

Inspection report

July 2004

# Supporting People Programme

Lancashire County Council

# Contents

Introduction to the Supporting People Programme	3
Background	3
Scoring the service	4
Context	12
The locality	12
The Council	12
Supporting People – ODPM Framework for Delivery	13
Supporting People – Housing Related Support Services in Lancashire	13
How good is the service?	15
Are the aims clear and challenging?	15
Does the service meet these aims?	16
How does the performance compare?	35
Summary	36
What are the prospects for improvement to the service?	37
Ownership of problems & willingness to change	37
A sustained focus on what matters	39
The capacity and systems to deliver performance and improvement	41
Integration of continuous improvement into day to day management	44
Summary	45
Appendices	46
Documents reviewed	46
Reality checks undertaken	46
List of people interviewed	46
Demographic information	49
Performance information	51

# Summary

## Introduction to the Supporting People Programme

- 1 'Supporting People' is the Government's long-term policy to enable local authorities to plan, commission and provide housing related support services that help vulnerable people live independently. The programme went live on 1 April 2003.
- 2 The aim of the Supporting People programme is to establish a strategic, integrated policy and funding framework, delivered locally in response to identified local needs.
- 3 The Supporting People programme brings together a number of funding streams including transitional housing benefit (THB), which has paid for the support costs associated with housing during the implementation phase, the Housing Corporation's supported housing management grant (SHMG) and probation accommodation grant scheme (PAGS) into a single pot to be administered by 150 administering local authorities.
- 4 Lancashire County Council was inspected towards the end of the first year of the Supporting People programme. This report therefore reflects the current context for the council as it moves from implementation to the introduction of the programme and focuses on determining the effectiveness of current service delivery and the outcomes of this for vulnerable people.

## Background

- 5 Lancashire is a county council in the North West of England. It is a fairly affluent area overall but with significant variations. East Lancashire has serious housing problems and is the subject of the Government's housing market renewal initiative. Unemployment stands at 2 per cent compared with the national average of 2.6 per cent.
- 6 The population of the area is 1,140,000, living in 491,500 households<sup>1</sup>. Over the decade to 2001 the population has risen 3 per cent, although this varies throughout the county with some areas having a growing population and other areas falling.
- 7 Four districts, Burnley, Pendle, Hyndburn and Preston suffer the highest levels of deprivation within Lancashire. Over 4.6 per cent per cent of the population are from black and minority ethnic communities<sup>2</sup> (BME) and far higher concentrations of people from BME communities live in these deprived areas.
- 8 The county council is Labour controlled with a leader and cabinet model of governance. In total there are 78 councillors: 44 Labour, 27 Conservative, 5 Liberal Democrat, 1 Green party, 1 Independent and 1 Other. The council's net revenue budget for the year 2003/04 is £1,059 million.
- 9 Lancashire County Council acts as the administering local authority for the Supporting People programme in its area. The council works in partnership with 12 district and borough councils, 8 primary care trusts and one probation service in commissioning Supporting People services.
- 10 The total amount of Supporting People grant funding available in 2003/04 is £30.66 million. The council receives £767,307 Supporting People administration grant to fulfil its role as the administering authority.

---

<sup>1</sup> 2001 Census.

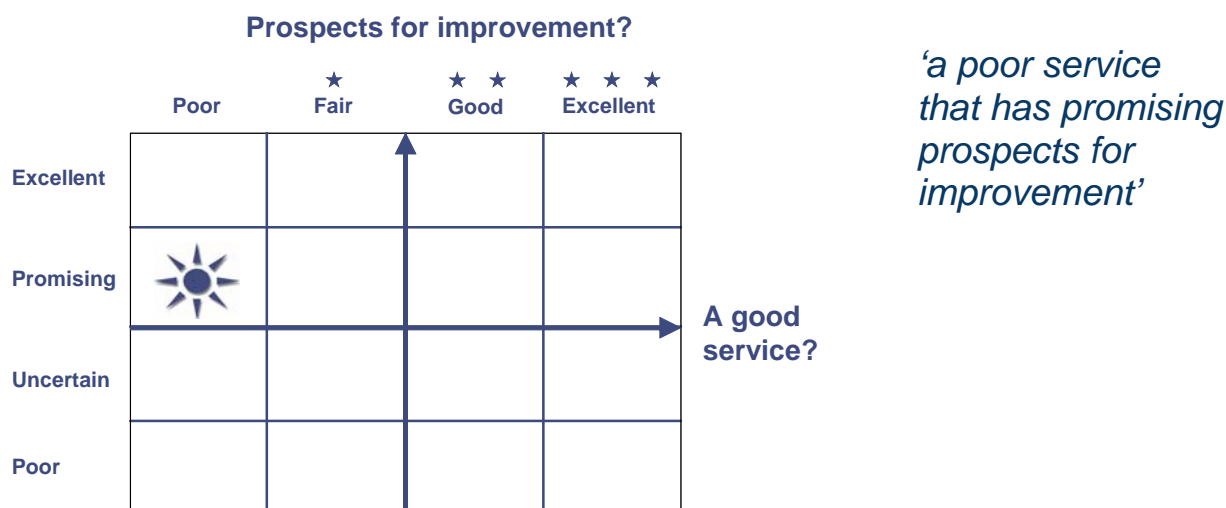
<sup>2</sup> 2001 Census.

- 11 The highest average cost of a Supporting People grant funded service per unit is £890.90 a week for accommodation based support for a person with learning disabilities. The lowest weekly unit cost was £0.80 for community alarm units for older people.

## Scoring the service

- 12 We have assessed the council as providing a ‘poor’, zero-star service that has promising prospects for improvement. Our judgements are based on the evidence obtained during the inspection and are outlined below.

### Scoring chart<sup>3</sup>: Lancashire County Council: Supporting People Programme



### What works well

- 13 During our inspection we found a number of positive features in the way that the Supporting People programme has been implemented to date. These include:
- ◆ Some positive outcomes for service users are beginning to be realised as a result of the Supporting People programme through additional services and a system of service reviews that is seeking to identify areas for improvement in terms of the quality of the services provided.
  - ◆ The aims of the Supporting People programme are clear and balance the priorities of a large number of partner agencies.
  - ◆ Linkages between the Supporting People programme and the local strategic partnership and other local multi agency partnerships are beginning to develop. These are providing the programme with a better grounding in meeting the needs and aspirations of Lancashire’s communities.
  - ◆ Partnership structures are in place and a programme of service reviews is well underway. Service provision within the first year are forecast to be managed within budget.
  - ◆ The council's programme of service reviews are starting to facilitate a further assessment of the Supporting People funding that will be required and are ensuring that appropriate services are funded within the guidelines for eligibility.

<sup>3</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.

- ◆ Work is progressing to better understand the housing related support needs of some client groups within Lancashire's diverse communities.
- ◆ Partnerships are established and work is beginning to develop. Most partners take an active part. A smaller executive body, drawn from the existing commissioning body, has been established to speed up decision making.

### Areas for improvement

- 14 However, we found the following weaknesses with the Supporting People programme that need to be addressed. These include:
- ◆ Only a small proportion, 40 out of an expected 165 by February 2004, of interim contracts are agreed, signed and in place. This is a potential breach of ODPM grant conditions which required the immediate review of services which do not have a contract in place by 31 July 2003 and progress to resolve the position is slow.
  - ◆ Schedules agreeing the amount of Supporting People provision are not in place. In a significant number of cases, legacy provision has not been reconciled with the level of services which providers say they are providing. Payments are being made to providers to ensure that services are maintained but in some instances these are not accurate.
  - ◆ Service provider returns required to ensure that payments of grant are accurate and reflect the level of provision are not being made. At the time of our inspection only 50 per cent of providers were making the necessary returns.
  - ◆ Over £1.2 million late transitional housing benefit (THB) has been claimed which has not attracted legacy funding from the ODPM. One late claim is from one of the commissioning body partners. While the commissioning body has agreed to honour all late claims, to ensure services are maintained to vulnerable people, the financial burden of this decision will reduce the council's ability to manage the budget and develop new services.
  - ◆ Relationships with external providers are poor. There are high levels of dissatisfaction with the way that the council has implemented Supporting People. A number of service providers expressed serious concerns at the approach. Providers do not consider their views are being sought before important decisions are taken or that they are listened to.
  - ◆ Requests from external providers to attend core strategy group meetings have been denied and reinforce the distrust and perception that there is an uneven playing field in favour of internal providers who are represented on this group.
  - ◆ Whilst reviews of services, including those with higher costs, have progressed at a considerable pace, 45 have been completed to date. Discussions on how to fund care services identified by review and ineligible for Supporting People grant are only just beginning. Despite assurances that funding will not be withdrawn until a decision is reached, this leaves service providers and users in considerable uncertainty.
  - ◆ The council estimate that £5 million of Supporting People grant is funding ineligible services. However there are no proposals or plans in place to show how statutory agencies, where they have a responsibility to the vulnerable people concerned, will take responsibility for this funding over time. There are no plans in place that will allow the release of grant funding for investment in appropriate low level housing related support services for vulnerable groups where an unmet need is identified.
  - ◆ The engagement of service users is underdeveloped as are the visible means for communicating with users and potential users. Consultation mechanisms already exist for some client groups, although not all, but no real

dialogue has yet been established with them. Engagement with BME communities is patchy and only just beginning in some areas.

- ◆ There are gaps in the identification of the needs of some client groups, mainly hard to reach groups including refugees, travellers and people with HIV/AIDS.
- ◆ The inclusive forum has operated primarily as a vehicle for communicating with providers and other arrangements for creating a dialogue with users, carers and advocacy groups are yet to be fully explored.
- ◆ Limited information is available for service users on the availability of and how to access, Supporting People services. Access arrangements remain much the same as they were before the introduction of the programme. A new general purpose leaflet has been produced. There is limited information available to users on the county and district council web sites.
- ◆ Supporting People partnerships are not as effective as they need to be. While the structures are generally in place, there needs to be greater clarity about how to engage meaningfully and transparently with all key partners and service providers in a way that builds trust and ensures they work together for the benefit of service users.
- ◆ There are no protocols or processes in place to resolve disputes with providers, despite numerous ongoing disputes, queries and discrepancies over legacy provision and interim contracts. An appeals panel exists for disputed decisions following review but is as yet untested.
- ◆ Risk assessment, contingency planning, performance management and monitoring have begun but need significant further development.
- ◆ The Supporting People partnerships with health and probation lack shared targets for the programme that are understood by housing related support providers, commissioning managers within the council, health service providers and others involved in the criminal justice services in Lancashire.
- ◆ It is unclear how gaps in provision, such as support for people with a physical disability or sensory impairment, refugees, travellers and people suffering from HIV/AIDS are to be addressed.

15 We have judged that the Supporting People programme has promising prospects for delivering further improvements. We found the following strengths:

#### **What works well**

- ◆ There is a commitment to improve services from all stakeholders including the partnerships. Whilst the council have not given Supporting People priority in the past, recent changes in personnel are expected to raise the profile.
- ◆ The county council has a track record of delivering improvements through action plans drawn up in response to performance assessment and inspection reports.
- ◆ At a corporate level, partnership working is well established and a number of consultation mechanisms already exist to engage with several of the client groups who receive Supporting People services, for example people with learning disabilities.
- ◆ Supporting People partnerships are developing with active regular participation by most of the 22 partners, including PCTs and Probation. The commissioning body has also responded to the need for a more streamlined executive structure to speed up decision making. Some difficult decisions have been taken and there is a strategic direction for the Supporting People programme.
- ◆ Additional management resources are being added to the Supporting People team to separate strategic and operational management. This will

supplement the existing team of 20 who hold a wide range of skills, including finance and IT, and are drawn from a variety of relevant professional backgrounds.

As part of the five year strategy, due for submission to the ODPM by March 2005, plans are in place to achieve the following:

- ◆ develop the council's understanding and knowledge of the low level housing needs of Lancashire;
- ◆ 'piggy back' on existing user consultation mechanisms that exist within the county and the partner agencies to formalise links with Supporting People; and
- ◆ develop performance management so that indicators can be put in place to monitor progress against Supporting People and partner objectives and targets.
- ◆ In the run up to Supporting People some additional services have been developed, and changes are being made to inherited services. The service review process is key to delivering improvements both in the quality of services provided and ensuring services are value for money. Funding is expected to be released through the review process to enable new services to be developed. In Lancashire this process is well advanced.

### Areas for improvement

16 There are, however, a number of areas in which the council needed to improve:

- ◆ Until recently there were no signs of ownership of some key problems and the impact they were having on Supporting People service providers, particularly external providers. An improvement plan has now been put in place to deal with key weaknesses identified by the inspection. These issues include the following:
- ◆ Prolonged data reconciliation problems that have delayed the agreement and signing of contracts with a significant impact on some service providers. A culture of blame has developed which is becoming a barrier to resolving problems.
- ◆ The deteriorating relationship between mainly external providers and the Supporting People team resulting in some cases in a lack of trust, involvement and co-operation.
- ◆ Requests for service provider representation on the core strategy group by service providers have been denied without a clear explanation for this decision by the council.
- ◆ External service providers' perception that decisions are being taken without any opportunity for them to have their say, let alone effect any influence over the eventual outcome.
- ◆ Decisions taken by the council are rarely as a result of consultation and are not open and transparent.
- ◆ Uncertainty over existing and future Supporting People grant funding has implications on service providers' confidence to plan and develop future provision.
- ◆ There are no consistent systems for communicating with and encouraging the participation of service users to help shape the future delivery of Supporting People in Lancashire.
- ◆ There is a lack of understanding of how the Supporting People programme will make contributions to the objectives of the various statutory agencies and partnerships. Partnerships are in place, both within and outside of the Supporting People structures created across Lancashire, but there needs to

be greater clarity about what Supporting People can achieve for each and how they inter-relate.

- ◆ There is a lack of definition about the role and purpose of low level housing related support within the delivery of health, probation and social care services and its contribution to improving the lives of vulnerable people in Lancashire.
- ◆ Despite attempts being made to establish a clearer understanding of the boundary between care and support progress has suffered from the lack of trust between Supporting People and service providers.
- ◆ The council's draft Supporting People eligibility criteria are very narrow and the insensitive approach taken in raising this with service providers did not make clear that views were to be sought before any decisions are reached.
- ◆ The focus of activity has been on identifying areas for savings. Little emphasis or attention has been given to the need to have interim contracts in place, accurate data, and systems to gather information to keep the data up to date.
- ◆ Councillors, particularly district councillors, are being given limited information and are therefore taking insufficient ownership of the Supporting People programme.
- ◆ Cross authority work is under-developed. In the absence of agreement, the council has a decision not to fund people inward placements, without any real consideration of what the repercussions might be or arrangements for outward placements.
- ◆ Whilst corporate mechanisms exist within the council, Supporting People has not been fully integrated into the wider processes. Nor is it clear how these processes will be developed.
- ◆ Risk assessment is in its early stages and the adoption of contingency plans need to be formalised. There is no detailed service plan or action plan for Supporting People that will monitor and control the delivery of detailed actions.

17 In response to the weaknesses identified as the inspection progressed, the council has taken positive and decisive action. An improvement plan has been developed with proposals to address the majority of the weaknesses identified above including:

- ◆ improving relations and communications with providers;
- ◆ resolving the delay in agreeing contracts and administrative problems;
- ◆ improving engagement with service users drawing on the skills of partners and providers and activities already underway in Lancashire;
- ◆ performance management systems that measure outcomes for service users;
- ◆ engaging councillors more in the programme; and
- ◆ resources have been allocated to implement the programme and action has begun.

## Recommendations

- 18 To rise to the challenge of continuous improvement, councils need inspection reports that offer practical pointers for improvement. In this context, we are making the following recommendations:
- 19 With immediate effect the council must draw up a recovery plan with each service provider who has not agreed a contract – interim or otherwise that achieves the following:
- ◆ reconciles legacy provision with provider data;
  - ◆ ensures that Supporting People data is accurate and up to date;
  - ◆ puts in place accurate payments with any necessary adjustments;
  - ◆ ensures providers are informed of the make up of payments;
  - ◆ establishes systems to ensure data is kept up to date and all monitoring forms are returned and processed; and
  - ◆ identify a named contact within both organisations – the Supporting People team and the service provider.
- 20 This recovery plan should be properly resourced and progress should be monitored by the commissioning body. The aim should be to have signed contracts in place within 3 months of the date of the draft report and no later than 30 June 2004. A further improvement plan must be drawn up no later than 30 April 2004. The plan must be adequately resourced, target driven and monitored at a corporate level and by the commissioning body, for delivery within agreed timescales stating how work will be carried out that addresses the following issues:
- ◆ details how the outcomes of consultation with service providers and service users will inform council decisions taken to determine housing related support tasks which are eligible for Supporting People grant in the context of guidance from the ODPM;
  - ◆ establish a separate body, that includes county and district councillors, that is agreed with and understood by all parties that will hear and rule on disputes and queries in relation to contracts, payments and the process and outcomes of service reviews;
  - ◆ detail actions to be taken to determine how service providers will be allowed representation at Supporting People partnership groups and bodies;
  - ◆ establish criteria and systems for determining value for money and cost effectiveness during Supporting People service reviews; and
  - ◆ provide proposals to consult with service providers to establish how forums should be developed in future as effective communication and participative entities.
- 21 Within three months of the publication of this report the council should have achieved the following:
- ◆ Improved relationships and communication with providers and restores trust and co-operation.
  - ◆ Secured the ownership of the Supporting People programme by district and county councillors, probation and PCT board members. In the light of the previous low level of engagement in the programme from councillors, take action to increase their knowledge and awareness amongst councillors participating on the appeals panel, particularly from a service user and service provider perspective.

