following any additional budget reductions.
- 203** The Supporting People programme is improving its information base. It is actively seeking to establish the likely future demands for housing related support by carrying out service-user surveys and engaging with other involved groups, for example, relatives and carers, other care agencies, service providers and service-user forums, thus ensuring that appropriate planning can be put in place to meet future demands. Other work includes additional research is being carried to understand the housing related support needs of gypsies and travellers, the biggest minority group in the county. Better information will inform priority setting.
- 204** Planning is good. The 2006/07 Action Plan clearly identifies the actions required to address the issues and priorities identified for the programme for that year. At the team level, there is a team plan which identifies core improvement activities of partnership working, outcomes, targets, and performance indicators. Individuals are linked into the process with individual plans which set out the key activities that person is required to carry out. Work is well co-ordinated and managers and team members know what they need to focus on.
- 205** Outcomes identified in plans are not always SMART. For example outcomes for new and remodelled services are identified as the development of particular schemes. They are not focused on what that scheme will achieve for a particular client group or the individuals who receive support. Targets for the team plan focused on process such as holding a certain number of meetings, production of newsletter. Targets are measuring process rather than outcomes, for example what is the meeting or newsletter intended to achieve.
- 206** Overall financial management of the programme is strong. There are regular reports to the governing partnership groups and medium term plans which include estimates of savings to be achieved and spending on projects to meet priorities. With support from corporate finance, the programme take a medium term view on budget planning to ensure books balance and any variations are identified early. Arrangements are in place to transfer the cost of ineligible services to their proper source. A staged transfer of funding has been agreed between Supporting People and Adults Services budgets. Phasing has been built into medium term financial plans.

- 207** Resources are not, however, identified at a lower level. Resources to deliver actions within the Annual Action Plan or the team plan are not estimated. The plan has been developed through discussion across the partnership and agreed that actions are capable of being delivered within resources available. However, there is a risk that plans will not be delivered if resources have not been adequately assessed and sourced.
- 208** A broad, detailed system is in place to monitor performance of the Supporting People programme. It measures progress across a range of indicators including contract compliance, service provider performance, measures for Supporting People team performance, financial and non financial indicators. Further work is required to refine indicators to measure outcomes for service users, joint targets with partner agencies, and collate information on relevant, existing indicators. However performance management arrangements do provide a good picture of what the programme is achieving. Progress is reported quarterly to line managers, the Core Strategy Group and the Commissioning Body with detailed annual reviews. Progress is being well monitored.
- 209** Proposed changes will further improve the programme. They include:
- remodelling services to older people to provide consistent standards of housing related support, choice and removing the tenure restriction currently operating;
  - greater emphasis on equality, diversity, support planning and the physical accessibility of services in the 2006-2009 service review programme;
  - rolling out across the county local service delivery models developed in Easington and Sedgfield which include:
    - a single assessment process for Supporting People and Social Care; and
    - neighbourhood teams for care and support services including housing allocations; and
  - a protocol covering how all agencies work with offenders.
- 210** There is a sound business case for remodelling alarm and warden services. Currently these services cost £4.1 million, 24 different service providers offer 60 different types of service levels and over 140 different pricing structures. Much existing service is historically tied to tenure and not strongly focused of meeting individual needs. A more streamlined approach with different and flexible levels of service is proposed. Services are currently being tendered. This will transform the way services are provided to around 20,000 older people in the county providing choice and consistency.

- 211** Political risks mean that the Commissioning Body project manage the detail of the VIP Project. A tried and trusted project management methodology is being used to develop the project. This means that there is a clear decision making structure for the project, milestones, clear plans, delivery and evaluation mechanisms. However, progress has been slowed because of differing opinions on how services should be delivered. There are big political risks associated with changing high quality, valued and subsidised local services. The Commissioning Body is involving itself in the detail of the project rather than fulfilling a strategic, commissioning role.
- 212** Management of the project can be improved in some areas. Under PRINCE 2<sup>12</sup> methodology one of the three main decision making roles is that of a senior user representing the interests of people who will use the new service. This is currently inappropriately filled by a District Council representative. Secondly, changes are being implemented across the board on a specific date without any piloting. There are valid reasons why this needs to be the case with the complexity of tendering, operating two systems and working across boundaries. Detailed implementation plans have not yet been drawn up. However, with this major change affecting a huge number of vulnerable older people, unforeseen and unexpected issues are certain to arise and it is important that the project has measures in place to deal with these.
- 213** Risk management of the Supporting People programme, in general however, is well developed. An independent risk consultant has assisted in the identification of risks to the Supporting People programme. Risks and actions to mitigate them are recorded in the departmental and corporate risk registers which are regularly reviewed. Risks to the VIP project have also been thoroughly assessed. Risks are well managed.
- 214** There are a number of examples where the Commissioning Body has shown leadership to drive the programme forward to improve services. In addition to setting up the structures needed to deliver the programme, action has been taken to address ineligible services to people with a learning disability and to older people in the form of extra care. The Supporting People programme is active in the homeless action partnership to prevent, monitor and improve services to homeless people. In addition, against competition, the Council won additional funding to develop a Value Improvement Project to transform care and warden services for older people. This is not an easy project, particularly in a two tier council environment where District Councils are the main suppliers of services.
- 215** Learning and spreading good practice are essential features of the programme. Durham play an active part in the Supporting People Regional Improvement Group and cross authority group and take a lead in some areas, such as benchmarking. Durham, through the VIP project, has close links with the Regional Centre of Excellence for Procurement, piloting changes in the way services are procured to inform good practice and assist others. Internally good practice, for example on support planning, is shared with service providers and within the team through team meetings. Good practice is identified and shared.

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<sup>12</sup> PRINCE 2 - PRojects IN a Controlled Environment 2 is a project management methodology recommended by government.

