

Supporting People Inspection Report

September 2007



Supporting People

Liverpool City Council

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Supporting People Inspections

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

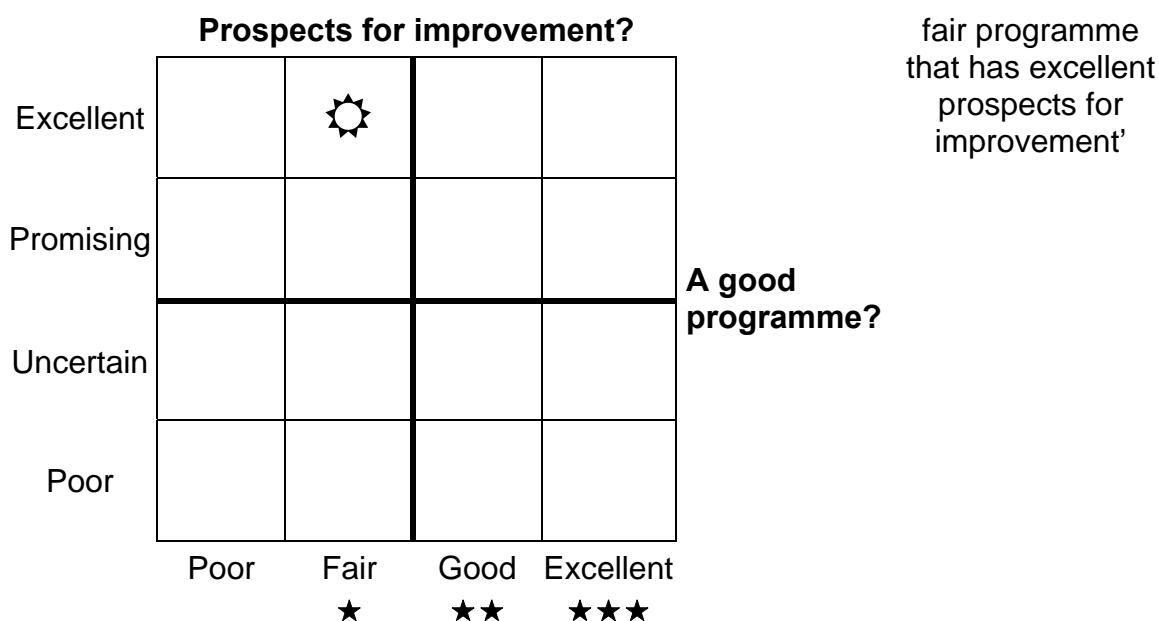
Summary

- 1 Overall we judge that Liverpool City Council (LCC) now administers a fair, one-star Supporting People programme which has excellent prospects for improvement. Previous inspections in September 2004 and December 2005 assessed the Council as delivering a poor, no-star programme with uncertain prospects for improvement.
- 2 Liverpool is a large city in North West England with a population of 447,500. The percentage of the BME population is lower at 5.7 per cent compared to the national figure of 10.44 per cent. Liverpool City Council is Liberal Democrat controlled, and the annual budget for 2006/07 was £690 million. The Supporting People programme covers 329 contracts for 535 services. The programme grant from CLG in 2007 totalled £41,900,943. This delivers 10,331 units of supporting housing comprising of 5,662 accommodation units, 2,056 floating support units and 2,583 community alarm units.
- 3 There has been a shift in the direction of the programme and speed of improvement over the last nine months which is beginning to result in improved outcomes for vulnerable people and service users. This can be attributed to the completion of the needs analysis providing a sound basis for the development of the five-year strategy, and identification of commissioning priorities. This coincided with the introduction of new officers in the posts of Accountable Officer and Lead Officer providing clear direction and improved leadership to the programme, along with the repositioning of the team in one place. Voluntary improvement work carried out by the Audit Commission enabled focus on the key areas of improvement, and the Council has responded well to support from the CLG and Audit Commission over the last year. This has resulted in improvements such as support to providers, service user involvement, and the improved approach for contracting, evaluation, reviewing and procurement.
- 4 However, a number of weaknesses still exist in delivery of the programme. Delays in completing service reviews, the needs analysis, reviewing the five-year strategy and retraction planning for ineligible funding have impacted considerably on the delivery of the programme. This has resulted in delays in addressing value for money, reconfiguring services in line with priorities identified within the five-year strategy and new provision. Areas for improvement include addressing ineligible spend and value for money issues and the development of outcome measures.
- 5 The Council has excellent prospects for improvement. The programme has clear direction and the pace of improvement has increased recently. Demonstrable outcomes for service users include more relevant and better quality services and planned and appropriate opportunities for service user involvement. The restructure of the team and strong leadership with the permanent appointment of officers to key positions provides greater capacity for the programme to deliver planned improvements. Some concerns remain over the level of underspend and delays in addressing ineligible spend have impacted on the ability to deliver some improvements.