- ◆ Put in place a training programme including visits by key partners to a range of Supporting People service provision.
- ◆ Agreed how service users can become better engaged with the Supporting People programme.
- ◆ Discussed and agreed with service providers how often and through what means Supporting People information will be provided.
- ◆ Discussed and agreed protocols for advance consultation with providers on significant policy recommendations prior to decisions being taken.
- ◆ Discuss and agreed with all partners, including service users and providers, protocols on the feedback of information on decisions reached and the reasons.
- ◆ Established clear complaints procedures and routes and ensured that they are accessible to all service users particularly those who have not traditionally engaged with social services.
- ◆ Developed an ongoing means of monitoring satisfaction with targets and routine reporting.
- ◆ Formalised arrangements to engage service users of all client groups in the development of aims, priorities and service design for the Supporting People programme.
- ◆ Agreed an approach with social services managers and the PCTs on how care services ineligible for continued Supporting People grant following review will be funded.
- ◆ Developed a joint approach to service reviews drawing on all the key partners expertise where Supporting People services are funded from more than one source.

22 Within twelve months of our published report:

- ◆ Finalise risk appraisal and contingency planning for the Supporting People services in Lancashire with an emphasis on the potential for service failure. These plans must be linked to the corporate programme of risk management, should be clearly recorded and agreed by the commissioning body.
- ◆ The commissioning body must consider how performance indicators and other statistical information provided by all the partners can be used to evidence the impact that the Supporting people programme is having in Lancashire.
- ◆ Develop and deliver the five year strategy to reflect the information being gathered from service users about their views and needs for future services and the quality of existing services.
- ◆ Improve information and access to Supporting People services taking full account of any special communication needs.
- ◆ Address the needs, current level of service provision, information and access arrangements for people from black and minority ethnic communities.
- ◆ Establish a wide ownership across the county including the Supporting People commissioning body and its stakeholders.
- ◆ The council is required to identify and address all the other weaknesses in this report.

23 We would like to thank the staff of Lancashire County Council particularly Carolyn Smith and Ann Fitzpatrick who made us welcome and who met our requests efficiently and courteously.

**Inspection Team:**

<b>Alan Brownson</b>	<b>Housing Inspector (principal for Lancashire inspection)</b>
<b>Maureen O'Hare</b>	<b>Tenant Inspection Adviser</b>
<b>Jane Webb</b>	<b>Inspector – HM Inspectorate of Probation</b>
<b>Lesley Hoyes</b>	<b>Inspector – Social Services Inspectorate</b>

**Dates of inspection: 18 February – 27 February 2004**

**Email:**

**[a-brownson@audit-commission.gov.uk](mailto:a-brownson@audit-commission.gov.uk)**

**For more information please contact  
Audit Commission  
Central Region  
First Floor, Bridge Business Park  
Bridge Park Road  
Thurmaston  
Leicester  
LE4 8BL  
[www.audit-commission.gov.uk](http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk)  
Telephone: 0116 250 4100  
Fax: 0116 250 4101**

© Audit Commission

The official version of this report is also available on the Audit Commission's web site at [audit-commission.gov.uk](http://audit-commission.gov.uk)

Copies of this report are also available from the above address. The Audit Commission cannot verify the accuracy of and is not responsible for material contained in this report which has been reproduced by another organisation or individual.

# Report

## Context

- 24 This report has been prepared by the Audit Commission ('the Commission') following an inspection under Section 10 of the Local Government Act 1999, and issued in accordance with its duty under Section 13 of the 1999 Act.

## The locality

- 25 Lancashire County Council is in the North West of England. Its administrative boundary covers the whole of the county of Lancashire apart from two areas which are the responsibility of two unitary councils, Blackpool and Blackburn and Darwen. By area it is the fourth largest county in the country. A fairly affluent area overall but with significant variations. The economy is mixed with manufacturing making up 21 per cent of jobs. A low skills base and low pay are underlying features of the area. East Lancashire has serious housing problems and is the subject of the Government's housing market renewal initiative.
- 26 The population of the area is 1,140,000, living in 491,500 households<sup>4</sup>. Over the decade to 2001 the population has risen 3 per cent, although this varies throughout the county with Burnley district seeing a fall in population by 1.7 per cent compared to a rise of 8.1 per cent in Lancaster district. Over 4.6 per cent of the population are from minority ethnic communities<sup>5</sup> with far higher proportions in the districts of Burnley, Pendle, Hyndburn and Preston.
- 27 These four districts suffer the highest levels of deprivation within Lancashire. Of the 354 council districts in England, Burnley is the 46<sup>th</sup> most deprived, Pendle the 50<sup>th</sup>, Hyndburn the 51<sup>st</sup>, and Preston the 70<sup>th</sup>. Overall, however, only 30 of the county's 256 wards are in the 10 per cent most deprived wards in England. Unemployment stands at 2 per cent compared with the national average of 2.6 per cent.

## The Council

- 28 The county council is Labour controlled. In December 2001 it adopted a leader and cabinet model of governance. Ten members make up the cabinet. Decisions are scrutinised by four overview and scrutiny committees. In total there are 78 councillors: 44 Labour, 27 Conservative, 5 Liberal Democrat, 1 Green party, 1 Independent and 1 Other.
- 29 Lancashire covers 12 district and borough council areas, 8 primary care trust areas, is part of one strategic health authority area which also covers Cumbria, and one Probation area. It is in the early stages of establishing a county-wide local strategic partnership and developing a county wide community strategy. Each of the 12 district and borough councils has its own local strategic partnership and the county has representatives attending all 12.
- 30 The council's net revenue budget for the year 2003/04 is £1,059 million. Around one quarter, £253 million is allocated to the social services department.
- 31 Objectives for the council and commitments to local people are made in the county corporate plan. In total there are seven objectives and four commitments. Those most relevant to the Supporting People programme include objectives for the Lancashire communities to:

- ◆ feel safe;

---

<sup>4</sup> 2001 Census.

<sup>5</sup> 2001 Census.

- ◆ live healthy lives; and
  - ◆ get help when in need.
- 32 Commitments set out how the council will deliver services to the people of Lancashire. These include:
- ◆ treat all people with equity;
  - ◆ ensure accessible, quality, value for money services;
  - ◆ involve local people; and
  - ◆ speak up for Lancashire.
- 33 In 2001 the council entered into a local public sector agreement with the government. This contains twelve stretching performance targets including:
- ◆ improve quality of life and independence for older people;
  - ◆ reduce the rate of youth offending; and
  - ◆ prevention of youth offending.
- 34 A comprehensive performance assessment was carried out in 2002. The county council received an overall score of 'good'.

## **Supporting People – ODPM Framework for Delivery**

- 35 The ODPM has set out the following structural arrangements for the development and delivery of the Supporting People programme:
- ◆ Accountable officer and the Supporting People team: drive the whole process.
  - ◆ Inclusive forum: consults with service providers and service users.
  - ◆ Core strategy group: proposes strategic direction, service review procedures and timetables and work needed to secure the effective and efficient delivery and development of the programme.
  - ◆ Commissioning body: agrees strategic direction, compliance with grant conditions, outcomes of service reviews and monitors the delivery and development of the programme.
  - ◆ Elected members: approve key decisions of the commissioning body.
  - ◆ Supporting People team: delivers the local programme.
- 36 Supporting People commissioning bodies are a requirement under grant conditions and must have senior representation from the administering local authority (ALA), the local health services (usually one representative from each primary care trust (PCT)) and the area probation service. In two tier ALAs each district council is entitled to one representative. Each named representative has one vote although the ALA has a veto where it can demonstrate a financial risk to the ALA.

## **Supporting People – Housing Related Support Services in Lancashire**

### **Management Arrangements**

- 37 The Supporting People team sits within the social services directorate. The accountable officer is the head of information in the social services department, although a newly appointed assistant director, the head of adult services will shortly take over responsibility.
- 38 The commissioning body comprises the head of information from the social services directorate, representatives of the 12 district and borough councils, representatives of the 8 PCTs and the assistant chief officer of the regional

probation service. It is chaired by one of the district council representatives. Terms of reference for this body have been agreed which set out its role of overseeing the Supporting People programme in Lancashire.

- 39 The administration grant awarded to the council by the ODPM to assist in the costs of implementing, delivering and managing the programme is £767,307 for the financial year 2003/04.
- 40 The Supporting People team comprises:
- ◆ a manager;
  - ◆ a review and development manager with a team of seven review and development officers;
  - ◆ a finance manager with 7.5 full time equivalent staff dealing with finance, contracts and information technology;
  - ◆ 2.5 full time equivalent administrative staff; and
  - ◆ support from the fairer charging team located within the main departmental structure.

### Supporting People Strategy and Budget

- 41 The ODPM required all Supporting People administering local authorities to submit a shadow strategy in the Autumn of 2002. The shadow strategies were required to demonstrate a clear vision and strategic steer for the programme and to set out the map of existing housing related support provision. The ODPM assessed the council's shadow strategy as fair.
- 42 The shadow strategy sets out the context for Supporting People in Lancashire. It also explains the identified supply of Supporting People services in the county.
- 43 The primary client group analysis of current services and unmet need shows:
- ◆ low levels of accommodation based support for homeless people, people with mental health problems, frail older people, young people including teenage parents, people with a physical or sensory disability, offenders and people with alcohol problems;
  - ◆ high levels of generic provision and accommodation based support for people with learning disabilities;
  - ◆ adequate levels of accommodation based and floating support for people fleeing domestic violence;
  - ◆ low levels of floating support for people with mental health problems, young people including at risk, leaving care and teenage parents, people with a physical or sensory disability and people with alcohol problems;
  - ◆ an over supply of accommodation based support for older people; and
  - ◆ no provision for travellers or people with HIV/AIDS.
- 44 The actual supply of accommodation and support services as funded by Supporting People grant based on 31 March 2003 was 11,231 units of support.
- 45 The highest average cost unit was £890.90 a week for accommodation based support for a person with learning disabilities. The lowest weekly unit cost was £0.80 for community alarm units for older people.
- 46 Housing related support is delivered by:
- ◆ 148 providers;
  - ◆ through 165 contracts; and
  - ◆ delivering 361 separate services.

- 47 The final Supporting People grant allocation to the council for the financial year 2003/04:
- ◆ £30,659,687;
  - ◆ £867,295 has been awarded to cover the revenue costs of schemes under development (pipeline funding); and
  - ◆ £767,307 administration grant.
- 48 For the financial year 2004/05:
- ◆ £30,728,125 covering grant and pipeline funding.

## How good is the service?

### Are the aims clear and challenging?

- 49 Inspectors look to see how a council has agreed the key aims for the service being inspected, how clear these aims are to the people that receive the service and whether these reflect the corporate aims of the organisation as a whole.
- 50 Aims need to be challenging, address local needs and support national objectives. This requires the council to consider and demonstrate how a service contributes to its wider corporate aims and community plans.
- 51 The aims for the Supporting People programme are clear but they are not challenging as no measurable goals or targets have been set. Partners, some providers and a limited number of users have been involved in the development of aims and priorities. However, there is little awareness of what the priorities are amongst users and providers. There are no measurable goals or targets in place to demonstrate the extent of the ambitions for the Supporting People programme. Without them, progress cannot be monitored nor can any assessment be made of the contribution towards higher level council, local strategic partnership or other statutory agency partner aims and objectives.
- 52 Current aims are identified in the council's shadow strategy which was assessed as 'fair' by the ODPM. Significant comments from the ODPM evaluation include:

*'Does demonstrate that there has been consultation, research and analysis'.*

*'Does feel representative of a partnership'.*

**ODPM December 2002**

- 53 There are five key themes that underpin the council's vision statement. These are:
- ◆ help people remain in their own homes;
  - ◆ consistency of provision;
  - ◆ increase availability of supported accommodation;
  - ◆ help people move on; and
  - ◆ be locally sensitive and reflect other priorities.
- 54 There are immediate and longer term priorities. They include immediate objectives to ensure that providers were paid on time and service users have a continuity of service. Longer term priorities include consistency of provision for:
- ◆ women fleeing domestic violence;
  - ◆ homeless provision;
  - ◆ accommodation for offenders;
  - ◆ drug and alcohol misusers; and
  - ◆ young people.

More services including:

- ◆ Very sheltered housing for older people; and
- ◆ Supported housing for people with learning disabilities.

Help through:

- ◆ home improvement agencies; and
- ◆ community alarms.

- 55 This covers most of the differing priorities of the 22 partners and sets a direction for the county as a whole, although it excludes some client groups. The five year strategy needs to build on this and make clearer how local needs are prioritised into county wide priorities. The shadow strategy does not, however, include some hard to reach groups, for example travellers and people suffering from HIV/AIDS are not included. Nor does it set out what it wishes to achieve for minority ethnic communities.
- 56 There are links between the Supporting People programme aims and those of the county council. The contribution that Supporting People can make has not, however, been quantified in any way and there are no stated, linked objectives to be found in allied service priorities and action plans across the social services department.
- 57 Providers and some service users were consulted in the development of the strategy although there is little understanding among these groups of what the priorities are. Supporting People partners and other partnerships such as the drug action team have been involved in determining priorities.
- 58 Links are made in the strategy to others strategies and groups where Supporting People can contribute to the achievement of objectives and targets. But these links are implicit. The contribution that Supporting People can make to the wider agenda in Lancashire is not clearly identified and made explicit. These include contributions to:
- ◆ ‘the reduction in re-admission rates to psychiatric hospital’ by providing support at home to prevent crises; and
  - ◆ ‘reduce the level of youth offending’ by providing support for offenders to obtain and maintain tenancies. A high proportion of crimes are committed by previous offenders. Helping them to maintain a stable lifestyle, address possible drug or alcohol problems and live independently can assist the drive to reduce crime.
- 59 There are no measures or targets in place to make clear the extent of the Supporting People programme ambitions or enable progress to be monitored.
- 60 With the dual requirements to achieve the ODPM savings target and fund late THB services of £1.2 million, the overwhelming objective for the commissioning body for the first year has been to balance the budget and this has taken precedence over identified aims. Whilst this is understandable we feel that the council has missed the opportunity to engage with service providers and service users to agree priorities for the area and then work proactively with them to start to reconfigure services to meet identified priorities within the budget constraints.
- 61 A significant number (see paragraph 131) of service providers that we interviewed, and those who returned our questionnaire, do not consider that the council perceives them as partners in the process of agreeing the future strategic planning and development of the Supporting People programme.

## **Does the service meet these aims?**

- 62 Having considered the aims that the council has set for the service, inspectors make an assessment of how well the council is meeting these aims. This includes an assessment of performance against specific service standards and targets

and the council's approach to measuring whether it is actually delivering what it set out to do.

63 The assessment was based upon the following key issues:

- ◆ commissioning services to meet local needs;
- ◆ user involvement;
- ◆ diversity;
- ◆ partnership working;
- ◆ quality and monitoring; and
- ◆ outcomes for service users and carers.

### **Commissioning services to meet local needs**

64 Most current housing related support services are the result of legacy provision. The majority of this legacy provision was funded through transitional housing benefit prior to the introduction of Supporting People on 1 April 2003. These services have been developed over time to meet user need identified by providers for particular client groups but without any strategic planning or balancing of needs and priorities. This is true of all initial Supporting People programmes.

65 No comprehensive map of local needs exists although good information is available on the needs of some client groups. Gaps, as identified by the council in its Supporting People shadow strategy, exist in a number of areas such as provision for frail older people. New services have been developed although the amount of development is constrained by the lack of funding.

66 There are significant administrative problems which potentially brings the council into a breach of the ODPM grant conditions and financial regulations. Only 40 of over 165 interim contracts are signed primarily because of data queries and there are no proposals to immediately review those services where no contract is in place. Payments are being made but will not be accurate until the contract schedules and all changes since April 2003 are captured, negotiated and resolved. Providers we contacted are generally unhappy with implementation arrangements.

67 The existing supply of housing related support services has been mapped. However, the number and extent of late claims to transitional housing benefit, currently standing at £1.2 million and growing, is evidence that a significant number of service users have not been identified in the run up to April 2003. We also found other examples of housing related support services which are provided by local organisations where they were not assisted or encouraged to develop services funded through Supporting People.

68 For example, an advocacy organisation is providing housing related support in the shape of advice on managing debts and making benefit claims to people with a disability. This is an area where there are gaps in services. With the right, early guidance the organisation may have been encouraged to develop a more comprehensive floating support service and secure funding through clients eligible for transitional housing benefit. This organisation receives most of its referrals through the council's social workers and has done so for the past two years at least.

69 Transitional housing benefit (THB) appears to have been a problem area. Not all THB claims were determined prior to the ODPM final grant reconciliation process, known as the platinum cut, some the result of late applications, others awaiting proof of circumstances or costs to support a claim. A number of applications have been made after the platinum cut and isolated applications continue to be received. Late claims are estimated to amount to £1.2 million and rising, including a significant late claim from one of the commissioning body partners. The

commissioning body has decided to honour all late claims which ensures the continuity of existing services to vulnerable clients but limits the potential to develop new services to plug gaps and address under supply.