### **Is there capacity to improve?**

- 216** Strengths outweigh limitations on the Council's capacity to improve. An effective partnership framework has been established. It is supported by a skilled and motivated team. The programme has reliable IT support and can call upon specialist expertise, such as finance and HR support, from the corporate centre. External funding is being attracted to areas and services connected to the programme. Robust procurement policies and procedures for the Supporting People programme are in their final stages of development. However, some aspects of partnership working act as a brake on the speed of progress.
- 217** An effective partnership framework has been established to deliver the programme with robust administrative support arrangements. The Supporting People partnerships have brought agencies together to deliver improvements to services for vulnerable people. There is a clear strategy and priorities from which services can be planned and developed.
- 218** However the Commissioning Body does not always function as one. There are instances where needs information has not been shared with the programme. The PCT is not currently well engaged with the programme although re-organisation offers potential for this to be improved. The VIP project has tested the ability of the Commissioning Body to work in true partnership and ensured that detailed and systematic decision making processes have been developed and followed to make progress.
- 219** A stable team supports the administration and delivery of the programme. There is a competent and motivated team with the necessary experience and skills. A relatively, low turnover of staff and low sickness levels have contributed to their ability to deliver. Team structure has been changed to meet the changing needs of the programme, including the introduction of new IT support. Staff have area and specialist functions. Effective supervision and development systems are in place. Training is available to staff where there is an identified need. Staff have undergone project management training and procurement training. Skills are shared ensuring a strong and knowledgeable team.
- 220** A new, more efficient, IT system has been procured to support the programme. The IT system has enabled savings to be achieved in staffing resources. It has all the features needed to support the delivery of the programme offers potential for development. Reliable IT provides a solid foundation for administration of the programme.
- 221** Additional specialist expertise and resources are available to the team on demand. Services from the finance, IT, legal, communications and HR departments are available when needed. Good quality IT support is available to the programme.

- 222** A programme of training and workshops has been developed for the coming year. The programme offers service providers and Supporting People stakeholders the opportunity to increase their awareness and knowledge of particular areas for the Supporting People programme. There is no specific induction or developmental programme for Commissioning Body members, although new representatives receive a briefing and relevant documents. This is important as membership of the group is changing quite considerably. Following reorganisation Probation has a new representative. Reorganisation of the PCT structure should result in a new representative. In addition a number of District Councils have or are in the process of disposing of their housing stock via Large Scale Voluntary Transfer or have set up Arms Length Management Organisations. This has and will result in further membership changes. Without a good understanding of the Supporting People programme, members cannot contribute fully to debate and decision making.
- 223** The 2007/08 grant settlement is better than expected. Grant of £14,588,081 has been allocated for 2007/08 which is an increase over 2006/07. Plans have been drawn up on the basis of an expected settlement of around £13.6 million. This allows some room for new service development or inflationary increases to sustain existing services. Increased funds will be considered by the Commissioning Body as part of their reconsideration of priorities.
- 224** The Council recognises that Durham Strategic Partnership has not functioned as effectively as it might in the past. A new, more cohesive and better co-ordinated structure is being proposed. It offers potential for improved support to the Supporting People programme.
- 225** Robust procurement arrangements for Supporting People are in their final stages of development. A draft commissioning and decommissioning policy was developed in June 2006 and will be finalised once DCLG procurement guidance is issued. The policy provides a framework to guide the Commissioning Body in planning and commissioning new Supporting People services. Actions to identify issues and address barriers within the policy document have been informed by involvement in national and regional procurement work and experience in the local Value Improvement Project. Durham Supporting People have participated in regional procurement seminars with DCLG and the regional Centres of Procurement Excellence, participated in the north east procurement Health and Social Care workstream identifying future procurement projects for Supporting People, and worked with the Public Private Partnership Programme to develop procurement training materials. Durham Supporting People programme is therefore closely connected to the latest thinking on procurement for the Supporting People programme.
- 226** The Supporting People programme is active in attracting external funding to the areas and services that support the programme. There are a number of examples including £80,000 from DCLG towards a family mediation service, £83,000 from DCLG towards the VIP project and £250,000 Neighbourhood Renewal Funding towards a homeless service. Not all bids are successful but it is clear that opportunities are being explored. Other external funding supports the programme.

## Summary

- 227** We consider that the Supporting People programme has excellent prospects for improving on the progress made so far.
- 228** The programme has a positive track record of delivering improvements. The profile of housing-related support provision is changing significantly, services have been extended and gaps in services are being filled. Robust service reviews have been completed on schedule. Significant value for money improvements have been achieved and improved outcomes for service users are evident.
- 229** Clear overarching aims and priorities are in place with plans to deliver both strategic and operational improvements. These plans address the right areas and include substantial change to modernise services, removing the link to tenure and matching services to needs. It does not, however, identify the inability of vulnerable people to move on when they are ready to as a significant issue. Resources to deliver plans need to be more clearly identified. Performance is well managed although more needs to be done to fully capture the outcomes that the programme delivers for service users. Finance and risk management is strong.
- 230** Financial management and human resource planning is good. Significant additional funding has been attracted to areas and services that are connected to the programme enabling more to be achieved. Partnership working is challenging for the programme and in some circumstances stifles progress. Robust procurement arrangements are in their final stages of development informed by close involvement with national and regional procurement work.