Scoring the Supporting People programme

- 6 We have assessed Liverpool City Council as providing a fair, one-star programme that has excellent prospects for improvement. Our judgements are based on the evidence obtained during the inspection and are outlined below.

Figure 1 Scoring chart²



Source: Audit Commission

- 7 We found the programme to be fair because it has a range of strengths including:
- corporate commitment to the delivery and improvement of the programme;
 - improved governance arrangements and improved support and engagement of providers;
 - key partners effectively involved in delivery of the programme with a range of outcomes;
 - appropriate arrangements in place for MAPPAs and adult and child protection;
 - robust eligibility criteria, VFM methodology and approach to reviews resulting in savings being identified and improvements to services;

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

- a comprehensive five-year strategy with a clear vision, agreed priorities and clear plans for delivery;
 - a comprehensive needs analysis has been carried out considering the needs of socially excluded groups, and action is being taken to address gaps in services;
 - improvements to the management and performance of the team;
 - effective partnership working with Liverpool First (the Local Strategic Partnership);
 - improved performance management of the programme and a comprehensive risk register;
 - clear commitment to improvement of services and capacity building with providers;
 - structured approach to service user involvement under development including service user forum and sub groups, involvement in reviews and service design resulting in some initial outcomes;
 - positive engagement sessions enabled service users, providers and other stakeholders to be involved in shaping the programme;
 - Access Liverpool provides one point of contact for older people in sheltered housing, frail older people and people in adapted properties;
 - appropriate signposting and referral arrangements are in place and a range of accessible information is available;
 - approach to diversity is strong with arrangements in place for equality impact assessments, and consideration in the procurement process;
 - a support charter has been developed demonstrating commitment to improving outcomes for service users and quality of support provided; and
 - there are many examples of positive cases where service users have gained independence, and examples of improvements to services.
- 8 However, there are some areas which require improvement. These include:
- performance reporting to the Commissioning Body has been weak historically;
 - high turnover in the Accountable Officer position which has impacted on championing and directing delivery of the programme;
 - delays in developing the retraction plan and dealing with ineligible spend with £8 million ineligible spend identified and retraction only now commencing;
 - anomalies in outcomes from addressing the high cost cases;
 - delays in the completion of service reviews impacting on the ability to significantly reconfigure services;
 - monitoring of provider improvement plans is not embedded;
 - reporting arrangements for complaints are not robust;

8 Supporting People | Scoring the Supporting People programme

- limited outcomes from use of benchmarking information and cross authority working to achieve value for money savings;
- development and delivery of the procurement plan has been delayed;
- high level of services not delivering value for money and delays in addressing this;
- service users involved are not representative of all groups and only just beginning to become involved in governance structures;
- take up of fairer charging is low, and limited promotion work is carried out with providers;
- there have been considerable delays in increasing the choice of services available to meet the needs of service users as a result of delays in the completion of reviews, eligibility and value for money assessments; and
- appropriate arrangements are not yet in place for outcome measurement.

9 The programme has excellent prospects for improvement because:

- a number of historical barriers to delivering the programme have been addressed resulting in a shift in the direction of the programme in the last nine months;
- there is now an emerging track record of delivering change and improvement;
- the pace of change has been considerable to ensure high quality outcomes;
- some improvements for service users are evident such as service user involvement and increase in provision which meets priority needs;
- the programme is exceeding many of its set targets;
- actions are already planned which address many of the areas for improvement identified during this inspection;
- use of additional expertise to support delivery of programme where appropriate;
- corporate support is available for the programme including support to address diversity;
- ICT investment and improvements under way; and
- increased capacity of the team and actions are planned to further improve team capacity and that of providers.