- 70 There are question marks over how well the council worked with district councils to help them decide on the eligibility and accuracy of THB. Reviews have identified examples of providers receiving double funding for elements of services provided. Housing benefit managers accept that THB required assessment of benefit for services outside of their normal area of expertise. They have worked together to establish common approaches and benchmark costs but say that they received little support from the council's Supporting People team.
- 71 We acknowledge that the issue of THB reconciliation was a particular burden and challenge for the council in the context of 12 district councils. We do not consider, however, that sufficient work was carried out to build and sustain effective partnership working with the district councils to facilitate joint working and to reduce the risks of inaccurate and late data being submitted.
- 72 There have been problems with data reconciliation and as a consequence few contracts are in place. The size and complexity of the task was challenging and was underestimated. The council did not commit the necessary resources to this task and failed to work collaboratively with other councils to learn from good practice elsewhere.
- 73 There have been problems with data reconciliation and as a consequence few contracts are in place. The size of the task was challenging and has been underestimated.
- 74 Twelve separate housing benefit departments provided lists of THB claimants at 31 March 2003 to be reconciled with data from providers on people, properties and rates of support. There are numerous discrepancies, such as people missing from lists and differences in rates. Attempts have been made and are continuing to reconcile details. However, progress is slow and only 40 of the expected 165 contracts are in place. The council estimate that it will take a further nine months to complete this work. As we explain in paragraphs 148 – 149 of this report, this has consequences both in the accuracy of payments and in the relationship between Supporting People and providers, particularly for external providers.
- 75 The council are attempting to bring clarity to and define which services are eligible to continued funding from the Supporting People grant. It is one of the first authorities to attempt to do so by providing a definitive list of what is eligible and what is not. This has caused an outcry from providers whose services are most affected and do not consider they have had the opportunity to comment before a decision was taken. The council are clear that this proposal is in draft but this understanding is not shared by the service providers we interviewed.
- 76 There is a need for clarity between what is housing related support and what is health/ social care. It underpins the service review process and is essential for a clear understanding by commissioners and service providers. Lancashire council's good intentions have, however, been undermined by being too rigid in their draft definitions and overly prescriptive, nor have they involved the providers who will be most affected in arriving at the definitions. Providers have a valuable contribution to make to ensure that proposals are scrutinised and workable. For example:

*'Eligible: managing health and safety (only when enabling service users to ensure their environment is safe. Only once per household NOT once per service user).'*

*'Inappropriate as it is very much related to individuals not a group. It suggests that there is an assumption that support is not geared to the individual and that s/users do not lead separate lives in their household. Health and safety issues are very much an individual risk assessment within a group context. Different people need different support with this'. - **Provider comment.***

*'Ineligible: life skills for long term services'.*

*'For tenants with a learning disability there should be some improvement, but rarely complete independence. The nature of learning disabilities is that tenants are likely to need long-term support'. - **Provider comment.***

These are valid comments and the list would benefit from taking account of service provider and service user views, even if the eventual decision is unpopular. The lack of engagement with the people most affected by eligibility criteria is symptomatic of the council's approach in the planning and delivery of the Supporting People programme.

77 New services have been and are being developed. In particular there are:

- ◆ 5 additional units of support for people with mental health problems;
- ◆ 24 additional units of support for people with learning disabilities;
- ◆ another 15 schemes are at various stages of development in the pipeline to bring extra services;
- ◆ homeless families and single people;
- ◆ young people including teenage parents;
- ◆ people with mental health problems; and
- ◆ people with learning disabilities.

Many of these services have been delayed by the need to remodel following funding shortfalls in ODPM pipeline allocations. The commissioning body, quite rightly, assess the relevance, location and unit cost of the proposed service against the priorities shown in the shadow strategy before declaring support for a particular scheme.

78 However, gaps remain, for example there is under provision of services for frail older people and people with physical disabilities and no provision for some hard to reach groups such as travellers. Services are developing in some areas but it is not clear how all these gaps will be addressed.

79 Information on local housing related support needs is good in places but does not cover all client groups. For some client groups it is good, such as for people with mental health problems or people with learning difficulties – these are groups that are likely to be social services users, and less good for others such as people with HIV/AIDS, refugees or travellers. Whilst the gaps in information are recognised and work is ongoing to improve intelligence on need to inform the development of the strategy, it is not clear how these gaps are intended to be addressed.

80 The council has not adequately developed its approach to housing related support service users who are not also social services users. We are concerned that there is a lack of understanding of the needs of vulnerable people who fall outside the high risk groups engaged with social services. The council needs to ensure that the aim of Supporting People, to provide low level housing related support as part of a preventative agenda to reduce the risks of increased

dependency on statutory services for a wide range of vulnerable groups, is being realised.

- 81 Lancashire's Supporting People commissioning body has taken a decision not to fund inward placements from outside the council boundary into services provided by providers within Lancashire. While there is a financial rationale for this, it leaves important questions unresolved. How are outward placements to be funded? Who funds services to those people who fall in between? These should be considerations of the cross authority working group but no resolutions have been agreed. The absence of such an agreement places some vulnerable people at risk.
- 82 There are close links with social services commissioning arrangements. Work is beginning on joint commissioning of services which include elements of housing related support, personal care and in some cases health services. Commissioning links are less well developed for people with physical disabilities and services for people with mental health problems are better developed in some districts than others.
- 83 With a few exceptions, payments are being made to ensure that providers, particularly small providers, are able to continue delivering their services. However, not all payments are accurate, as providers are not all returning monitoring forms on occupancy levels, some data queries remain unresolved and housing benefit managers are not keeping the Supporting People team informed of those clients who lose entitlement to housing benefit.
- 84 Despite requests in the Supporting People provider newsletter, not all providers are aware of the need to submit monitoring returns. Earlier advice from the council had been for providers not to submit returns as the team were unable to cope with processing them. This action has added to service provider confusion in this area.
- 85 Schedules are not sent out to providers with all payments to explain how their payment is made up. Some are provided and others are provided on request. However, without these details providers cannot accurately allocate monies to their clients' accounts.
- 86 Significant numbers of providers have negative views about Supporting People implementation arrangements within Lancashire. Over 80 per cent of the 37 provider representatives who attended our meeting were unhappy with arrangements. Concerns centred on the lack of strategic direction for agreed arrangements to consult service users and carers, the lack of contracts, and arrangements for prioritising areas for future development.
- 87 Uncertainty of funding, exacerbated by a lack of interim contracts, is impacting on providers' confidence to commit resources to planning new provision.
- 88 The council is following the ODPM guidance for the governance and delivery of the programme in the following areas:
  - ◆ The local authority, the primary care trust and the probation service are all involved through the commissioning body.
  - ◆ Each partner organisation has one vote only on the commissioning body.
  - ◆ Joint working arrangements come within the framework of the local strategic partnership.
  - ◆ The commissioning body operates under terms of reference and a memorandum of understanding that recognise the relationship between the commissioning body and the administering local authority.
  - ◆ A list of Supporting People services in the commissioning body's area is maintained.
  - ◆ The council attends regular cross authority groups.

- ◆ The council has agreed a charging policy for Supporting People services.
- ◆ Service reviews are being carried out with a view to raising standards. The outcomes of the reviews are being reported to the commissioning body.

89 However, there is a potential significant breach of conditions in Lancashire. Grant conditions require the immediate service review of any scheme without a contract in place by July 2003. Only 40 are in place by February 2004. These immediate service reviews have not been carried out and it is clear that the council does not have the resources to carry them out in the short term.

### **User involvement and access to services**

- 90 There is no co-ordinated approach across supported housing services in the borough to involve users in the development of services, improve information provision or access.
- 91 Whilst there has been some early engagement with a limited number of users through the inclusive forum, and on an ad hoc basis through providers, there is no structured meaningful engagement of users in the Supporting People programme. Essentially, access to Supporting People services remains the same as they were before, using the same channels and the same referrals systems. Limited additional information is provided for users.

### **Consultation**

- 92 The shadow strategy drew on views expressed by a limited number of users and their representatives who attended inclusive forum events across the county. Community views were sought through the Life in Lancashire members' panel of 1700 residents. Providers' views are also given through regular provider meetings.
- 93 The nature of many of the groups assisted by Supporting People is that they are amongst the most marginalised in society. Although a significant number of groups, boards and forums already exist both within the county, districts, and their probation and PCT partners, links to Supporting People have not yet been formalised and co-ordinated. It is important that this task seeks to involve all the client groups, including those that are hard to reach such as young people with complex needs, refugees, travellers and people suffering from HIV/AIDS.
- 94 There is evidence to demonstrate that new schemes coming on line, such as the additional services provided for people with mental health problems and homeless, have engaged with service users and the design of the service has been user led. Other examples include documents specifically designed to engage with users who have a learning disability and a new general purpose leaflet shortly to be introduced which encourages users to comment on their services. This leaflet has been designed with the help of users and advocates.
- 95 The methodology for ongoing reviews of services includes consultation with service users. Providers are expected to engage in developing better ways of consulting service users. Results shape the nature of and way that services are provided to meet client needs.

### **Information**

- 96 The county council's arrangements for disseminating information specific to Supporting People have been limited. There is limited access to general Supporting People information through the council's website and there are no links between district council's web sites and the county web site. Information on district websites varied in detail. Some had some Supporting People information and contact telephone numbers but seven had no mention of the Supporting People programme.
- 97 We made a number of mystery shopper enquiries to the county and district councils. In each case, the enquiry was dealt with quickly and sympathetically.

Whilst unable to deal with the enquiry at the first point of contact, we were correctly signposted to the most appropriate point where the enquiry was adequately dealt with.

- 98 Leaflet information for users is also limited. A new leaflet has been produced to provide general information on Supporting People for users. This is easy to understand and has been sent out to some providers to pass on to users. Some providers, such as district council providers, have produced their own information leaflet for existing and new service users. However, the overall approach is not structured in a way that will ensure all users are provided with information in a format that is appropriate for their communication needs and embedded into existing leaflet and information packs.
- 99 The council has concentrated on providing information to providers through the regular provider forum meetings and in the form of newsletters. Recent meetings have been well attended and the newsletter is informative and easy to read.
- 100 During our discussions with users, we found that some had heard of Supporting People, usually from their service provider, whereas others had not and none felt they had participated in any consultation.
- 101 In some circumstances where charges have been separated from rent, users were generally aware that housing related support referred to the separate charges shown. In others residents had no knowledge of Supporting People or its charges.
- 102 Older tenants of sheltered schemes we met had limited knowledge of information services and tenant involvement. In some districts, there was no district wide sheltered group of tenants.
- 103 It was suggested to us that there is resistance to housing people with chaotic behaviour or those with former rent arrears, particularly in areas where districts have transferred their housing stock. Supporting People contracts need to ensure that any exclusion policies followed by service providers are appropriate and that unofficial exclusions are not applied.
- 104 Around 4,000 service users are not receiving housing benefit and are paying for their own housing related support services. Some may be eligible for financial assistance following a means test under the fairer charging policy. However, no action is taken to make these service users aware of this possibility and how to apply for an assessment. The Supporting People team are not taking action to inform users, seeing this as the responsibility of providers. To date only 150 assessments have been requested.
- 105 In general, access to Supporting People services remain the same as they were before, using the same channels and the same referrals systems.
- 106 Supporting People has adopted the complaints procedures followed by the social services department. While the procedures appear sound, no special arrangements have been put in place. For example to prepare a complaints leaflet that reflects the Supporting People partnership or ensures that service users who are not clients of the social services department have ready access to one. The method of recording complaints does not lend itself to easy analysis of trends and causes. In addition there needs to be clear co-ordination with providers own complaints procedures, to show a clear path and escalation procedure for complaints. This needs to include how information will be fed back to providers.
- 107 We had asked the council to arrange a focus group of service users as part of our early discussions in the preparation stages of this inspection. This request was made some weeks before our on site inspection. We were disappointed at the small turnout from service users, only three people attended. None of the three service users were in receipt of Supporting People funded housing related

support services although it was clear that they all required, and would be eligible for, housing related support. They were all social services users.

- 108 On enquiring about the arrangements for the focus group we were told that the person who had been asked to facilitate group was contacted 48 hours before the meeting and asked to identify service users. The service users had been contacted with 24 hours notice. The service users that attended made very valuable contributions to our inspection and had made considerable efforts to attend the meeting.
- 109 We are concerned that the approach to the engagement of service users in the Supporting People programme is patchy. In some areas such as with people who have a learning disability it is good, and in others where users are not traditional clients of social services or are harder to engage with, it is poor.

## Diversity

- 110 Through their corporate plan, the county council make a strong commitment to understanding the diverse needs of the communities in Lancashire and develop services that address their needs. A number of activities are underway corporately but these are starting from a low base:
- ◆ The council are commissioning work from the University of Central Lancashire to identify the specific housing related support needs of black and minority ethnic (BME) communities in Lancashire.
  - ◆ The county is increasing efforts to consult and support BME communities through a dedicated women's group and a BME pact.
  - ◆ Neighbourhood renewal funding has sponsored some targeted work with BME communities in Pendle District. Community representatives were encouraged by the positive effects this work has had in making services more accessible to the local minority communities.
  - ◆ Probation has carried out an offender accommodation needs analysis. Currently it is limited to offenders identified as having accommodation needs and those being released from prison. In future it will extend to the whole probation caseload.
- 111 Information on the needs of the various diverse groups, including the various ethnic communities needs to be better. The view of representatives of the BME communities is that their voice is not loud enough. More work is needed to:
- ◆ Reach out to the communities to understand their culture and how that impacts on the services which they need. And recognise that there are a number of communities, not simply one homogeneous group.
  - ◆ Ensure people from these communities have appropriate access channels to get information about what services are available and how to access them.
  - ◆ Monitor the use of services by community groups to learn how access and services can be improved.
- 112 Older people and women in the BME communities are those most in need of specialised services. Fewer of these people are able to speak English well and use family members to help them communicate. This is not always appropriate, for example in the case of a woman wishing to flee from domestic violence.
- 113 There is a lack of culturally sensitive services in some areas within Lancashire, for example low level mental health services or family services. There are few culturally specific services in Lancashire, a Jewish housing association, providing services for older people with support needs and outreach services for people experiencing domestic violence in East Lancashire.
- 114 Other services exist that can cater for special needs, such as people for whom English is not their first language, and we are aware that action is being taken to address the low take up of care services for people with a learning disability

amongst BME communities. There is, however, little intelligence on which of the housing related support services are sensitive to a range of cultural and religious needs, how much support there is, and the nature of the culturally sensitive specialist support that is available.

- 115 There is no overall monitoring of the take up of Supporting People funded housing related support services by ethnicity or disability. Although information is captured for new service users, it is not clear how this information is to be used.
- 116 Social Services officers, including members of the Supporting People team, have access to signers and an interpretation service.
- 117 There are also gaps in information and services in other areas. For example, the needs of people with HIV/AIDS and travellers are not catered for by existing housing related support services in the county. It is not clear how these needs are intended to be addressed.
- 118 Service reviews do address providers commitment to equality, policies and procedures to ensure there is no discrimination. However, contracts do not reflect a requirement for culturally diverse services and monitoring systems are not yet in place to understand the amount of provision, standards and how it differs to address the needs of specific individuals or groups. Nor are the council through service reviews able to track trends linked to ethnicity or wider diversity issues.
- 119 On race equality, the council is making some progress but is starting from a low base. In the 2002/03 best value performance plan, it reports that it has attained level one (the first of five) of the commission for race equality's (CRE) standard for local government.

### **Partnerships**

- 120 Co-ordinated and effective partnership working is key to the success of the Supporting People programme that delivers real improvements to the housing related support available to vulnerable people. The council has a range of mechanisms in place to achieve this as described in the following sections of this report.
- 121 Having made a late start the Supporting People formal partnerships are beginning to develop and work together. However, progress in some areas is being overshadowed by major problems with the partnerships with service providers, notably with external providers. Many external providers lack confidence and trust in the council's arrangements to deliver Supporting People services. They feel they have no voice, decisions are taken before they have the opportunity to comment, and some are fearful of commenting in case of repercussions. This needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency.
- 122 Internal and external partnerships are important to effective service delivery. Within the council, there were some good examples of joint working, such as joint commissioning and review of services and others that appeared to operate in a silo. For example, there was little knowledge within social services of the potential support that could be offered by Supporting People to children leaving care.

### **Inclusive Forum**

- 123 Initial guidance from the ODPM<sup>6</sup> stated that council's should operate an inclusive forum that would meet regularly and involve all partners in consultation. It is not evident that the group operating in Lancashire acts in this manner, in particular due to the lack of representation from users, their carers and advocates.
- 124 The Lancashire Supporting People inclusive forum has met five times. The initial meeting was on 24 February 2003 and the latest in 16 January 2004. The

---

<sup>6</sup> ODPM Supporting People Guidance – October 2001.

inclusive forum does not fulfil its description as in the last year it has acted mainly as a forum for informing service providers and should therefore be identified as a provider forum. Only the early events sought to engage with users, their carers and advocates.

- 125 The council has arranged a reasonable number of training events for Lancashire's providers. These included:
- ◆ Supporting People financial package and general finance issues;
  - ◆ the Supporting People review process;
  - ◆ completing excel interim contract monitoring form and the record keeping workbook; and
  - ◆ a presentation on the five year strategy and planning process and the process of developing new services.

No training has been provided on the charging policy although explanatory notes were included in the contracting pack that was sent out to all providers in February 2003.

### **Core Strategy Group**

- 126 Links exist between partner organisations for example the health primary care trust, the council's social services department and the probation service at the core strategy group. Meetings are fairly well attended.
- 127 Terms of reference for the core strategy group are in place. Sub groups are established to progress elements of work, for example on the assessment of needs for the five year strategy.
- 128 Despite requests from providers, no external providers attend this group. Their inclusion has been denied on the grounds of the already unwieldy size of the group and the conflicts of interest between commissioning and delivery of services. Representatives of the 12 district councils, social services and the 7 primary care trusts, who are also major service providers, do attend.
- 129 The core strategy group will discuss the outcomes of service reviews and decisions on reconfiguration and decommissioning services will be recommended to the commissioning body. It is imperative that access to these discussions from internal service providers does not compromise the independence of the decision making process.
- 130 Meetings of the core strategy group have a full agenda covering a broad range of topics including progress with service reviews, financial updates, work on the five year strategy and a variety of associated topics.
- 131 The group has operated to a project plan to implement the Supporting People programme. This needs to be updated.