## Appendix 1 – Performance indicators

### Demographic information

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

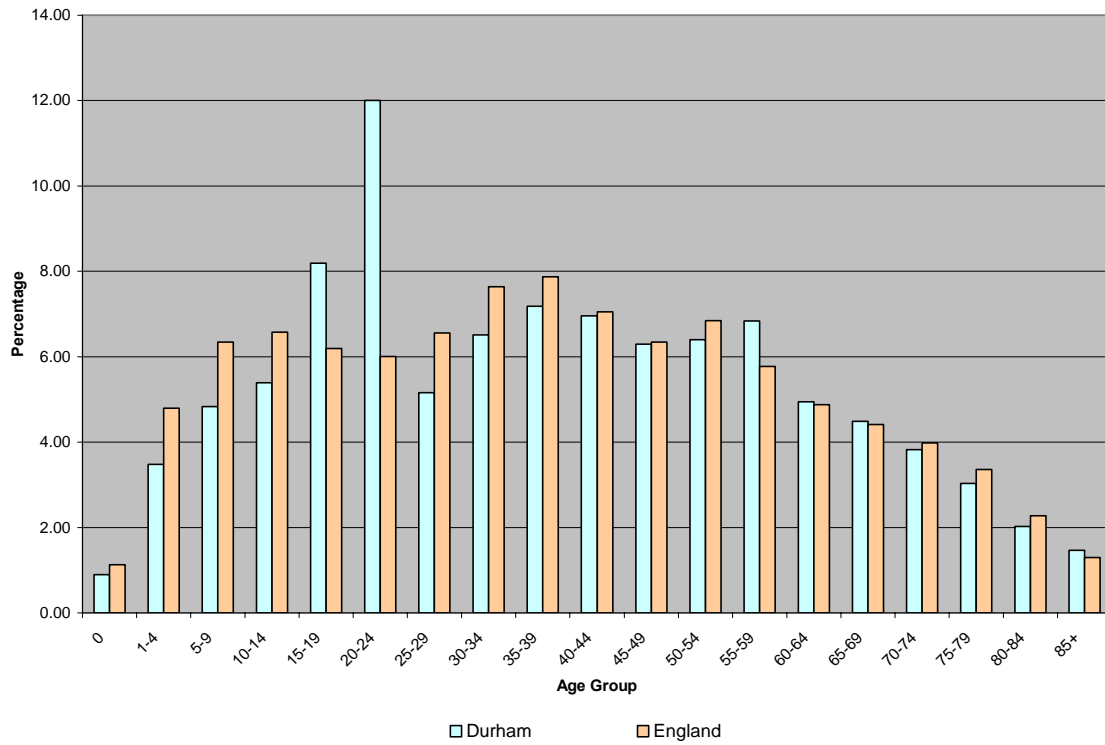
Measure	Durham	England
Population (mid-2004) <sup>13</sup>	496,800	57,851,100
Percentage of the population aged 65+ (mid-2004)	19.7	18.5
Percentage from minority ethnic groups (all groups other than White – British 2004)	1.0	10.44
Percentage unemployment (claimant count rate) <sup>14</sup>	2.4	2.4
Deprivation Index (1 highest, 354 lowest) <sup>15</sup>	160	-

<sup>13</sup> Source: midyear population estimates (2004)

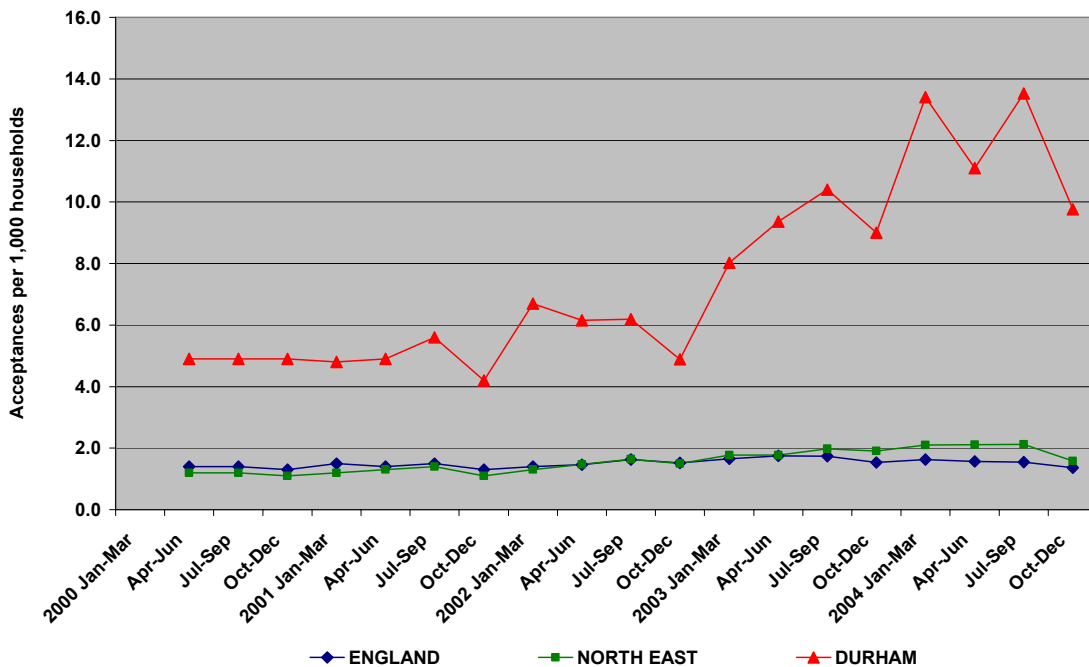
<sup>14</sup> Source: claimant count with rates and proportions (April 2006)

<sup>15</sup> Source: deprivation Index 2004, average ward score for the authority.

**Percentage of the population<sup>16</sup> in each age group compared with England**



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



<sup>16</sup> Source: midyear population estimates (2004)