10 However, there are some barriers to improvement. These include:

- considerable delays in addressing some key areas of the programme including service reviews, identifying eligibility and retraction planning;
- four previous inspection recommendations require completion; and
- the Council is not yet able to identify the contribution Supporting People makes to the wider social care and health targets and indicators.

Recommendations

- 11 To rise to the challenge of continuous improvement, organisations need inspection reports that offer practical pointers for improvement. Our recommendations identify the expected benefits for both local people and the organisation. In addition, we identify the approximate costs³ and indicate the priority we place on each recommendation and key dates for delivering these where they are considered appropriate. In this context, the inspection team recommends that the Council shares the findings of this report with service users, service providers and councillors, and addresses all weaknesses identified in the report. The inspection team makes the following recommendations.

Recommendation

R1 Reassess the work carried out to date to address eligibility issues within high cost cases and take appropriate steps to plan the retraction of funding to the appropriate budgets. This work must be carried out with partner agencies, providers and service users.

The expected benefits of this recommendation are:

- the programme will be compliant with grant conditions and locally agreed eligibility criteria;
- funding will be released from ineligible services for reinvestment to meet gaps in provision, address identified needs and increase choice for vulnerable people; and
- effective joint working will ensure a smooth transition of funding for service users.

The implementation of this recommendation will have high impact with low costs. This should be implemented by January 2008.

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

Recommendation

- R2 Improve performance and outcome monitoring of the programme by:*
- *implementing a performance management framework which integrates:*
 - *regular detailed reporting to providers and the Core Strategy Group; and*
 - *at least six monthly overview report to Commissioning Body, Cabinet and Liverpool First Partnership and partner agencies;*
 - *develop local performance indicators to monitor delivery of the programme;*
 - *identify and monitor existing related and joint targets with all relevant partner agencies; and*
 - *implement a framework that captures the outcomes the programme delivers for service users.*

The expected benefits of this recommendation are:

- areas of achievement and under-achievement will be known;
- all stakeholders will know how the programme is performing;
- progress against shared targets will be known; and
- the Council can intervene if remedial action becomes necessary.

The implementation of this recommendation will have medium impact with low costs. This should be implemented by January 2008.

Recommendation

- R3 Revise the detailed improvement plan currently in place in the context of the findings within this report and agree the revised plan with the governing bodies, the Audit Commission and the CLG. Ensure that robust monitoring arrangements are put in place to effectively monitor and report improvements.*

The expected benefits of this recommendation are:

- the Council will have a SMART, agreed improvement plan in place to drive further improvements to the programme;
- progress against the plan will be monitored and reported; and
- service users will continue to benefit from improvements in the delivery of the programme resulting in improved services and better outcomes.

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

Recommendation

R4 Improve access to the programme and information relating to services, and opportunities for service user involvement in the delivery and development of the programme by:

- *working with service users to develop an accessible version of the directory;*
- *develop the arrangements to ensure service users are actively engaged in the governance arrangements;*
- *work with providers to assess the level of potential Fairer Charging take up and to actively promote Fairer Charging to target groups;*
- *widen representation of service users involved in the programme;*
- *improve and formalise arrangements for the involvement of carers and advocates in the delivery and development of the programme;*
- *improve the website to provide more information which is accessible to service users; and*
- *implement the arrangements for the involvement of service users, carers and advocates in contract monitoring and procurement of new services.*

The expected benefits of this recommendation are:

- service users understand the programme better;
- service users have opportunities to influence and shape the programme through appropriate and formalised arrangements; and
- vulnerable people will find it easier to find out about information on services and know what choices they have.

The implementation of this recommendation will have medium impact with medium costs. This should be implemented by January 2008.

- 12 We would like to thank the staff of Liverpool City Council who made us welcome and who met our requests efficiently and courteously.