### **Commissioning Body**

- 132 Senior officers from the partner organisations, the county council, 12 district councils, 8 primary care trusts and the probation service sit on the commissioning body. It has met quarterly since late 2002 and is chaired by an officer from one of the district councils.
- 133 Although the partnership started late there is now reasonable engagement from the county council, probation, most district councils and improving engagement from PCTs. Partners speak positively about their involvement and ability to influence decisions.
- 134 In response to a need for more meeting time to consider an increasing number of decisions, the commissioning body has taken the pragmatic step of setting up an executive group – a smaller group consisting of the chair and one representative from each agency, social services, district council, PCT and probation. Meetings

take place in the intervals between full meetings and decisions taken are ratified by the full group. The intention is to minimise demands on people's time, while at the same time retaining the commissioning body's democratic and accountable remit.

- 135 Commissioning body partners feel that they are working together and do understand each others statutory agency objectives. They feel confident in being able to influence the agenda. In addition partners feel that the partnership working is 'helping to heal old wounds' and bring about other joint work, such as a joint county, district and PCT strategy for older people.
- 136 There are a number of examples where other partnership working is developing.
- 137 Probation are drawing up a multi agency public protection agreement (MAPPA) protocol between themselves, the police, the prison service and each district council to deal with housing support needs of high risk offenders. It has been introduced and is in the final stages before signing. They also run an offender's accommodation forum.
- 138 There are county council partnership officers in each district council to facilitate joint working. County council cabinet members sit on each local strategic partnership and the county council leader and chief executive meet all district councils every six months.
- 139 There is a strategic direction for the Supporting People programme and this is to be refined as better intelligence on service user needs is gathered for the five year strategy. Proposals on how to engage with the diverse community groups in Lancashire are still to be confirmed. Early suggestions are quite sensibly to 'piggy back' on established arrangements that already exist within the partner agencies. Indicators that measure progress towards the achievement of strategic goals are still to be put in place. In addition formal links still need to be made to partner agency objectives and targets that highlight and measure the contribution that Supporting People can make.
- 140 The dominating priority has been to manage the transition to Supporting People funding within budget. The scope for developing new services has been limited, although where pipeline funding has been granted there is a clear rationale behind which schemes to support.
- 141 Councillors are not actively engaged in the programme. Reports are produced for the social services portfolio holder. Commissioning body members are expected to keep their senior politicians and board members briefed on progress and developments. To date this has had more of a passive role rather than active engagement.
- 142 An appeals panel with councillor membership has been established to consider challenges made by providers against funding decisions following a service review. In the light of the previous low level of engagement in the programme from councillors there is a need to increase knowledge and awareness amongst the participating councillors, particularly from a service user and service provider perspective. It is essential that a training programme is put in place as a matter of urgency including visits to a range of service provision.
- 143 Terms of reference have been established for the commissioning body. They detail the voting rights and its general purpose. There is also a memorandum of understanding between the commissioning body and the administering authority which refers to the council's right to veto decisions where a financial risk to the council can be demonstrated.
- 144 However, the terms of reference lack some fundamental criteria around the resolution of potential disagreements, resolving conflicts and conflicts of interest. There is no specific mention of how disagreements will be resolved beyond the reliance on the split in the available votes.

- 145 Some significant service related decisions have been taken. The commissioning body has already taken the decision to honour all late transitional housing benefit claims, provide no inflationary increase in funding to providers from April 2004, and a series of decisions around pipelines schemes.
- 146 The Supporting People charging policy statement has been agreed by the commissioning body.
- 147 The commissioning body has failed to monitor and ensure the participation of service providers and service providers in the planning and delivery of the programme and to effectively manage and monitor the contract and payment systems.

### Cross Authority Issues

- 148 Cross authority working is required in order to effectively meet the needs of vulnerable people. Specialist housing related support services may not be available in their own administering local authority areas and where people needs may need to be met outside their immediate area. For example, women fleeing domestic violence and offenders who cannot be housed in the area. The council has been a member of cross authority working with Blackpool, Blackburn and Darwen and Cumbria.
- 149 The cross authority group has met quarterly and has been a forum for sharing information and looking at users who move between authorities. But the group has had limited effect. No shared practices have come out of the cross authority work, there is no agreement about inward or outward placements. The group will need to be clear about what it is trying to achieve and focus more on what it needs to deliver in the future.

### With Service Providers

- 150 Supporting people services are delivered through commissioning third parties to deliver those services to users. It is vital therefore that good and equitable working relationships exist between the commissioners and the providers of services.
- 151 We found that this is not the case in Lancashire. Whilst there is a spread of opinion about how effectively the Supporting People programme has been introduced, the majority view from external service providers is negative. This is a view that is felt strongly by a significant proportion of providers. This is sufficiently widespread to be a major concern. Providers feel they are briefed about what is happening but not effectively involved in influencing decision making.
- 152 Findings from our meeting with 37 provider representatives revealed:

*79 per cent unhappy with training and information: 'compared to other areas, information has been quite shoddy'. – Provider comment.*

*80 per cent unhappy with contracting arrangements: 'We've not had our contracts yet. This is dreadful'. – Provider comments.*

*'This is a deliberate tactic to force us to sign contracts we're not happy with' 83 per cent unhappy with consultation with users or carers: 'I'm unaware of any formal consultation with service users and carers at all'. – Provider comment.*

*80 per cent unhappy with prioritisation and future schemes: 'making so many cuts there is no point in developing new schemes'*

*'Back room deals'. – Provider comments.*

- 153 Our questionnaire survey, in advance of the inspection, revealed lower but still significant levels of dissatisfaction. Forty one providers responded to the survey. Analysis of responses show:

**Analysis of survey of providers [41 responses]:**

Question – Satisfaction with .....	Satisfied	Dissatisfied
The council's provision of training on the charging policy?	62%	38%
Arrangements for negotiating Supporting People contracts?	60%	40%
General consultation with users about Supporting People?	61%	39%
Arrangements for consulting with you on the Supporting People strategy?	64%	36%
Processes for service and contract reviews?	80%	20%

- 154 Whilst we found no evidence to substantiate statements such as back room deals, this level of dissatisfaction and the strength of the comments made illustrate how bad relations are between service providers and the council in the delivery of the Supporting People programme. This includes a lack of trust, an inability to influence decision making and a lack of confidence in delivery.
- 155 Some providers were also worried about a 'culture of fear' where they were afraid to voice concerns for fear of being targeted for early service review and therefore cuts. The lack of a negotiated and agreed contract leaves them with no security or certainty. In their view decisions are taken without giving them the opportunity to comment and are then simply announced. The main example suggested was the eligible/ineligible task list. We have commented on this in paragraph 70 of this report.
- 156 In reality, no decision has yet been reached on the eligible/ineligible task list, although the perception of external providers is that minds have already been made up. Whether this is true or not, there are significant issues here around communication, involvement, transparency and trust. There is an issue around presentation and communication, but it goes beyond that. External providers' requests for representation at the core strategy group meetings have been refused reinforcing the belief there are is an uneven playing field with internal providers having access to information and influence denied to external providers.
- 157 Urgent efforts need to be made to restore good working relationships with providers. The starting point will be to put contracts into place quickly. In addition provider representatives need to be more closely involved with the decision making process, so that they see the issues as they arise, understand the debate and reasons for decisions better, feed back to their colleagues and allow confidence in the administration of the grant to return.
- 158 The council has not addressed the need to create a level playing field for all providers in the planning and delivery of Supporting People funded services. It has yet to address the actual and potential conflicts of interest in the decision making processes where internal providers have access to decision making bodies denied to their external competitors.
- 159 Relations between Supporting People and district council housing benefit managers are also cool. This appears to refer back to the quality of housing benefit data provided by districts. The housing benefit managers consider that the council is slow to provide them with financial support for the purchase of software and administration. The Supporting People team consider they have made appropriate payments and are seeking a service level agreement which sets out what districts are required to do in return for funding. There is no sense of the county council pulling together with district councils to resolve THB issues and ongoing monitoring to improve services to the vulnerable people in Lancashire.

- 160 None of the district councils, as providers of services, have contracts in place. However, this appears to be less of an issue for them, as payments are being made and there is confidence that correcting adjustments will be made eventually. The district councils that we spoke to have not however agreed their pricing schedules and so there is a lack of transparency around payments for specified service users.
- 161 Some service providers are also concerned at the lack of formal protocols between agencies in some areas. This has an impact on referrals and move on accommodation and is frustrating both for the provider and the user.

## Quality and Monitoring

### Contracts and Payments

- 162 As stated earlier the council has been slow to finalise interim contracts. The current position is:
- |   |     |                    |
|---|-----|--------------------|
| ◆ Gross number of interim contracts required  | 165 |                    |
| ◆ Less contracts under review                 | 30  |                    |
| ◆ Interim contracts outstanding               | 135 |                    |
| ◆ Of which total contracts issued             | 97  | (90 Organisations) |
| ◆ Total agreed and signed                     | 40  | (39 Organisations) |
| ◆ Number of contracts yet to be issued        | 38  | (27 Organisations) |
| ◆ Number of contracts to be signed and agreed | 95  | (68 Organisations) |
- 163 The logistics of this exercise in Lancashire is bigger and more challenging than in most administering authorities. Nevertheless 11 months after the date Supporting People went live, only 40 contracts are in place. More effort is needed to put these contracts in place quickly and move on from there.
- 164 The transition of funding streams from 1 April 2003 has not been seamless. There were some early problems with payments. However, most are now resolved to some extent and all but two providers are being paid although not necessarily the correct amount. The approach to paying providers from 1 April 2003 was to use existing THB data and to amend it 'on trust' according to subsequent queries and amendments received from providers, and in the meantime to attempt to reconcile providers' stated positions with the information provided by housing benefit departments and the Housing Corporation.
- 165 All providers are required to make returns (performance indicator on occupancy levels and tenancy changes), however, only 50 per cent are currently doing so. Some were confused over whether they were required to do so as they were told that returns weren't required as the team did not have the capacity to deal with them. This, however, ignores the Supporting People's team's attempts to get service providers to submit all current and past returns at forum meetings, by email, telephone and through the newsletter. Accurate records and correct payments cannot be maintained without up to date data.
- 166 All providers should receive a monthly breakdown of how their payment is made up. Approximately 60 per cent are being sent one without being asked and others are sent on demand. Providers without block contracts are therefore unable to check the accuracy of payments and allocate monies, where necessary, to individual client accounts.

### Performance Management

- 167 Performance management within Supporting People needs to be developed. Progress reports are provided to the core strategy group, covering finance, reviews and contracts. However, there is little evidence of target setting and performance reporting against key measures both of progress, the quantity and

quality of services, contribution to partner agency objectives and achievement of Supporting People strategic objectives.

- 168 Little performance information is passed up the social services management line. Updates are provided by the accountable officer to both senior officer and political managers. But there was no evidence that financial and performance measures for Supporting People are integrated with those for the department.
- 169 Progress targets are in place for Supporting People implementation. However, a system of performance indicators, targets and outcome measures are not in place to allow regular reporting of performance across all areas of the service and also to support their approach to diversity. There has been little use of exception reporting to raise areas of concern, there are no transparent avenues for external providers to raise concerns within the council outside the Supporting People team.

### **Value for Money and Cost Effectiveness**

- 170 It is acknowledged that there may be some mismatch in the levels of Supporting People grant being claimed for some schemes and that there could be an element of care being paid for by Supporting People and vice versa. The council's intention is that the scheme reviews will allow for a reassessment and reallocation of Supporting People resources in line with grant conditions. This process will ensure that the council only renews contracts, where an existing interim contract is in place, for services that are eligible for grant funding. The council themselves estimate that around £5 million of Supporting People grant may be funding services that may be defined as care rather than low level housing support. In addition, the reviews have also identified an example of a provider receiving duplicate funding.
- 171 The council has established its approach to value for money although it is an area that is still developing. It draws on ODPM guidance and their unit costs for each client group are being followed as guidelines and a starting point. The council's approach is based initially around the quartile rates set by the ODPM for different types of service provision. Where a variance is identified, more detailed work is carried out to establish whether costs are reasonable for the level and quality of individual services provided.
- 172 Local comparisons will be made between providers and benchmarking work is ongoing with other authorities in the North West. This approach appears sound, although our examination of a number of completed service reviews (see paragraphs 172 – 173 below) suggests that in these cases the assessment had been more crude, based on regional average comparators. Good communication with all service providers is required to ensure an understanding of the processes.
- 173 However, providers lack knowledge of how the council will assess whether services are value for money. They have not been involved in developing the approach and know little about it. Given the lack of trust from providers and the council's concentration on making savings, there is a real fear that crude measures are being used to drive down costs. Providers need to be more involved in determining the approach to value for money to ensure that it is reasonable, understood and accepted. The council have not recognised the need to draw on the expertise of service providers in developing their approach.

### **Risk and Contingency Planning**

- 174 The identification and evaluation of risks to the Supporting People programme are ongoing. Some early work was carried out and described in the shadow strategy. More detailed work facilitated by a consultant has been carried out in January 2004. From this work A risk register is being drawn up (which looks comprehensively at risks to the programme from a number of different angles including strategic, operational, people, financial, IT, regulatory and reputation, a series of actions are proposed to manage the risks). This is good quality work

although it is in its early days. Actions still need to be integrated into management work plans and urgent work to manage current risks need to be considered as part of this process.

- 175 The council's Supporting People team are involved in probation risk management and public protection protocols, through multi-agency public protection agreement (MAPPA) meetings, a public protection panel for partner agencies to meet and prepare plans for a number of individuals who pose a risk to public safety. Probation are drawing up the protocol between themselves, Supporting People, police, the prison service and each district council. It has been introduced and is in the final stages before signing.
- 176 Contingency plans are in place for IT failure. Lancashire County Council social services directorate contracts section procedure and emergency plan will be followed in the event of:
- ◆ closure of a provider; and
  - ◆ sudden failure of a service.

### Service Reviews

- 177 The ODPM Supporting People grant conditions require all administering local authorities to review all of their contracted services within a three year period from 1 April 2003. Service providers are currently expected to provide services under interim contracts and a service review is required before a contract can be renegotiated. The outcomes of service reviews and any associated decisions to reconfigure or decommission a service must be agreed by the commissioning body. The ODPM has published extensive guidance on how service reviews should be conducted.
- 178 A service review programme has been put in place with reviews ranked according to high risk, concern about quality, high cost, new services, and significant late THB claims. From the second year, reviews are expected to move to a broader based approach across client groups so that a more strategic assessment can be made of provision against need.
- 179 The council has drawn together a team of seven review and development officers to undertake the programme of reviews managed by a deputy manager. Staff have been drawn from a wide range of professional backgrounds, including health, social services, housing and the voluntary sector. There has also been investment in training to develop and prepare the team.
- 180 The programme is quite well advanced in Lancashire. The review process commenced on 21 July 2003, prior to both the platinum cut and the ODPM deadline of having all contracts priced by 31 July 2003. The grant conditions state that providers not in receipt of an interim contract by 31 July 2003 should be reviewed 'immediately' - in practice the council say this was not possible, due to the finite resources available to undertake reviews.
- 181 Forty five reviews have been completed; with steady state contracts to be issued once review action plans have been completed. Reviews have been completed on 21 organisations, totalling 25 contracts containing 54 services.
- 182 Findings have been reported to the core strategy group and include quality assessment framework<sup>7</sup> assessments of:
- ◆ 9 services operating at level C or above in all four core objectives;

---

<sup>7</sup> The quality assessment framework is a set of nationally defined standards. Set by the Office of the Deputy Prime minister, their aim is to help service providers achieve high standards. Each of four core service objectives is graded. There are four grades: A = Excellent; B = Good Practice; C = Minimum standard; D = Below minimum requirements.

- ◆ 6 services operating at level D in all 4 core objectives. Action plans have been agreed;
- ◆ 3 services are not strategically relevant and further investigation is being carried out; and
- ◆ review - generally reductions - in the contract price is recommended for 27 services, mainly services for people with a learning disability.

183 Only eleven service reviews are complete and formally signed off by the commissioning body. Delays are being caused by the need to ensure that providers continue to receive adequate funding for their services, in order for services to continue to be provided to vulnerable people, following any decision to withdraw all or some of the Supporting People grant funding. Where care is being funded from the Supporting People grant it is inappropriate to withdraw funding without first agreeing some transfer arrangements with social services or health. These discussions and negotiations have only just begun.

184 We inspected several completed service review files and found that the final report had:

- ◆ a useful, concise summary including key service facts;
- ◆ whether the service is strategically relevant;
- ◆ compliance with quality assessment framework check list and level;
- ◆ whether the service provides value for money; and
- ◆ whether recommended for re-commissioning.

185 However, of the service review files we examined it appears that the value for money judgement is largely based on general comparability of costs with regional/national upper quartiles. This is unsophisticated, with little evidence of supporting financial information. The service review reports have a straightforward structure covering key areas but there is no qualitative summary of key areas of strength/weaknesses and priorities for action. The 'check list approach' does not give an overall picture of the quality of the service. There is no summary of outcomes for service users.

186 Ideally where services are suspected to have a combination of care and housing related support services, a joint review between the different funding bodies should be carried out. The overall needs of service users should be assessed and a package of funding to provide value for money care and support services also put in place. This is what the council would like to see happen in future but discussions are only just beginning.

187 The question of what are eligible and ineligible tasks to be funded from the Supporting People grant is particularly relevant here. The council has taken a sensible step in trying to make the position clear. Without clarity how can the reviewers make an appropriate assessment. However, as described earlier greater care needs to be taken to ensure that the requirements of individual users are not overlooked in favour of having a restricted, inappropriate and tightly defined list.

188 Service providers have mixed views on the quality and benefit of Supporting People service reviews. The majority are positive recognising that the review process questions the way that they deliver their services in order for improvements to be made. A number were complimentary about the accessibility and support received from the review officers. Review officers themselves feel that they have received positive feedback about service review activity.