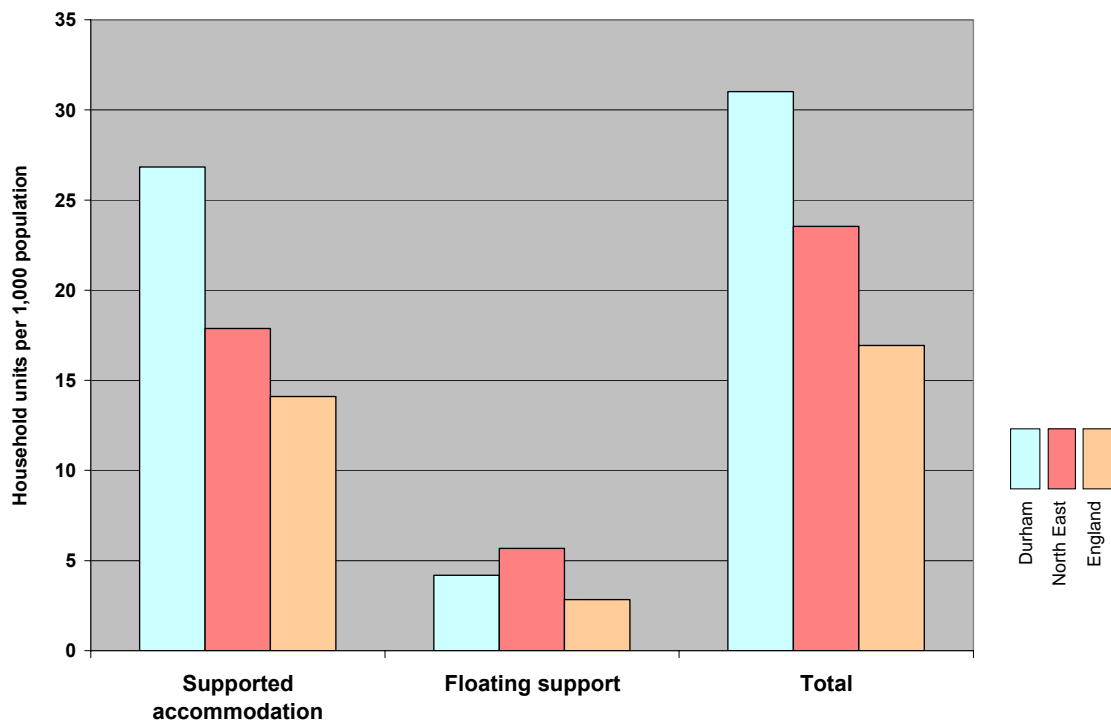
## Performance information

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.