Dates of inspection: 14 to 18 May 2007

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Report

Context

The locality

- 13 Liverpool is a large city located in the north west of England. It has a growing population of 447,500 based on 2005 population estimates. A total of 5.7 per cent of the population consider themselves to be other than 'white British' compared to 10.44 per cent for England. 17.2 per cent of the population are aged 65 and over.
- 14 The city has high levels of deprivation and is ranked as the second most deprived area based on the 2004 deprivation index with 70 per cent of super output areas in the 10 per cent most deprived wards nationally. Significant social and economic problems remain. There are high levels of residents living with long term illness (24.5 per cent compared to 17 per cent across England and Wales in 2001). Unemployment rates are high at 5.7 per cent compared to 2.4 per cent for the claimant count rate for England in May 2007. In December 2005 the level of worklessness was 33.9 per cent of the working age population, and 15.7 per cent of the working age population were in receipt of incapacity benefit and SDA.
- 15 Of the 209,053 homes in the city, 30 per cent are socially rented with 9 per cent council owned and 21 per cent RSL owned. The housing stock is heavily skewed towards lower value properties when compared to regional or national averages with 80 per cent of housing in the lowest Council Tax bands A and B. There are 11,366 households on the housing register and the profile of new lettings suggests that there is a continuing increase in vulnerable tenants. It is estimated that at 1 April 2004, 43 per cent of Liverpool's social housing did not meet the decency standard. In 2005, 5.4 per cent of properties in the city were long term voids.

The Council

- 16 Liverpool City Council is administered by a Liberal Democrat controlled administration. The majority party Liberal Democrat has 55 seats. There are 31 Labour members, 3 Liberal members and 1 Green Party Member. The model of governance used is a Leader and Cabinet model, delivered through a cabinet of five portfolios. Supporting People is linked to Supported Living and Community Safety.
- 17 The Council employs 8,929 council employees. In 2006/07 the annual net council budget was £690 million of which £7 million was allocated to housing and £180 million to social services.

- 18 The Council has updated its vision, aims and priorities as part of the 2006-2009 Corporate Plan. The Council's vision is 'to build and safeguard a fair, prosperous and open city where no-one is in poverty; where our citizens are well educated and take part in the decisions that affect them and where the cultural and religious differences between people are valued and celebrated.' This is supported by six corporate aims including 'to support active, healthy and independent living'. The Council's ambition is to build Liverpool into a 'world class' city to live, work and visit.
- 19 Liverpool First is a well established Local Strategic Partnership, chaired by the Leader of the Council. The Local Area Agreement, Accelerating Delivery, Changing Impressions 2007-2010, builds upon the strength of the Local Strategic Partnership and with the Sustainable Community Plan provides a strategic focus. Through the Local Area Agreement partners have demonstrated their commitment to a shared vision and ambition for the city of 'becoming a premier European City by developing a more competitive economy, building healthier, safer and more inclusive communities and enhancing life chances.'
- 20 In previous assessments of Council and service performance there has been mixed performance. For example:
- in 2005, the Commission for Social Care Inspection joint inspection with Health of Older Peoples services rated the Council as serving some people well served with uncertain prospects for the social care element;
 - in 2006, the Audit Commission Comprehensive Performance Assessment rated the Council as two stars (adequate performance) for overall performance and improving adequately for direction of travel;
 - in 2006, the Commission for Social Care Inspection judged the Council to be serving most adults well and to have promising prospects for improvement; and
 - in 2006, the Commission for Social Care Inspection and Ofsted judged the contribution of the local authority's social care services in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people as a service that delivers consistently above minimum requirements for user.

The Supporting People programme

- 21 Progress in implementing the Supporting People programme in Liverpool was first assessed in September 2004. This rated programme delivery as poor with uncertain prospects for improvement. A second inspection was completed in December 2005. This rated programme delivery again as poor with uncertain prospects for improvement.