189 Negative feedback centred around the service providers feeling that there was an underlying agenda at the outset to cut costs and that service reviews could be inconsistent in their rigour depending on who the reviewing officer was. It was also considered that the lack of a contract was a tactic used by the Supporting

People team to increase pressure on providers to accept a lower contracted rate for their service.

- 190 A positive sign is representatives from the probation service are becoming involved in reviews. Probation representatives have been able to influence the content of reviews, for example to check whether there are exclusion policies. They have also participated in stakeholder surveys for reviews of all services, not just those specialising in offenders.
- 191 The outcomes of all service reviews are reported to the commissioning body, in accordance with the grant conditions, with recommendations for further action as required.
- 192 An appeals system is in place made up of a panel of councillors. This is intended to allow providers the right to present their argument before a separate group to challenge decisions made by the commissioning body to reduce or withdraw funding following review. The system has not been tested yet, and a number of providers are cynical about it. We have commented in more detail on this in paragraph 131 in this report.

### Outcomes for service users and carers

- 193 The Supporting People programme in Lancashire is beginning to deliver positive changes to the services it funds and thereby the lives of service users. Whilst some changes have come about as a result of the national programme, this process of change is being linked into scheme reviews and the outcomes are being recorded and reported. However, there are areas where challenges still remain and it is unclear how they are to be addressed.
- 194 Positive outcomes reported by some users include:
- ◆ additional services for a number of user groups, including people with learning disabilities, people with mental health problems, and additional floating support services for people mis-using drugs;
  - ◆ many more users have personal plans which highlight their individual support needs. This raises the awareness of users about what they can expect to receive and with service providers on what they are expected to deliver; and
  - ◆ sheltered housing tenants are becoming more aware of the services that they pay for. Although a number of tenants have withdrawn from services once they became aware of the costs.
- 195 Private sector tenants who need the services of a home improvement agency (HIA) to help them adapt, renovate and maintain their property to continue to be able to live independently and will no longer be discriminated against on the grounds of inequitable access to services dependent on where they live. Proposals are at an advanced stage to ensure HIA coverage in the five districts that currently have no provision.
- 196 Challenges ahead include the provision of services for hard to reach groups such as travellers or people suffering from HIV/AIDS who currently do not receive any service specifically catering for their needs. There are also challenges to overcome differences in provision between areas, suitable accommodation for people with physical disabilities is limited in some areas, there are difficulties with move on accommodation in others.
- 197 The following case studies are historical and illustrate outcomes for service users who have claimed low level housing related support prior to the introduction of Supporting People. They illustrate the changes that Supporting People services can make to an individual's life and the opportunities that are available to vulnerable people in Lancashire if the council can resolve its current problems.

## Supporting People Case Study 1

---

Service User Group: Adult with learning disabilities

Type of Service: Accommodation based

Key Players: Housing related support staff, social services, the service user  
Supporting People team

Issues to be addressed:

- ◆ Mr A is a 52 year old with learning disabilities.
- ◆ He lived in long stay residential accommodation since 1977 funded by social services.
- ◆ Independent, shared accommodation with tenancy support became available in March 2003.
- ◆ After being shown the accommodation under development and having been fully informed about what moving would entail in terms of changed living conditions, Mr A expressed a wish to move.

Actions taken:

- ◆ In partnership with the provider and his social worker, an assessment was made of Mr A's support needs and whether supported, independent, accommodation would meet those needs. It did.
- ◆ He was given assistance to apply for and successfully secure supported accommodation. He was also assisted to apply for the benefits he became entitled to.
- ◆ His funding packages were adjusted to cover the housing related support and continuing care elements of his support needs.
- ◆ He moved in when the accommodation opened.

Outcome for service user:

- ◆ Mr A has become fully involved in the house activities and plays an active part in house meetings and formulating house rules. He has his own room, manages his own finances, and does his own shopping.
- ◆ Recently he has started working two days a week.
- ◆ Both his care manager and support worker confirm that Mr A has benefited enormously from the move to a shared house. He has gained greater independence, increased self confidence and has acquired life skills.

## Supporting People Case Study 2

Service user group: Drug misuser

Type of service: Floating support

Key players: Supporting People team, housing officer, housing related support staff

Issues to be addressed:

- ◆ Mr B was a chaotic heroin user for 20 years. At the time of his referral to the service he had a chaotic lifestyle with no employment. In order to sustain his habit and lifestyle he was also receiving money from his mother. Over a period of approximately six years Mr B has been in and out of drugs treatment services but never sustained his treatment long enough to make any long term changes to his life.

Action taken:

- ◆ Mr B was referred to a floating (a mobile service provided in the client's own home) housing related support service.
- ◆ He initially refused a home visit. When he was eventually encouraged to accept the visit, his home was found to be flea ridden. He was supported in arranging pest control to treat the flea infestation and from there was encouraged and supported in taking care of himself, his flat and his tenancy.

Outcomes for service user:

- ◆ Over the year in which Mr B has been receiving floating support the improvement in his life has been such that he is making good progress on a drug treatment programme, he is now in employment and no longer relies on his mother for money.

## How does the performance compare?

- 198 In order to judge the quality of a service, it is important to compare the performance of that service against other suppliers across a range of sectors. The aim is not exact comparison, but an exploration of how similar services (or elements of services) perform in order to identify significant differences, the reasons for them, and the extent to which improvements are required.
- 199 Currently there are no published national indicators which measure the quality or effectiveness of Supporting People services. Data is, however, available on a number of measures where Supporting People services, or more accurately legacy services, have contributed either directly or indirectly to results, and on a number of other services which assist vulnerable people to live independently. Some data is available on cost.
- 200 The details of the data used to inform comparisons are included in the data appendix to this report. Where possible, we have compared the council with other councils in its Audit Commission family group (councils with similar general characteristics). We have also compared the council with average indicator for all England and all metropolitan councils.
- 201 Overall, based on the performance assessment framework and best value indicators the council compares reasonably well against other councils.
- 202 In terms of the resources it has secured to deliver Supporting People services, it is around average for the grant per head of population for county council areas, and above average in relation to pipeline funding secured for 2003/04.
- 203 Overall provision is lower than the national average, although accommodation based support is higher. Provision is particularly low for homeless people, young

people, frail older people, and people with a physical disability or sensory impairment. In contrast, the amount of provision for people with learning disabilities and sheltered housing is high in comparison to other councils.

204 Excluding community alarms and sheltered housing the average unit cost of Supporting People services in Lancashire is higher than the national average but lower than the North West regional comparison. Learning disability provision and services for people with a physical disability or sensory impairment have high comparable unit costs.

205 In the performance assessment framework indicators for 2002/03:

- ◆ The council performed significantly above the average for the percentage of adults with mental health problems helped to live at home, the number of delayed hospital discharges for older people and the items of equipment costing less than £1,000 delivered within 3 weeks.
- ◆ The council performed above average in the number of admissions of supported residents aged 18-64 and those aged 65 or over to residential/nursing care.
- ◆ The council performed averagely in relation to emergency psychiatric re-admissions, adults with physical disabilities helped to live at home, adults with learning disabilities helped to live at home, older people helped to live at home, and admissions to hospital of people aged 75 or over due to hypothermia or a fall.

206 In the best value performance indicators for 2002/03:

- ◆ The level of the equality standard for local government to which the council conforms was average in comparison to other councils, as was the number of racial incidents recorded. Performance in response to the racial incidents that resulted in action matched the top 25 per cent of councils.
- ◆ There is mixed performance across the districts against a number of indicators which include the average time for processing new housing benefit claims. The level of the equality standard for local government to which each council conforms, the number of domestic violence refuge places available, racial incidents recorded by the authority and racial incidents that resulted in further action.
- ◆ District council performance is average or above average against indicators measuring the length of stay in bed and breakfast accommodation and the length of stay in hostel accommodation.

## Summary

207 Overall, we judge that Lancashire County Council is delivering a poor, zero star service. There are some positive features with the programme including clear aims, structures such as a commissioning body and a core strategy group in place and a well advanced review programme. However, these are outweighed by some very significant weakness. These include:

- ◆ how few contracts are in place, the poor overall relationship with service providers;
- ◆ weak approach to ensuring that the programme develops to service the diverse needs of the diverse population; and
- ◆ the lack of work to improve the understanding and secure the participation of service users.

208 Payments are being made to minimise disruption to services and service users, but the data to ensure these payments are accurate is not robust or up to date.

209 Other weaknesses with the Supporting People programme that need to be addressed and which have contributed to our judgement include the following:

- ◆ The engagement, involvement and participation of users is underdeveloped, this is a particular issue for more marginalised groups including engagement with BME communities. Service users do not have sufficient nor effective opportunities to understand the implications of the Supporting People programme for their services or to contribute to their development.
- ◆ Little information is available for service users on the availability of and how to access housing related support services funded through the Supporting People programmes.
- ◆ Performance management, monitoring and reporting need significant further development. The systems, when developed, must provide greater transparency for all the key partners.
- ◆ It is unclear how gaps in provision for vulnerable people who are not currently provided for through the programme, such as services for people suffering from HIV/AIDS, refugees and travellers are to be addressed.

## What are the prospects for improvement to the service?

210 Inspectors have judged the service's prospects for improvement based on its capacity to improve using the four building blocks for effective improvement:

- ◆ ownership of problems and willingness to change;
- ◆ a sustained focus on what matters;
- ◆ the capacity and systems to deliver performance and improvement; and
- ◆ integration of continuous improvement into day to day management.

## Ownership of problems & willingness to change

211 The council accepts that it has been slow to take ownership of the Supporting People programme.

*'Lancashire were slow off the blocks with Supporting People. It hasn't had the profile it needs'. - Council officer.*

*'Lancashire hit big, the County Council were too late in picking up the task they had to do'. - Service provider.*

- 212 Nevertheless it has made progress and developed partnerships that bring together 22 separate organisations, admittedly with different degrees of commitment. Partners are committed to working together and there is a desire for improvements.
- 213 The commissioning body has also accepted the need to streamline and speed up decision making. An executive of the commissioning body, including membership of the each of the various agency types has been established to make decisions while retaining a cross agency view and accountability.
- 214 The probation service has been engaged in the Supporting People programme in Lancashire. Probation is felt to be a significant player with the commitment of senior management. They are positive about their links to Supporting People although to date it has only ensured that legacy funded accommodation is protected, rather than looking more widely at the needs of offenders. Probation's strategic input is enhanced through their close involvement in work with the drug action team, and other initiatives.
- 215 Primary care trusts (PCTs) are also represented although to differing degrees. Nevertheless there is a confidence amongst the representatives that they understand the Supporting People agenda and that they can bring health issues along to the partnership and that they can make a real contribution.

- 216 There is ownership of some problems but at the commencement of the inspection not all were being addressed. The partnership has grasped the problem of the budget shortfall and taken a number of unpopular and difficult decisions. These include:
- ◆ honouring all late claims to transitional housing benefit;
  - ◆ setting a zero inflation rate for 2004/05;
  - ◆ limiting growth and pipeline funding; and
  - ◆ putting in place a robust review programme.
- 217 The commissioning body has also set a strategic direction for the development of services within Lancashire and priorities.
- 218 We were, however, not convinced that the council or the commissioning body had taken ownership of other important problems with the programme. There was a concentration of attention on review of service provision when few contracts are in place. This had not been recognised as an issue, particularly for providers. The council and the commissioning body have used the inspection process to focus on the weaknesses raised and have acted promptly to address them with some early signs of success.
- 219 There was evidence of a culture of blame. Identifying problems but seeking to attribute responsibility rather than getting to grips with the problem to sort it out. Data reconciliation problems that continue and the impact this has is evidence of this. Blame acts as a barrier to taking ownership of problems and resolution of issues.
- 220 The other major area where there were no signs of ownership are in building relationships with service providers, and in particular external providers. Providers are key to the delivery of Supporting People services and it is vital to the success of the programme to maintain their confidence and commitment. Providers were feeling intimidated, disempowered and excluded from the process.
- 221 We understand that the council will not be popular with those service providers who are faced with a reduction in funding following a service review but these feelings are voiced by providers from more than one client group. Consequently there is a need to deal particularly sensitively with these issues and be very open, transparent and inclusive with decisions. We did not see evidence of this sensitivity although service providers have reported early signs of a sea change in this area.
- 222 Decisions and actions have served to reinforce the negative views from the providers perspective. Excluding external providers from any representation on the decision making bodies confirms in some providers minds the opinion that in house providers are given favourable treatment, at least in access to information.
- 223 Concentration on review activity and a lack of speed or, in their eyes, inclination to sort out contract schedules can be seen to confirm the view that the lack of a contract is used as a bargaining tactic to reduce provider funds. The list of eligible/ineligible tasks were understood by providers to be already decided.
- 224 This is an area that the commissioning body needs to address urgently to restore trust and good working relations. Efforts need to be made to engage with all service providers in a meaningful way before decisions are taken.
- 225 Senior managers in health and social services are aware that Supporting People grant is funding some care services which will be ineligible for funding following a service review. Nevertheless, discussions on how to continue to fund these services ineligible for Supporting People grant are only just beginning. There was no early acceptance that this was an issue that could and should be addressed by the partners. Moving to joint commissioning and joint review of services is the

first step in the right direction and an indication that ownership of this issue is now being taken.

- 226 Councillors have not been sufficiently encouraged to take ownership of the Supporting People programme. There is some oversight and monitoring by the portfolio holder within the county council, but efforts to draw in the engagement of district councillors have not met with any success. District councillors had little knowledge of Supporting People funding for their areas and key local Supporting People issues. Much is said to be the result of the historical position where districts were responsible for housing matters and part of this responsibility is seen to have transferred both to the county council and from councillors to officers.
- 227 It is a concern that the Supporting People management and partnerships or social services management had not detected the deteriorating state of relationships with some providers and acted earlier to try and remedy the situation. The position with contracts is not seen as an issue for district councils or PCTs who are content to receive payments on account and have more confidence that contracts and adjusting payments will happen at some point.
- 228 More pleasing, however, is the council's acceptance of these deficiencies once they have been pointed out. There is serious commitment from senior officers, the elected member portfolio holder within the county council and the commissioning body partnership that they need to do something about these problems, and address them quickly. An improvement plan with high level and regular monitoring arrangements has been put in place. It is clear from proposal that the council is serious about making these changes.

## A sustained focus on what matters

- 229 The primary focus for the Supporting People programme in Lancashire has been to move from legacy to Supporting People funding smoothly without disruption to vulnerable service users and remaining within budget. To some extent it has achieved this. Services are being maintained the same as they were pre Supporting People and expenditure is forecast to be within the allocated budget.
- 230 The question is whether this focus is on the things that matter? The answer is that the council and the commissioning body has sustained a focus on the finances of the programme, but at the expense of some other important aspects of the programme. The other aspects are important for the programme to be sustainable.
- 231 Within Lancashire there has been a sustained focus on the review programme. This, quite rightly, has focused on high cost, high risk, late THB and new services and whilst it has not yet delivered major savings for the programme, it is well advanced and is driving improvements in the quality of services provided to users. Reviews will also benefit from attempts to establish which tasks are eligible for Supporting People funding and which are not.
- 232 There is also some focus on establishing a robust assessment of need to inform the five year strategy. Some good work is being carried out, but there remain gaps in the assessment. For example information on the needs of travellers in Lancashire, are not included in current assessments.
- 233 The commissioning body is honouring all late claims to THB which ensures that services are maintained to the vulnerable clients which they serve. Where funding has been received from the ODPM for pipeline schemes, these have been supported and allowed to progress after some delay through the need to remodel due to reduced funding. These schemes are in line with the priorities shown in the Supporting People shadow strategy.
- 234 There has, however, been a lack of focus on three main areas. These are:
- ◆ the need to put in place interim contracts;

- ◆ building effective relationships with service providers to deliver Supporting People services; and
- ◆ engaging meaningfully with current and potential service users.

235 Without interim contracts the foundations for the Supporting People programme have not been put in place. As one manager commented:

*'We're building the roof before we've built the foundations'. - Council officer.*

Whilst payments have been put into place to maintain services, there is still no definitive agreement on who, where and how much service is provided with a substantial number of providers. This is eleven months after the April 2003 go live date for Supporting People and is vital to establish a starting point. Some efforts have been made to resolve the reconciliation queries in order for contract schedules to be agreed, but insufficient for the size and complexity of the task. No real attention has been paid to what is a growing problem.

236 Changes of people moving in and out of schemes since April 2003 add to the complexity and make the task more difficult the longer it takes time goes on. This is exacerbated by the fact that not all changes are being notified to the Supporting People team.

237 Systems are not in place to ensure that cessations or changes of housing benefit, which has the potential to affect the rates amount of Supporting People grant paid, are all notified to the Supporting People team. A service level agreement is under discussion with housing benefit managers but not yet agreed. There is an urgent need to ensure that systems are in place to capture all necessary changes.

238 Building relationships with providers, particularly external providers, is another key area not identified as a focus for effort and attention. The lack of contracts has had a detrimental effect on the relationships with a number of service providers, particularly external service providers. Not only do providers have administrative problems allocating Supporting People grant to credit individual service user accounts, some providers see the slowness in resolving interim contracts as a tactic used to increase uncertainty and seek approval to reduced contractual rates. Confidence and trust is lacking and there are few signs of the Supporting People team and providers pulling together to resolve difficulties.

239 Again this is compounded by provider's perception of the way that decisions are taken and the consultation with Supporting People. Providers do not feel as if they have the opportunity to put their views forward before decisions are taken. Many feel that decisions are taken and they are informed, rather than having any opportunity to influence the decision beforehand. Decisions to exclude external providers from the core strategy group only serve to reinforce this view.