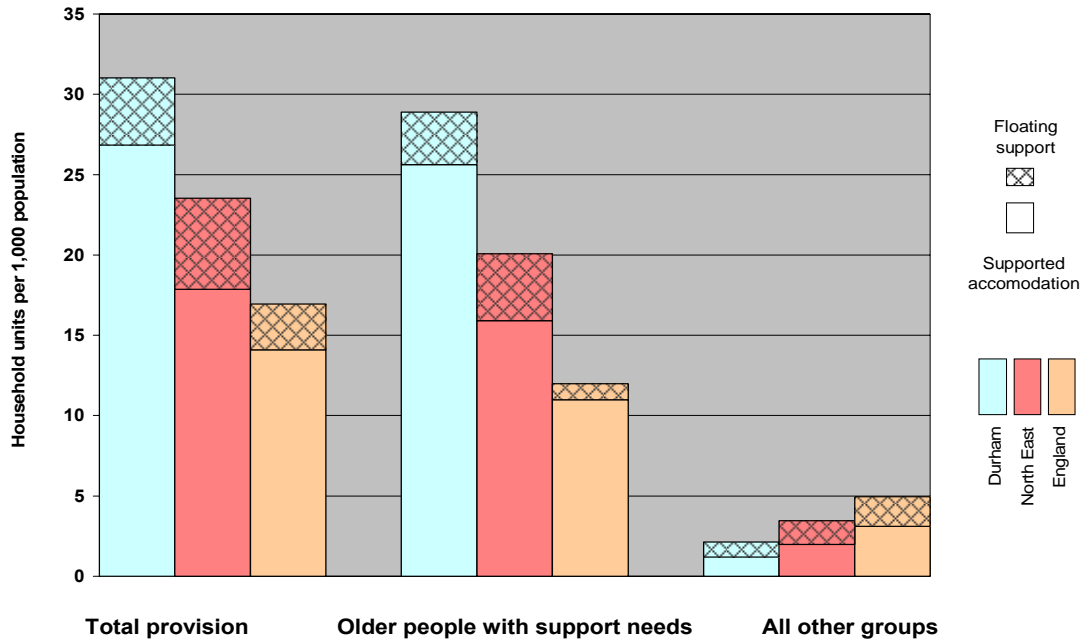
## Supporting People data

### Total service provision funded through Supporting People<sup>17</sup>

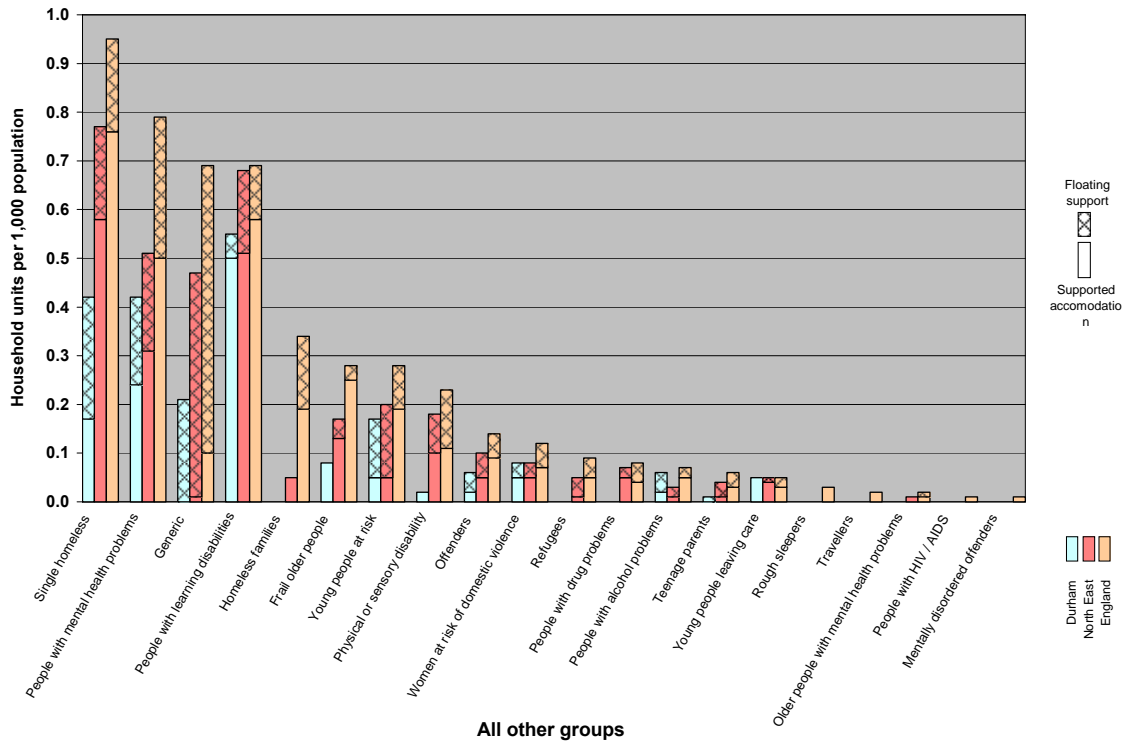


<sup>17</sup> Source: Platinum cut data, ODPM November 2003. Excludes community alarms, home improvement agencies, leasehold schemes and pipeline services.

### Services for older people with support needs compared with the region and England<sup>18</sup>



### Services for other groups compared with the region and England<sup>19</sup>



<sup>18</sup> Source: Platinum cut data, ODPM November 2003. Excludes community alarms, home improvement agencies, leasehold schemes and pipeline services.

<sup>19</sup> Source: Platinum cut data, ODPM November 2003. Excludes community alarms, home improvement agencies, leasehold schemes and pipeline services.

**Funding for Supporting People<sup>20</sup>**

<b>Durham</b>	<b>2003/04</b>	<b>2004/05</b>	<b>2005/06</b>
Final Supporting People grant	£ 15,033,501	£ 15,313,772	£ 14,615,606
Pipeline allocation	£ 520,996	£ 1,085,414	£ -
Administration grant	£ 502,602	£ 525,508	£ 420,406

**Unit costs of Supporting People services in 2003/04 (£ per week)<sup>21</sup>**

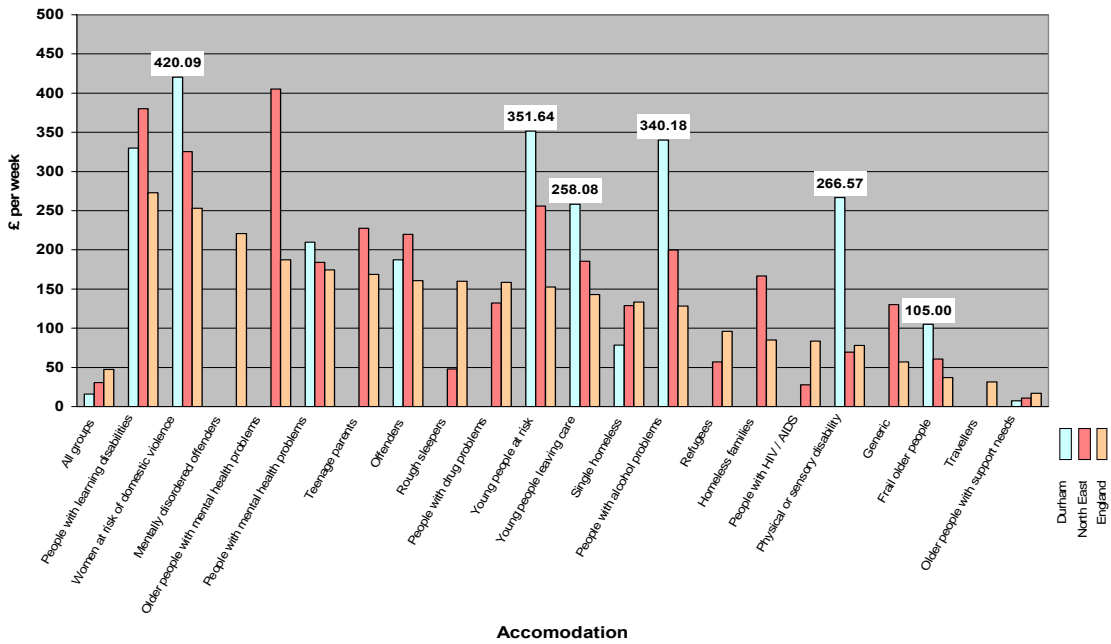
	<b>Per head of population</b>	<b>Per unit</b>	<b>Per unit excluding community alarms</b>	<b>Per unit excluding community alarms and sheltered housing</b>
Durham	£ 0.59	£ 12.48	£ 13.25	£ 29.65
North East	£ 0.72	£ 17.86	£ 24.71	£ 62.45
England	£ 0.70	£ 28.30	£ 34.71	£ 76.37

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

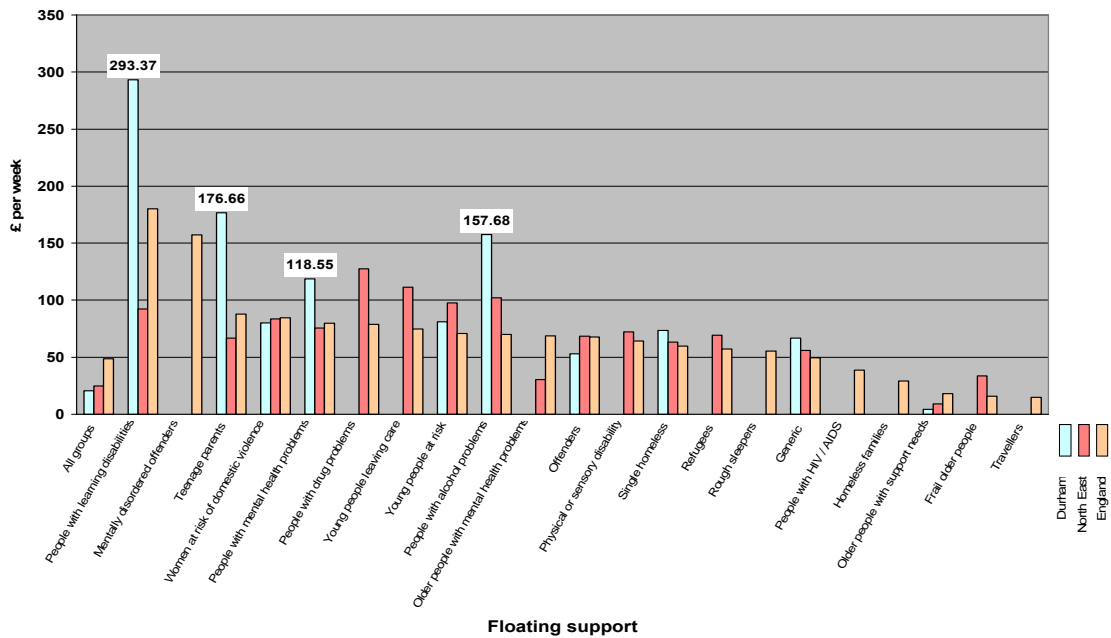
<sup>20</sup> Source: Grant allocations, ODPM.