240 It has reached the point with some providers where communications issued by Supporting People team are not read, listened to, believed or understood. The list of eligible and ineligible tasks is a particular example. In such a climate providers become reluctant to carry out development work needed to put new services in place. As one commented:

*'Prospects for the future are a concern, cuts in funding will destabilise small providers and be detrimental to stimulate activity'. - Service Provider.*

241 Engaging with service users is also a significant gap in the programme so far. There is no doubt that this is not easy, and some informal links have been made with some established consultation mechanisms. There are proposals to develop formal links with the numerous mechanisms in place to engage with service users but these are not all in place yet.

- 242 The council's approach to cross authority work, refusing to fund inward placements, is another example of the council putting financial considerations ahead of any need to reach mutually beneficial agreements.
- 243 There is also a late focus on seeking agreements with the social services department and PCTs on how care services, needed by vulnerable service users but ineligible following review for continued Supporting People funding, will continue to be funded. Discussions have begun but are at an early stage and work is proceeding on proposals to jointly review services. An undertaking has also been given not to withdraw Supporting People funding until a decision is reached. However, a number of services have already been reviewed and providers and users are left with the uncertainty until final proposals are made.
- 244 It is too early to see how resources are being re-allocated. There has been no headroom for funding to be re-allocated. To date, support has been given to maintaining legacy services and progressing modified schemes which received ODPM funding.
- 245 The council have responded quickly to our identification of these weaknesses. An improvement plan has been introduced to target specifically those areas above which have been identified as a weakness. Service reviews have been suspended to release resources to progress contracts and sort out differences, including putting systems in place to ensure that records are kept up to date. A mechanism is being developed to deal with the detailed contract schedule differences that remain.
- 246 Arrangements to engage with service providers have been changed to improve involvement, trust and relations. Meetings are being arranged, some have already been held in more local areas, consideration is being given to how best to secure provider representation on the core strategy group, a draft consultation and communication strategy has been prepared for discussion, and measures are being introduced to enable provider satisfaction to be monitored.
- 247 Plans have been put in place to integrate user consultation for Supporting People with activities that already occur within the county. This includes co-ordinating consultation activity which the county, districts, partners, and providers all undertake to better understand the needs and views of their service users. It includes ensuring the needs of hard to reach service users are captured.
- 248 Finally early plans have been put in place to develop a meaningful performance management system for Supporting People. This will not only measure progress on improvements and internal process, but also begin to measure real, indirect and direct, outcomes for service users.

## **The capacity and systems to deliver performance and improvement**

- 249 The council is in the process of building up its Supporting People programme capacity. As part of a wider departmental restructure, a new head of adults services has been recruited who will line manage the Supporting People team and sit on the commissioning body. He is tasked with raising the profile of Supporting People within the county council and working with the district councils to strengthen partnership working.
- 250 Additional management capacity is being added to the team, adding an extra post and separating strategic responsibilities from operational ones. This is needed as Supporting People has lacked leadership and clarity over its operational priorities to manage the transition smoothly and seek user focused service improvements. Until this position is filled, to make progress quickly the county council has allocated the previous accountable officer to work on the programme to ensure it develops quickly and addresses the weaknesses identified.

- 251 The team itself is significant in size, committed to the work and competent. It includes a strong review contingent with a range of relevant professional backgrounds. In February 2004 it was agreed that two review and development officers would be offered an honorarium for 6 months to undertake contract work to speed up the process. This is operational from 1 March 2004.
- 252 The team already has financial and information technology expertise. A new computer system is due to come on line in April 2004 which will provide better and easier working for staff, facilities for producing automatic payment schedules and improved reporting.
- 253 A service level agreement is being negotiated with housing benefit managers to put in place the necessary arrangements to enable changes to housing benefits to be notified to the team.
- 254 An executive group of the commissioning body has been put in place to speed up decision making. The body retains representation from all the professional agency groups, for example PCT, district council, county council, and probation. An appeals panel, as yet unused, is also in place.
- 255 Councillors, particularly district councillors, are not well engaged in the process. Proposals have been made and are included in the improvement plan on what the programme needs to do to better engage with councillors. These are included in the improvement plan and include:
- ◆ creating a pool of trained councillors to hear appeals;
  - ◆ a written procedure and brief for councillors;
  - ◆ regular updates to councillors by the district lead officer;
  - ◆ inclusion on the newsletter circulation; and
  - ◆ a rolling programme of training and events, including a conference to debate the future Supporting People strategy.
- 256 There is adequate capacity to deal with fairer charging assessments but we are less clear about proposals to ensure how all those entitled to an assessment become aware of that and how they can ask for one.
- 257 Systems that have been absent but are needed, and are now being developed, to help the Supporting People programme develop include:
- ◆ a means of securing the real interest and engagement of local councillors;
  - ◆ a means of allowing representatives nominated by providers attendance at core strategy group meetings, whilst not compromising confidentiality or providing favourable access to information;
  - ◆ an agreed protocol to improve information provision and transparency including:
    - ◆ consultation with users and providers prior to a decision being taken;
    - ◆ advance agendas of meetings;
    - ◆ provision of minutes of meetings;
    - ◆ named contacts within each organisation – provider, county council and district council;
    - ◆ feedback on decisions taken and explanations of why decisions were reached, with a clear route to an appeals/arbitration panel to resolve any disputes; and
    - ◆ a means to resolve contract schedule disputes - that brings together housing benefit managers, providers, and the Supporting People manager.
- 258 What is really needed is a conscious effort and plan to rebuild confidence and trust between Supporting People and external providers that ensures the two

work together. This is required in order to deliver the maximum benefit that the Supporting People grant can bring for vulnerable people in need of low level housing related support within Lancashire. This will take time, but it needs planning, resourcing and managing. The first stage in this process is for the council to accept that these problems exist and to work collaboratively with service providers and service users to resolve them. We consider that this work is beginning to happen.

- 259 Risk assessment, contingency planning and service planning are in their early stages of development. Some good early work has been carried out to identify the full range of risks to the programme and actions to minimise their likelihood of happening or impact. Supporting People are included in departmental business plans, and there are proposals to follow social services emergency procedures for schemes failures. More work is required to take this work forward into a prioritised and properly resourced action plan that will monitor and measure progress.
- 260 A start has now been made to establish a comprehensive performance management system with meaningful measures and targets that will demonstrate:
- ◆ how the programme is progressing against its stated objectives; and
  - ◆ what contribution the programme makes to county council corporate objectives, local strategic plan objectives, the local public service agreement, and partner agency objectives and targets.
- 261 This work is planned in line with the development of the five year strategy and has taken a significant step forward with the recent paper 'An approach to Performance Management for Supporting People'.
- 262 There is a clear commitment already in place and followed to support providers through the review process and put in place action plans to raise standards of performance and the quality of services. Forty two providers have had pre-review training. Arrangements are in place to ensure that appropriate advocacy arrangements exist to facilitate user involvement in service reviews.
- 263 There are a host of established mechanisms within the county council, district council, PCT and probation service to engage with service users. Plans to link Supporting People and these mechanisms are developing. Gaps also exist with some client groups, such as HIV/AIDS and these need to be addressed in the plans.
- 264 A piece of research has been commissioned from the University of Lancashire to pull together what is known and undertake further research to establish the Supporting People needs of Lancashire's BME communities.
- 265 A range of training has been delivered to providers, both at the provider forum and elsewhere. This includes training delivered to groups and to individual providers. Topics covered include finance, contracts, monitoring and returns. However, given the low level of agreed contracts and compliance with monitoring returns, it would be useful to see an advance programme of training. To be determined in consultation with providers, which shows how they will be further equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to further develop their services in line with Supporting People programme objectives. No such plan exists at the moment.
- 266 There is also a track record within the social services department of the council of responding positively to recommendations made in reviews and inspections, and in addressing issues raised by the performance assessment framework.
- 267 Performance management and business planning is well established within the departments. Supporting People, however, is not well linked into this process. There is little formal routine monitoring of Supporting People progress and spending above the level of accountable officer within the department.

## Integration of continuous improvement into day to day management

- 268 The council is becoming more engaged in the Supporting People programme but there is a long way to go. The portfolio holder is showing an interest in progress. The council's overview and scrutiny committee have received a report on the programme, but no detailed scrutiny has been carried out. A short audit was carried out on the programme as a result of risks identified in the annual audit letter and highlighted a number of issues. These included:
- ◆ contracts and reconciliation; and
  - ◆ needs and gap analysis is weak.
- 269 At a corporate level the council opens itself up to challenge and inspection to help it reach its ambitions. In the past it has responded quickly and positively to recommendations made by review bodies and inspections.
- 270 Partnership working is well established across a number of areas, and internal partnerships with statutory agencies within Supporting People are established and improving. However these do not include relationships with a significant number of external providers.
- 271 There are mechanisms in place in many areas to engage with various client groups, such as people with learning disabilities, which are being developed and improved. Plans are in place to formalise links to Supporting People with these groups.
- 272 Service planning is developed in the council and the social services department. These set out in clearly defined objectives and programmes of action to meet those objectives. Whilst this may on the one hand be regarded as a strength as there are the skills available within the council, it is also a weakness in that the council has failed to learn from what it does elsewhere and apply the corporate systems to all parts of the organisation including Supporting People.
- 273 Much of the corporate support framework for Supporting People is in place. However, the features which are essential to integrating continuous improvement into the work are only now beginning to develop for Supporting People. These include:
- ◆ The links between wider priorities and goals and individual targets for the Supporting People programme. These need to demonstrate how Supporting People contributes to the priorities and strategic direction of the council, the PCT and probation.
  - ◆ Engagement with current and potential service users to understand their needs does not take place.
  - ◆ Service standards have not been discussed, agreed and set.
  - ◆ Targets to measure and monitor performance are not yet in place.
  - ◆ Service planning is not a current feature of the service.
  - ◆ Although planned, there are no performance management and monitoring arrangements in place.
  - ◆ In response to the inspection, the council have drawn up a detailed action plan to drive improvements. It addresses all the key issues, although resources to progress each action are not clearly identified.
- 274 Most of these features are proposed for inclusion in the five year strategy. Currently they are at various stages of development.

## Summary

- 275 Overall, we judge that Lancashire County Council has promising prospects for delivering top performing improvements in the delivery of its Supporting People programme. There are some strengths at a corporate level and within the partnership and team. Significant weaknesses within the programme have been accepted and the council has changed management arrangements, and allocated additional staffing resources to resolve longstanding difficulties and drive the programme forward. An improvement plan that addresses the major weaknesses in the programme has been put in place and robust and frequent monitoring arrangements established.
- 276 There is a commitment to improvement from all stakeholders involved in the Supporting People programme. The Supporting People partnerships have set a strategic direction for the programme, have put in place a robust system and team to carry out service reviews and have taken some difficult finance related decisions. The review programme is key to delivering improvements and unlocking funding for re-investment and it is well advanced in Lancashire.
- 277 Poor signs of ownership of some significant issues that have hindered progress are now in place and there is a sense of willingness to put things right. Plans are in place to address the lack of engagement by district councillors. The focus of the programme to date has been on making savings and not on the need to engage meaningfully with both providers and service users. Progress in getting contracts in place, and ensuring data is accurate and up to date is very slow. This is accepted as being the foundation for Supporting People and is beginning to change.
- 278 The council and partnership approach has in the past alienated a significant proportion of external service providers who felt intimidated and disempowered. The council is now eager to rebuild this relationship. Without the full engagement of the service providers, it will be difficult to improve services and develop new services in response to identified needs. Plans to strengthen the management of Supporting People by better oversight and direction at assistant director level is encouraging and will inevitably take time to produce tangible improvements.

## Appendices

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

### Documents reviewed

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

- ◆ District Community, Corporate and Strategic Plans.
- ◆ County Community Plan.
- ◆ County and District Best Value Performance Plans 2003/04.
- ◆ District Housing strategies, Housing Strategy Statements and Homelessness Strategies.
- ◆ Supporting People Interim Shadow Strategy.
- ◆ Commissioning Strategies for Older People, Services to Adults, and Services to Children and Families, Valuing People, and Services for Vulnerable Young People.
- ◆ County Consultation and Procurement Strategies.
- ◆ Best Value reviews of Learning Disability Services and Services to People with Physical Disability or Sensory Impairment.
- ◆ Service Review timetable document.
- ◆ Implementation Plan.
- ◆ Minutes of meetings of various groups.
- ◆ Supporting People Newsletters.
- ◆ Better Care: Higher Standards Long Term Care Charter.

### Reality checks undertaken

When we went on site we carried out a number of different checks, building on the work described above, in order to get a full picture of how good the service is. These on site reality checks were designed to gather evidence about what it is like to use the service and to see how well it works. Our reality checks included a number of mystery shopper enquiries and observing meetings of the core strategy group. We met with 37 representatives of service providers at an open meeting. Analyses were undertaken of the complaints register and completed service reviews including examination of a sample of case files. We also undertook visits to or interviews with people shown below:

### List of people interviewed

Focus Groups	BME community representatives
	County and District council councillors
	District Council Housing Benefit managers
	Fairer Charging and Subsidy staff
	Heads of Housing from District Councils

	Members of the commissioning body
	Mental health service providers
	Older People
	PCT representatives on the commissioning body
	Registered Social Landlords
	Service users who have a learning disability and carers
	Service users who have mental health problems and carers
	Social Services Planning & Commissioning Managers
	Supporting People team members
Andy Brown	Supporting People Finance Officer
Andy McHugh	Supporting People Lead Officer in Blackburn (telephone)
Ann Fitzpatrick	Supporting People Lead Officer
Bob Gower	Manager of Leaving Care services
Conrad Edymann	Drugs Action Team
Cllr Chris Cheetham	Portfolio Holder
Cllr Mrs Harding,	Leader of Lancashire County Council
Dave Burnham	Accountable Officer
Fred	Supporting People Lead Officer in Blackpool
Ian Broughton	Head of Housing, Pendle Council and chair of the commissioning body
Ian Phillips	Assistant Chief Officer, Probation
Jackie Dodd	Supporting People Lead Officer in Cumbria
Jeff Pogson	County Principal Accountant
Mary Mather	Supporting People Co-ordinator
Richard Jones	Director of Social Services
Roger Hulme	Head of Finance
Steven Leaf	Supporting People Officer
Scheme visits	Burnley & Padiham Community Housing
	Burnley Pendle Rossendale PCT
	Burnley Women's Refuge

Cottage & Rural Enterprises

---

English Churches Housing (telephone)

---

Hyndbrook House

---

Inward House (Drugs)

---

IDIF Supported Housing Needs

---

Learning Disability Supported Living Scheme

---

North British Housing Association

---

Preston Care & Repair

---

Stonham Chorley (Offender)

---

Street Service

---

## Demographic information

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

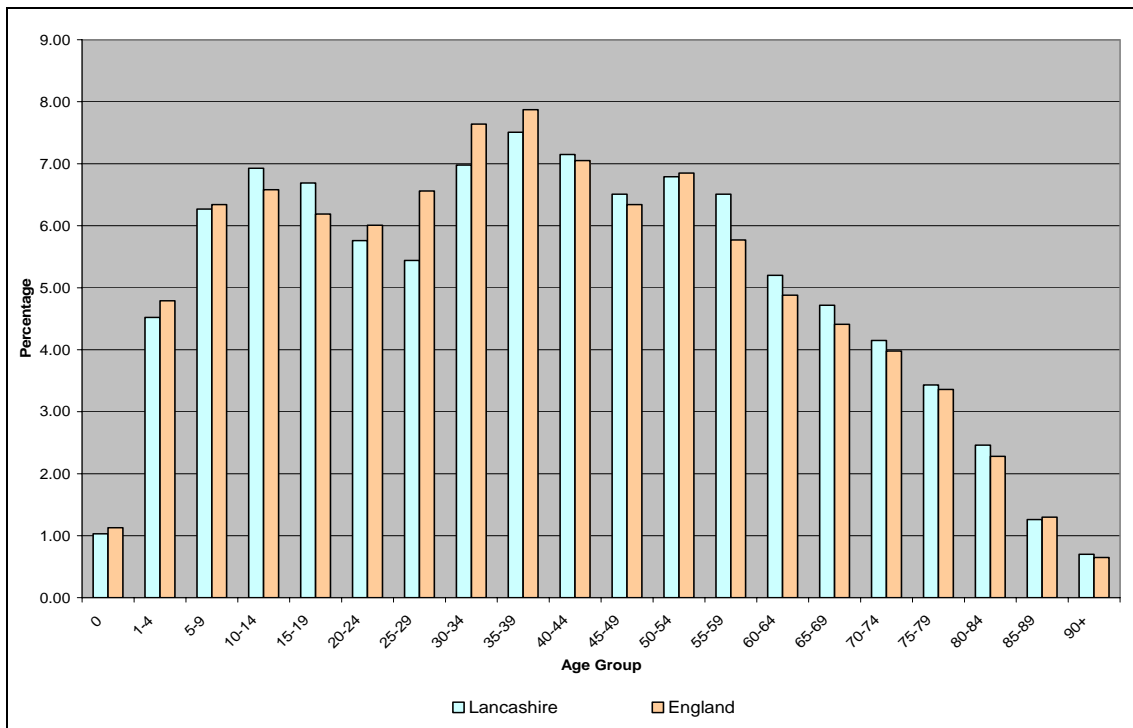
Measure	Lancashire	England
Population (mid-2001)	1,134,974	-
Percentage of the population aged 65+ (mid-2001)	21.44	15.9
Percentage from minority ethnic groups (all groups other than White – British 2001)	4.58	12.5
Percentage unemployment (claimant count rate April 2003)	2	2.6
Deprivation Index (1 highest, 354 lowest) <sup>8</sup>	Hyndburn (45)	-
Multiple deprivation – wards in the most deprived 10 per cent <sup>9</sup>	30 of 256	-
Access to services - wards in the most deprived 10 per cent <sup>10</sup>	11 of 256	-

<sup>8</sup> Indices of Deprivation 2000, average ward score for the authority.

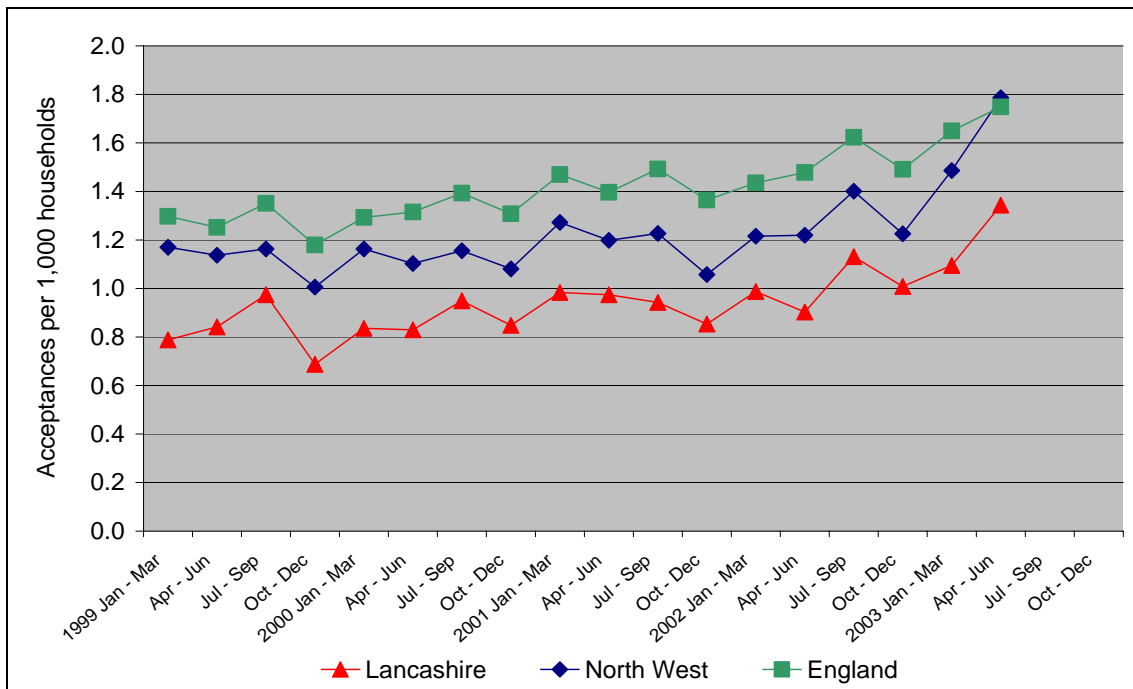
<sup>9</sup> Indices of Deprivation 2000, rank of index of multiple deprivation rank (out of 8414 wards).

<sup>10</sup> Indices of Deprivation 2000, rank of access domain (out of 8414 wards).

Percentage of the population in each age group compared with England



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



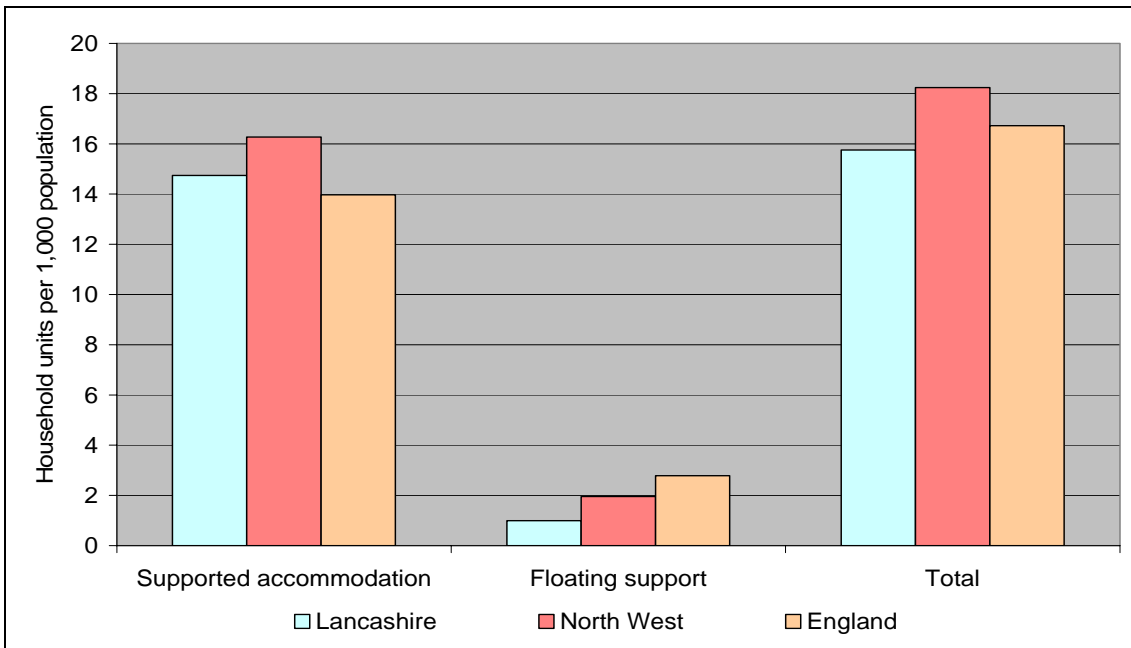
## Performance information

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

- ◆ data for services funded through the Supporting People programme;
- ◆ comprehensive performance assessment scores;
- ◆ star ratings for social services;
- ◆ performance assessment framework indicators for social services; and
- ◆ relevant best value performance indicators.

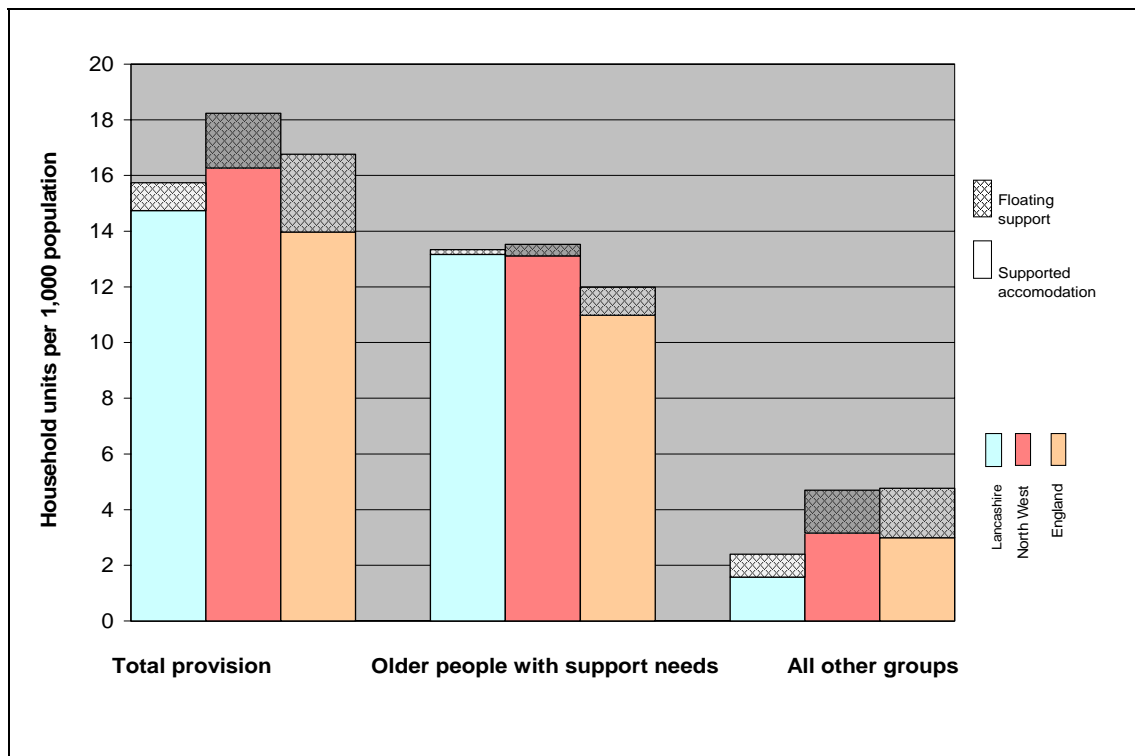
### Supporting People data

#### Total service provision funded through Supporting People<sup>11</sup>

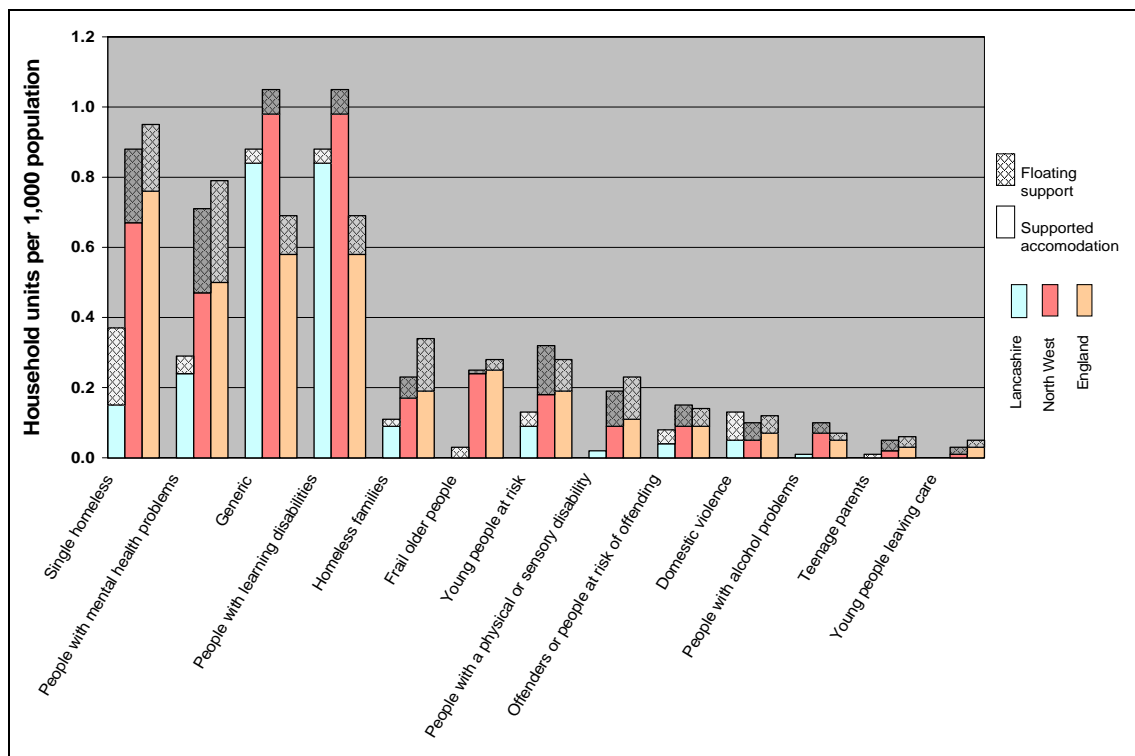


<sup>11</sup> Source: Platinum cut data, ODPM November 2003. Excludes community alarms, home improvement agencies, leasehold schemes and pipeline services.

Services for older people with support needs compared with the region and England<sup>12</sup>



Services for other groups compared with the region and England<sup>13</sup>



<sup>12</sup> Source: Platinum cut data, ODPM November 2003. Excludes community alarms, home improvement agencies, leasehold schemes and pipeline services.

<sup>13</sup> Source: Platinum cut data, ODPM November 2003. Excludes community alarms, home improvement agencies, leasehold schemes and pipeline services.

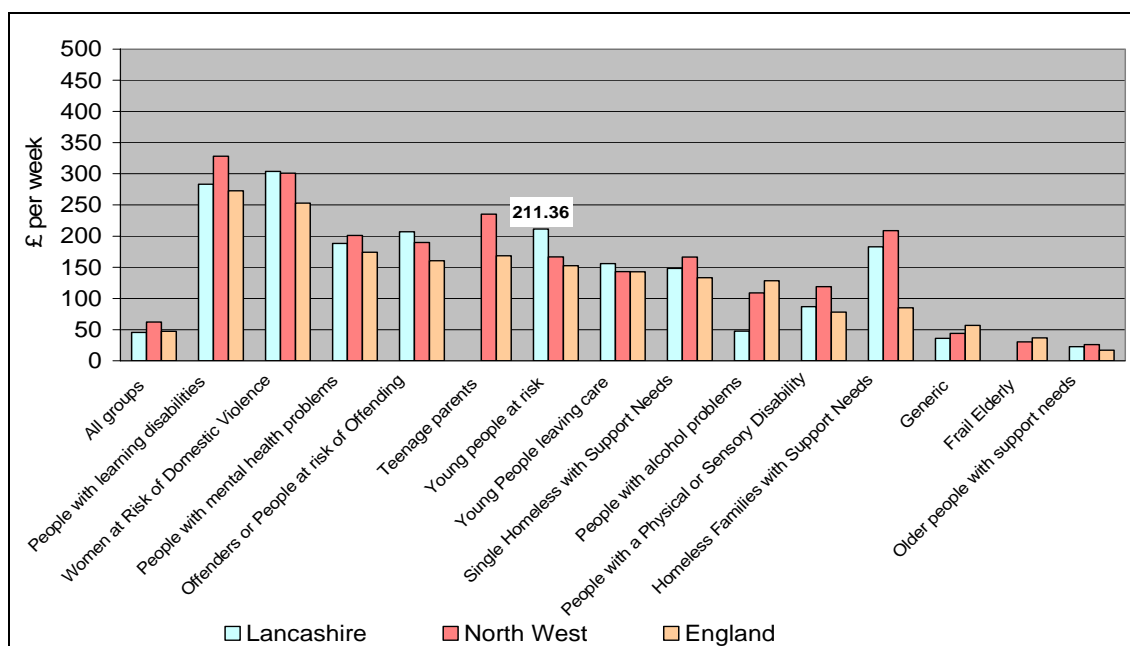
**Funding for Supporting People in 2003/04**

	Final Supporting People grant 2003/04	Pipeline allocation June 2003	Administration grant 2003/04
Lancashire	£ 30,659,687	£ 867,295	£ 767,307.86

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

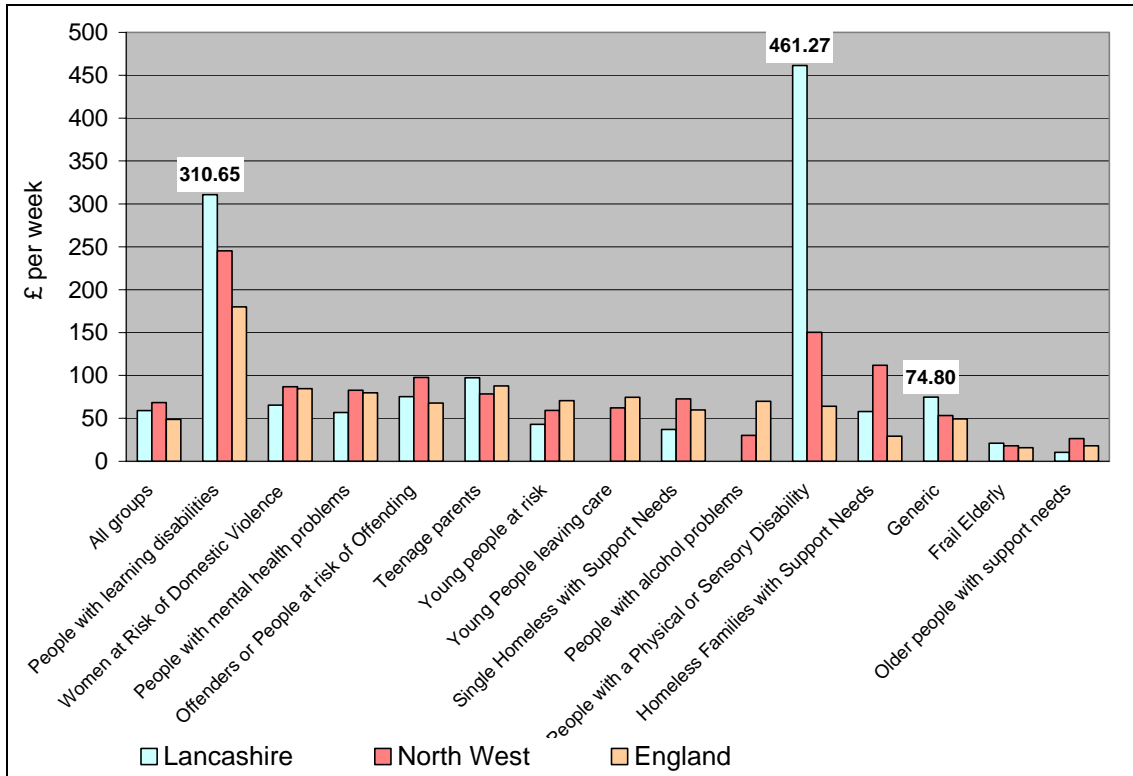
	Per head of population	Per unit	Per unit excluding community alarms	Per unit excluding community alarms & sheltered housing
Lancashire	£ 0.52	£ 24.39	£ 28.15	£ 86.62
North West	£ 0.86	£ 33.04	£ 39.06	£ 91.57
England	£ 0.70	£ 28.30	£ 34.71	£ 76.37

**Unit costs of supported accommodation compared with the region and England (labels show costs in the highest 25 per cent)<sup>14</sup>**

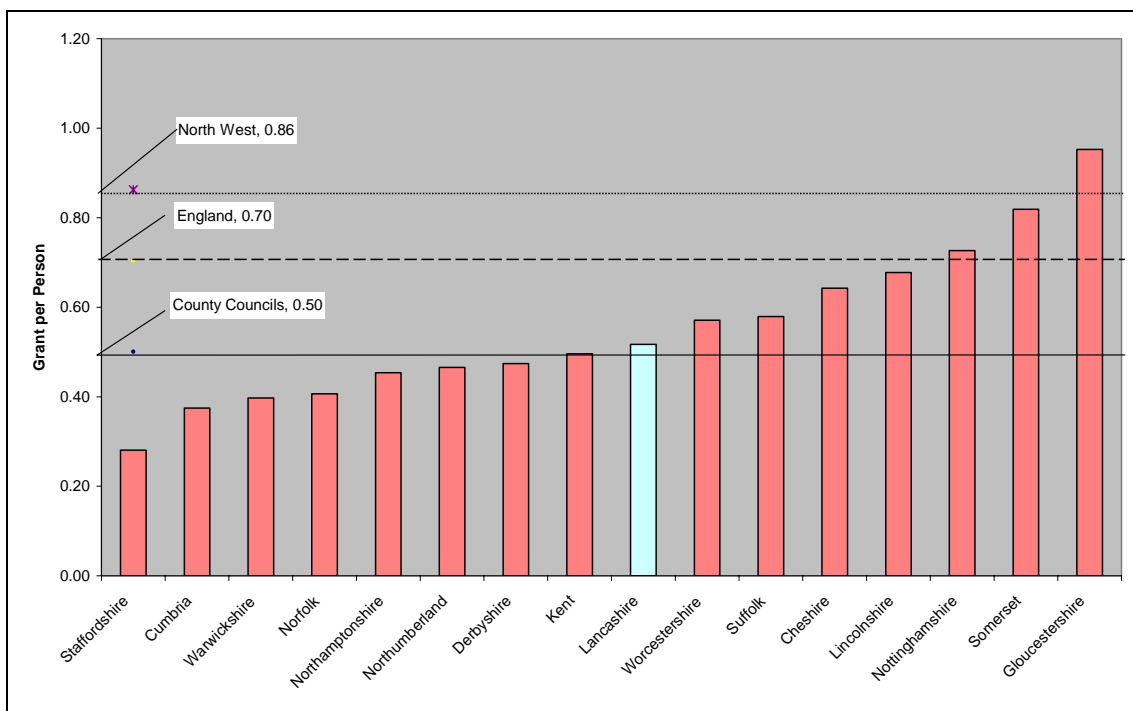


<sup>14</sup> Source: Platinum cut data, ODPM November 2003. Excludes community alarms, home improvement agencies, leasehold schemes and pipeline services.