<sup>21</sup> Source: Platinum cut data, ODPM November 2003

**Unit costs of supported accommodation compared with the region and England (labels show costs in the highest 25 per cent)<sup>22</sup>**



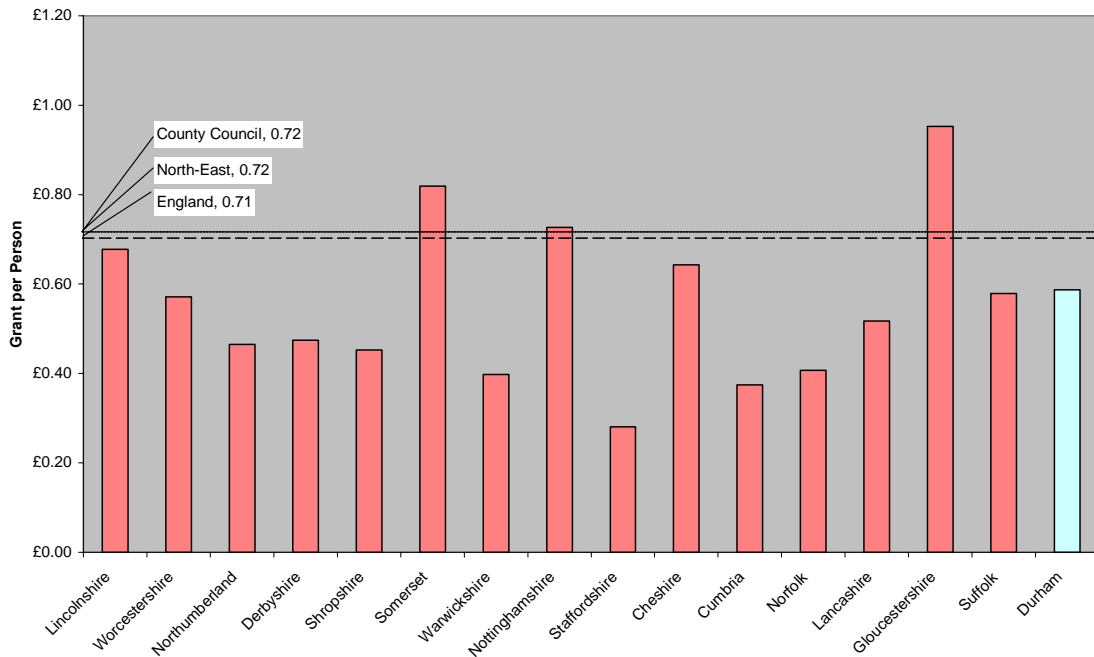
**Unit costs of floating support services compared with the region and England (labels show costs in the highest 25 per cent)<sup>23</sup>**



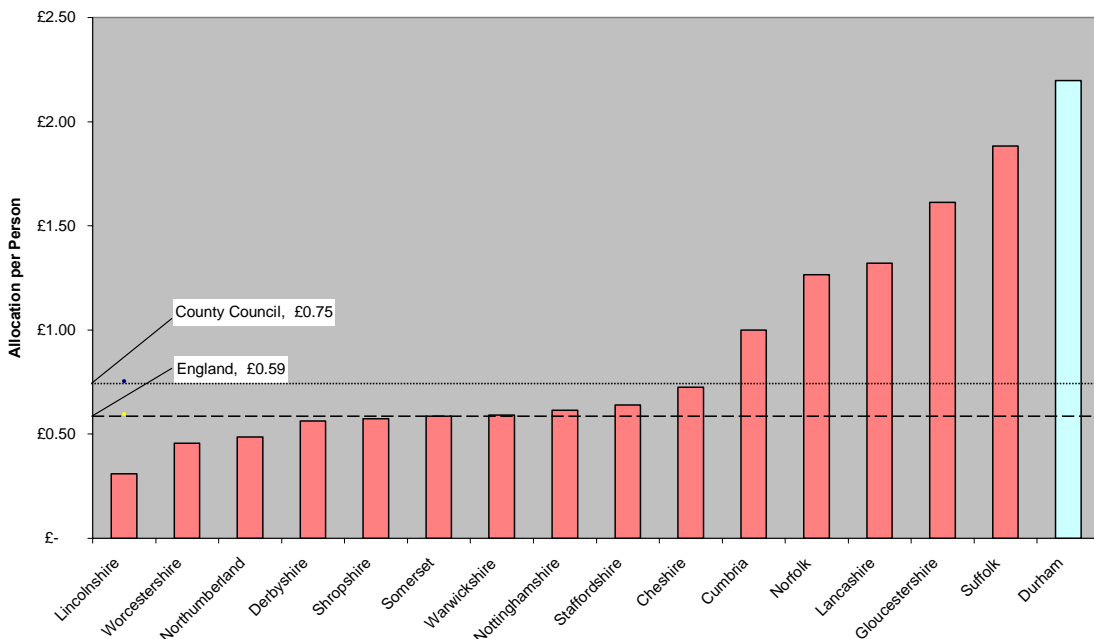
<sup>22</sup> Source: Platinum cut data, ODPM November 2003. Excludes community alarms, home improvement agencies, leasehold schemes and pipeline services.