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

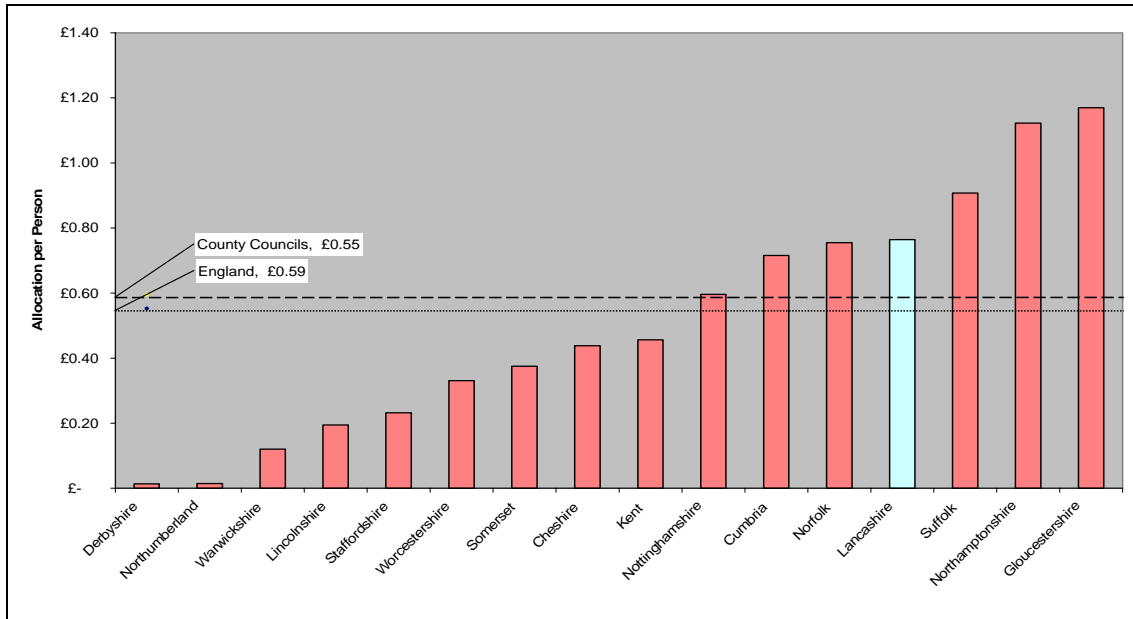


**Supporting People grant per head of population per week compared with nearest neighbours<sup>15</sup>, all county councils and all English councils (2003/04)**

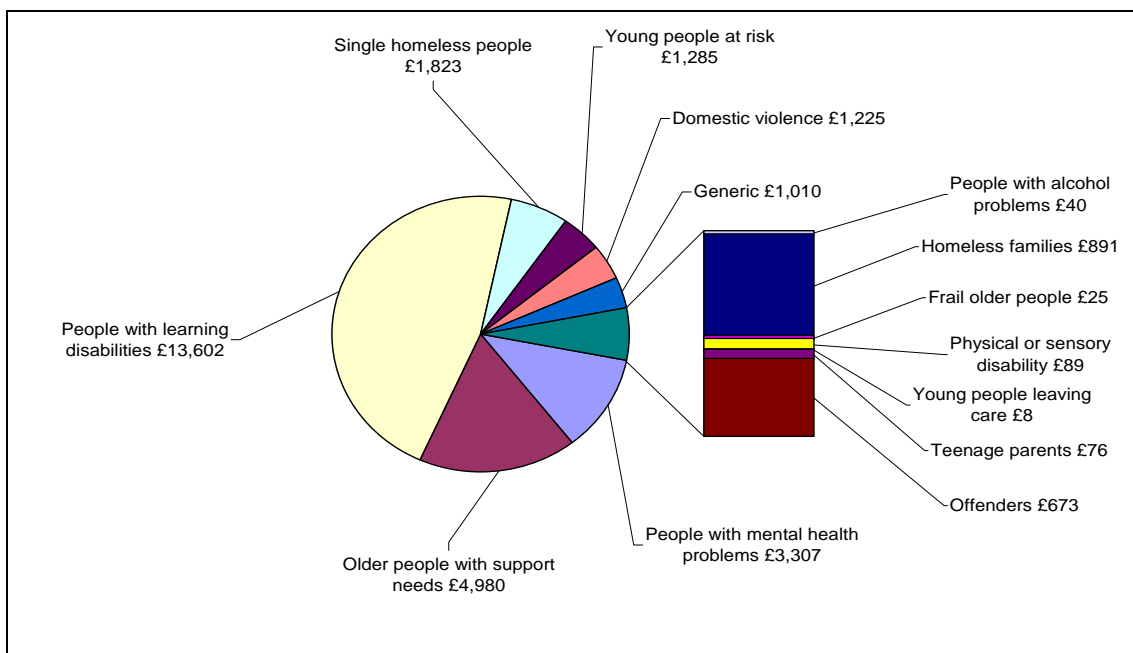


<sup>15</sup> A comparator group of similar councils.

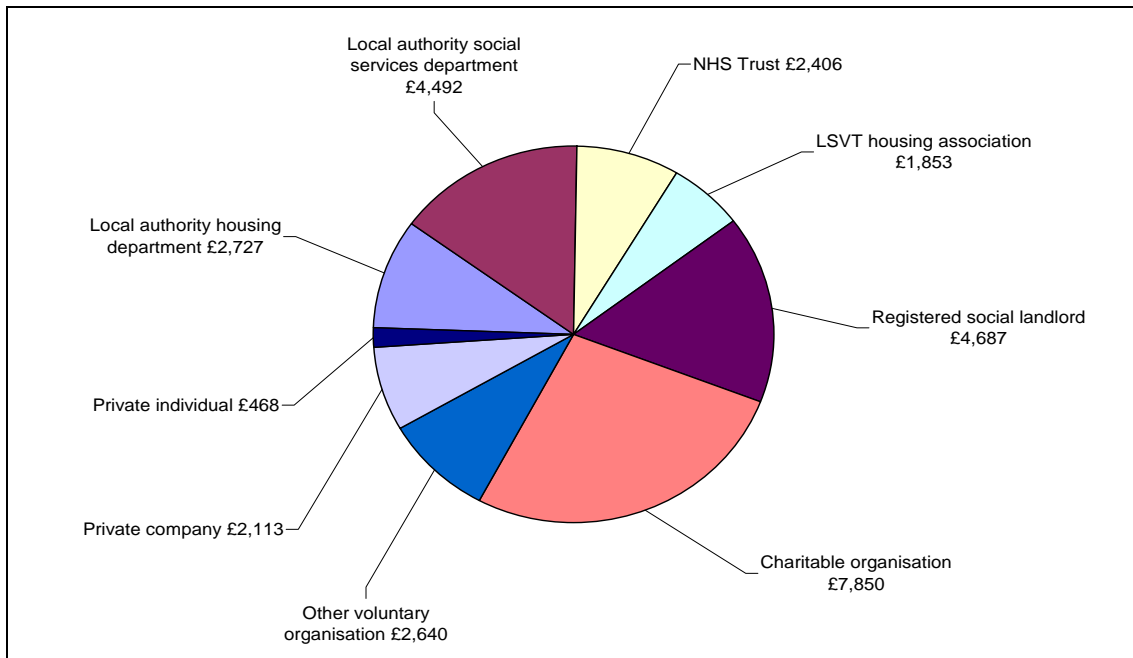
**Pipeline allocation per head of population compared with nearest neighbours, all county councils and all English councils.**



**Share of spending between user groups (£000s)**



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



**Social Services star ratings November 2003**

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	Some	Promising	★
Children's Services	Some	Promising	(2)

**Social services performance indicators**

**Performance Assessment Framework indicators 2002/03**

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

Lancashire	
Significantly above average (●●●●)	Adults with mental health problems helped to live at home (C31) Items of equipment costing less than £1,000 delivered within 3 weeks (D38) Delayed discharges for older people (D41)
Above average (●●●)	Admissions of older people to residential or nursing care (C26) Admissions of adults aged 18-64 to residential or nursing care (C27)
Average (●●)	Emergency psychiatric re-admissions (A6) Adults with physical disabilities helped to live at home

	(C29) Adults with learning disabilities helped to live at home (C30) Older people helped to live at home (C32) Admissions to hospital of people aged 75 or over due to hypothermia or a fall (C33) New clients for whom length of time from first contact to first service was more than six weeks (D43)
Below average (**)	Employment, education & training for care leavers (A4)
Significantly below average (*)	

### Best value performance indicators

#### Performance on relevant indicators in 2002/3 compared with county councils

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

<b>Lancashire</b>	
Within the best 25 per cent	Racial incidents that resulted in further action (BV175)
Average	The level of the equality standard for local government to which the authority conforms (BV2) Racial incidents recorded by the authority (BV174)
Within the worst 25 per cent	Domestic violence refuge places (BV176)

#### District council performance on relevant indicators in 2002/03

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

<b>Burnley</b>	
Within the best 25 per cent	Average time for processing new housing benefit claims (BV78a)
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) Length of stay in hostel accommodation (BV183b) Domestic violence refuge places (BV176)
Within the worst 25 per cent	Racial incidents recorded by the authority (BV174) Racial incidents that resulted in further action (BV175)
<b>Chorley</b>	
Within the best 25 per cent	Energy efficiency of local authority owned dwellings (BV63)

	<p>Length of stay in bed and breakfast accommodation (BV183a)</p> <p>Average time for processing new housing benefit claims (BV78a)</p>
Average	<p>The level of the equality standard for local government to which the authority conforms (BV2)</p> <p>Length of stay in hostel accommodation (BV183b)</p>
Within the worst 25 per cent	<p>Racial incidents recorded by the authority (BV174)</p> <p>Racial incidents that resulted in further action (BV175)</p> <p>Domestic violence refuge places (BV176)</p>
<b>Flyde</b>	
Within the best 25 per cent	<p>Length of stay in hostel accommodation (BV183b)</p> <p>Average time for processing new housing benefit claims (BV78a)</p> <p>Racial incidents recorded by the authority (BV174)</p>
Average	<p>The level of the equality standard for local government to which the authority conforms (BV2)</p>
Within the worst 25 per cent	<p>Length of stay in bed and breakfast accommodation (BV183a)</p> <p>Domestic violence refuge places (BV176)</p>
<b>Hyndburn</b>	
Within the best 25 per cent	<p>Length of stay in bed and breakfast accommodation (BV183a)</p> <p>Racial incidents recorded by the authority (BV174)</p> <p>Domestic violence refuge places (BV176)</p>
Average	<p>The level of the equality standard for local government to which the authority conforms (BV2)</p> <p>Length of stay in hostel accommodation (BV183b)</p> <p>Council homes which did not meet the decent homes standard (BV184a)</p> <p>Average time for processing new housing benefit claims (BV78a)</p>
Within the worst 25 per cent	<p>Energy efficiency of local authority owned dwellings (BV63)</p>
<b>Lancaster</b>	
Within the best 25 per cent	<p>Energy efficiency of local authority owned dwellings (BV63)</p> <p>Length of stay in hostel accommodation (BV183b)</p> <p>Council homes which did not meet the decent homes standard (BV184a)</p> <p>Racial incidents that resulted in further action (BV175)</p>

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)
Within the worst 25 per cent	Average time for processing new housing benefit claims (BV78a) Racial incidents recorded by the authority (BV174) Domestic violence refuge places (BV176)
<b>Pendle</b>	
Within the best 25 per cent	Average time for processing new housing benefit claims (BV78a) Racial incidents recorded by the authority (BV174) Domestic violence refuge places (BV176)
Average	The level of the equality standard for local government to which the authority conforms (BV2) Length of stay in bed and breakfast accommodation (BV183a) Length of stay in hostel accommodation (BV183b) Council homes which did not meet the decent homes standard (BV184a)
Within the worst 25 per cent	Energy efficiency of local authority owned dwellings (BV63)
<b>Preston</b>	
Within the best 25 per cent	Length of stay in bed and breakfast accommodation (BV183a) Racial incidents that resulted in further action (BV175) 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) Length of stay in hostel accommodation (BV183b) Average time for processing new housing benefit claims (BV78a)
Within the worst 25 per cent	Council homes which did not meet the decent homes standard (BV184a) Racial incidents recorded by the authority (BV174)
<b>Ribble Valley</b>	
Within the best 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

	<p>(BV184a)</p> <p>Average time for processing new housing benefit claims (BV78a)</p> <p>Racial incidents recorded by the authority (BV174)</p>
Average	<p>The level of the equality standard for local government to which the authority conforms (BV2)</p> <p>Length of stay in hostel accommodation (BV183b)</p> <p>Domestic violence refuge places (BV176)</p>
Within the worst 25 per cent	
<b>Rossendale</b>	
Within the best 25 per cent	
Average	<p>The level of the equality standard for local government to which the authority conforms (BV2)</p> <p>Energy efficiency of local authority owned dwellings (BV63)</p> <p>Length of stay in bed and breakfast accommodation (BV183a)</p> <p>Length of stay in hostel accommodation (BV183b)</p> <p>Council homes which did not meet the decent homes standard (BV184a)</p>
Within the worst 25 per cent	<p>Average time for processing new housing benefit claims (BV78a)</p> <p>Domestic violence refuge places (BV176)</p>
<b>South Ribble</b>	
Within the best 25 per cent	<p>Racial incidents recorded by the authority (BV174)</p> <p>Domestic violence refuge places (BV176)</p>
Average	<p>The level of the equality standard for local government to which the authority conforms (BV2)</p> <p>Length of stay in bed and breakfast accommodation (BV183a)</p> <p>Length of stay in hostel accommodation (BV183b)</p> <p>Average time for processing new housing benefit claims (BV78a)</p>
Within the worst 25 per cent	
<b>West Lancashire</b>	
Within the best 25 per cent	<p>Length of stay in bed and breakfast accommodation (BV183a)</p> <p>Length of stay in hostel accommodation (BV183b)</p> <p>Racial incidents that resulted in further action (BV175)</p>

Average	<p>The level of the equality standard for local government to which the authority conforms (BV2)</p> <p>Energy efficiency of local authority owned dwellings (BV63)</p> <p>Council homes which did not meet the decent homes standard (BV184a)</p> <p>Domestic violence refuge places (BV176)</p>
Within the worst 25 per cent	<p>Average time for processing new housing benefit claims (BV78a)</p> <p>Racial incidents recorded by the authority (BV174)</p>
<b>Wyre</b>	
Within the best 25 per cent	Racial incidents recorded by the authority (BV174)
Average	<p>The level of the equality standard for local government to which the authority conforms (BV2)</p> <p>Length of stay in bed and breakfast accommodation (BV183a)</p> <p>Length of stay in hostel accommodation (BV183b)</p>
Within the worst 25 per cent	<p>Average time for processing new housing benefit claims (BV78a)</p> <p>Domestic violence refuge places (BV176)</p>

## Supporting People – Housing related support services

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

The Supporting People programme brings together significant funding streams including transitional housing benefit (THB), which has paid for the support costs associated with housing during the implementation phase; the Housing Corporation's supported housing management grant (SHMG) and probation accommodation grant scheme (PAGS) into a single pot to be administered by 150 administering local authorities.

Unitary and metropolitan authorities and counties are designated as an administering authority with the county taking the lead in most cases for the districts in their area.

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

The programme allows for greater diversity of provision tailored to individual needs and delivered in a local strategic context. For example:

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

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