<sup>23</sup> 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 neighbours<sup>24</sup>, all county councils and all English councils (2004/05)**



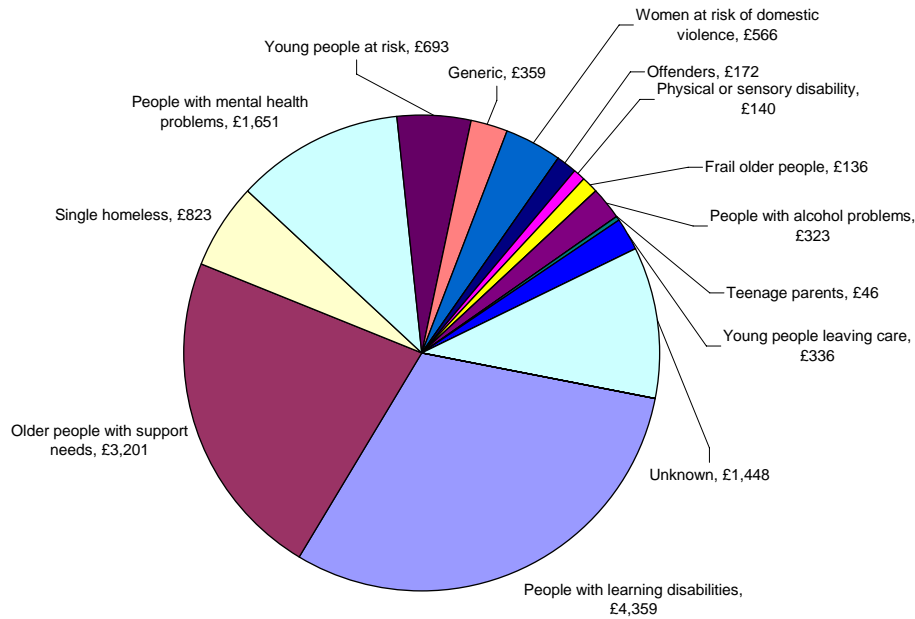
**Pipeline allocation per head of population compared with nearest neighbours<sup>25</sup>, all county councils and all English councils**



<sup>24</sup> A comparator group of similar councils.

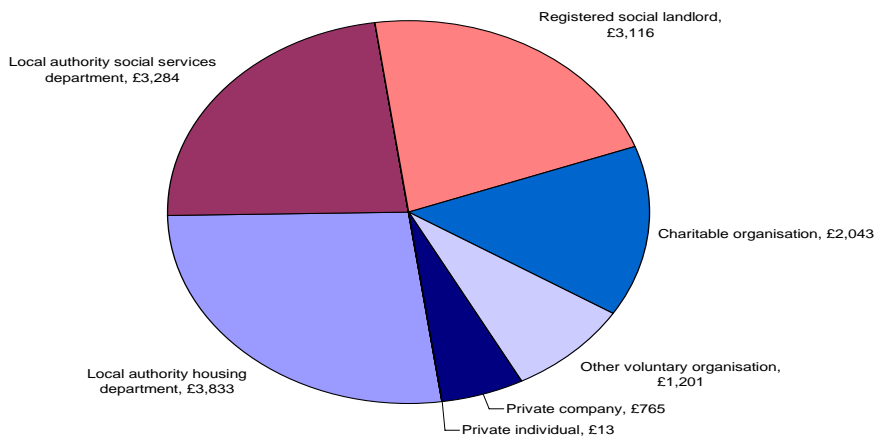
<sup>25</sup> A comparator group of similar councils.

Share of spending between user groups (£000s)<sup>26</sup>



Durham  
Funding by user group

Share of spending between types of provider (£000s)<sup>27</sup>



Durham  
Funding by provider type

<sup>26</sup> Source: Platinum cut data, ODPM November 2003. Excludes community alarms, home improvement agencies, leasehold schemes and pipeline services.

<sup>27</sup> Source: Platinum cut data, ODPM November 2003. Excludes community alarms, home improvement agencies, leasehold schemes and pipeline services.

## Social Services star ratings November 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	Excellent	★★★ (2)
Children's Services	Most	Promising	

## 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.

Durham	
Significantly above average (●●●●●)	Adults with mental health problems helped to live at home (C31) Admissions of older people to residential/nursing care (C26) Adults with physical disabilities helped to live at home (C29) Adults with learning disabilities helped to live at home (C30) Employment, education and training for care leavers (A4)
Above average (●●●●)	Adults and older people receiving a statement of their needs and how they will be met (D39) Admissions of supported residents aged 18-64 to residential/nursing care (C27) Older people helped to live at home (C32) Delayed transfers of care (D41) Percentage of items of equipment and adaptations delivered within seven working days (D54)

<b>Durham</b>	
Average (***)	Emergency psychiatric re-admissions (A6) Adults and older people receiving direct payments at 31 March per 100,000 population aged 18 or over (C51) Physically disabled and sensory impaired users who said that their opinions and preferences were always taken into account (D57) Physically disabled and sensory impaired users who said that they can contact social services easily (D58)
Below average (**)	Percentage change on previous year in total emergency admissions to hospital (A5) Adults and older clients receiving a review as a percentage of those receiving a service (D40)
Significantly below average (*)	

### Best value performance indicators

#### Performance on relevant indicators in 2003/04 compared with county councils

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

<b>Durham</b>	
Within the best 25 per cent	The level of the equality standard for local government to which the authority conforms (BV2) Domestic violence refuge places (BV176)
Average	
Within the worst 25 per cent	

**District council performance on relevant indicators in 2003/04**

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

<b>Chester-le-Street</b>	
Within the best 25 per cent	Length of stay in bed and breakfast accommodation (BV183a) Length of stay in hostel accommodation (BV183b) Council homes which did not meet the decent homes standard (BV184a)
Average	The level of the equality standard for local government to which the authority conforms (BV2) Energy efficiency of local authority owned dwellings (BV63)
Within the worst 25 per cent	Average time for processing new housing benefit claims (BV78a) Domestic violence refuge places (BV176)
<b>Durham City</b>	
Within the best 25 per cent	
Average	The level of the equality standard for local government to which the authority conforms (BV2) Energy efficiency of local authority owned dwellings (BV63) Length of stay in bed and breakfast accommodation (BV183a) Length of stay in hostel accommodation (BV183b) Council homes which did not meet the decent homes standard (BV184a) Average time for processing new housing benefit claims (BV78a) Domestic violence refuge places (BV176)
Within the worst 25 per cent	

<b>Derwentside DC</b>	
Within the best 25 per cent	Length of stay in bed and breakfast accommodation (BV183a) Length of stay in hostel accommodation (BV183b) Domestic violence refuge places (BV176)
Average	The level of the equality standard for local government to which the authority conforms (BV2) Energy efficiency of local authority owned dwellings (BV63) Council homes which did not meet the decent homes standard (BV184a) Average time for processing new housing benefit claims (BV78a)
Within the worst 25 per cent	
<b>Easington DC</b>	
Within the best 25 per cent	Length of stay in bed and breakfast accommodation (BV183a) Length of stay in hostel accommodation (BV183b)
Average	The level of the equality standard for local government to which the authority conforms (BV2) Domestic violence refuge places (BV176)
Within the worst 25 per cent	Energy efficiency of local authority owned dwellings (BV63) Council homes which did not meet the decent homes standard (BV184a) Average time for processing new housing benefit claims (BV78a)

<b>Sedgefield</b>	
Within the best 25 per cent	Energy efficiency of local authority owned dwellings (BV63) Length of stay in hostel accommodation (BV183b)
Average	The level of the equality standard for local government to which the authority conforms (BV2) Length of stay in bed and breakfast accommodation (BV183a) Average time for processing new housing benefit claims (BV78a) Domestic violence refuge places (BV176)
Within the worst 25 per cent	Council homes which did not meet the decent homes standard (BV184a)
<b>Teesdale</b>	
Within the best 25 per cent	Length of stay in hostel accommodation (BV183b)
Average	The level of the equality standard for local government to which the authority conforms (BV2)
Within the worst 25 per cent	Energy efficiency of local authority owned dwellings (BV63) Length of stay in bed and breakfast accommodation (BV183a) Council homes which did not meet the decent homes standard (BV184a) Average time for processing new housing benefit claims (BV78a) Domestic violence refuge places (BV176)

<b>Wear Valley</b>	
Within the best 25 per cent	Length of stay in bed and breakfast accommodation (BV183a) Length of stay in hostel accommodation (BV183b)
Average	The level of the equality standard for local government to which the authority conforms (BV2) Energy efficiency of local authority owned dwellings (BV63) Council homes which did not meet the decent homes standard (BV184a)
Within the worst 25 per cent	Average time for processing new housing benefit claims (BV78a) Domestic violence refuge places (BV176)

## Appendix 2 – Documents reviewed

- 1 Before going on site and during our visit, we reviewed various documents that were provided for us. These included:
  - the Council's corporate strategies that impact upon Supporting People, including the corporate plan;
  - plans and strategies from partner agencies such as the District Councils, the Probation Service, and the Primary Care Trusts that may impact on Supporting People;
  - needs research information, the five-year Supporting People strategy, the 2006/07 Annual Plan, the section's team plan and the service review programme;
  - minutes of the Commissioning Body and Core Strategy Group meetings; and
  - Supporting People advice leaflets.

## Appendix 3 – Reality checks undertaken

- 1 When we went on site we carried out a number of different checks, building on the work described above, in order to get a full picture of how good the programme is. These on-site reality checks were designed to gather evidence about what it is like to use the service and to see how well it works. Our reality checks included:
  - a questionnaire survey which was sent to all service providers of housing-related support services;
  - focus groups for service providers, frontline staff and neighbouring councils' Supporting People lead officers;
  - visits to supported housing schemes, to talk to service users, managers and frontline staff;
  - visits to a number of service user access points to test the level and extent of information available for service users;
  - observing a meeting of the Commissioning Body;
  - telephone calls to test how easy it is to access services; and
  - interviews with a wide-range of stakeholders, including the portfolioholder, the Chief Executive, the Director of Adults and Community Services, the Accountable Officer, the Supporting People lead officer, members of the Supporting People team, councillors, social services commissioning managers, representatives of the probation service and the primary care trusts, advocacy groups and community safety.

## Appendix 4 – Positive practice

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

### **Elected members group**

A dedicated County and District Council elected members group meets regularly to discuss progress and issues arising. Senior councillors from Durham's District Councils and the County Council's portfolio holder attend the group with officer support. PCT and Probation board members are also invited. It provides a forum for sharing information and an opportunity to air different points of view. The group assists in connecting the Supporting People programme with the political structures in the County and District Councils and understanding cross boundary tensions.

### **Approach to assessing value for money**

The Council has adopted a sound approach to assess value for money as part of the service review process. The value for money policy includes a weighted scoring framework that brings together components such as quality, cost, outcomes for service users and user satisfaction levels. The scoring matrix adds a weighted score for services that may have additional costs due the specialised nature of their services.

A sector based approach ensures there is consistency and fairness in contracting rates. Separate exercises have been carried out for floating support services and accommodation based services. Low, medium, high and intensive bands were established and services which fell above the upper limit cost for each band were subjected to greater scrutiny.

### **Protocol to access young people's services**

A joint protocol has been developed to help young homeless people access the services they need. District councils, floating support providers and the Supporting People programme have worked together to develop a protocol on how to deal with young people. Whatever their point of access, their needs are assessed and services put in place with funding resolved between the three parties. This means that services are put in place quickly to meet the needs of young people.

### **Welfare benefit checks**

Applicants for a fairer charging assessment are provided with a full welfare benefits assessment. This ensures that vulnerable people are claiming their full benefits entitlement.