- 22** The Supporting People team is located in the Community Services Directorate and Portfolio which also includes Adult Social Care and Strategic Housing and Neighbourhoods. The Supporting People programme is now delivered by one team which consists of 19 staff made up of:
- Lead Officer;
 - Supporting People Team Leader;
 - Supporting People Strategy and Engagement Manager;
 - Procurement Manager (based in Corporate Procurement Team but funded by Supporting People);
 - Risk Management Manager;
 - Information and Research Manager;
 - Contract Managers - five positions;
 - Contract Officers - three positions;
 - Research Information and Monitoring Officer;
 - Supporting People Finance Manager; and
 - Finance Support Officers - three positions.
- 23** Additional support is received from other council departments including finance, procurement, scrutiny and best value, marketing and legal services.
- 24** Liverpool City Council acts as the administering local authority (ALA) for the Supporting People programme in the area. The Council received a Supporting People grant of £42,738,115 for 2006/07 which is a reduction of £751,870 (1.8 per cent decrease) on the previous year allocation. The Council received a further reduction in 2007/08 with the Communities and Local Government (CLG) grant reduced by a further £827,172 to an annual grant of £41,900,943. In 2006/07 the programme grant was underspent by £2.5 million with a projected underspend of £900,000 in 2007/08. The Council also received an administration grant of £383,711 to contribute towards the administrative requirements of the programme. To improve programme delivery the Council supplemented the administration grant with a budget of £594,891 in 2006/07, which was increased to £751,000 in 2007/08.
- 25** There are 329 contracts covering 535 services. In total the programme funds a total of 10,331 units of housing related support comprising 5,662 units of accommodation, 2,056 units of floating support and 2,583 community alarm units.

- 26 A revised version of the five-year strategy for 2007-2012 has recently been agreed by the Commissioning Body and has been submitted to the CLG. The five-year strategy identifies the commissioning priorities over the next three years with priority schemes including a service for homeless families (prevention and resettlement), families at risk of homelessness due to anti-social behaviour, resettlement pilot for socially excluded groups, abstinence based drug and alcohol service, floating support for older people and older people homeless resettlement, and Somali mental health floating support, and a rent deposit scheme for excluded groups.

How good is the Supporting People programme?

What has the programme aimed to achieve?

- 27 The programme's vision is set out in the five-year strategy for 2007-2012 as 'high quality services, which promote independence in neighbourhoods'.
- 28 The aim is to 'work with people who use support services, service providers and partners and commissioners to ensure that Liverpool has excellent and innovative housing related support services, which meet the needs of our diverse communities'.
- 29 This is supported by four strategic objectives.
 - To develop effective partnership working with a wide range of stakeholders, including service users.
 - To promote choice through the investment in new services and remodelling of current provision better meet service users' needs.
 - To promote high quality services and improve capacity of support providers through investing in training, capacity building and research.
 - To develop and promote value for money through the effective monitoring and review of the Supporting People programme.
- 30 The strategic objectives and targeted actions to achieve them are reflected in the Supporting People Action Plan which will be monitored and reported on a quarterly basis.
- 31 A Support Charter for a better quality of life for vulnerable people is currently under development. This has been developed with a wide range of service users, providers and service commissioners. This states that Liverpool City Council and the key delivery partners believe that 'good quality person-centred care and support is a basic right for all vulnerable people using the services in Liverpool and we will work with providers, commissioning partners and all key stakeholders to deliver this.'

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

32 The assessment was based on the following key issues:

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

Governance and partnerships

33 CLG has set out the following structural arrangements for the governance, development and delivery of the Supporting People programme.

- Accountable Officer and the Supporting People team: drive the whole process.
- Inclusive forum: consults with service providers and service users.
- Core strategy group: proposes strategic direction, service review procedures and timetables and work needed to secure the effective and efficient delivery and development of the programme.
- Commissioning body: agrees strategic direction, compliance with grant conditions, outcomes of service reviews and monitors the delivery and development of the programme.
- Councillors: approve key decisions of the Commissioning Body.
- Supporting People team: delivers the local programme.

34 In the previous inspection, it was recognised that efforts had been made to improve the governance arrangements. There was stronger corporate commitment and additional resources secured to add capacity to delivery of the programme. However, the Commissioning Body and Core Strategy Group needed further development to achieve the required standards in delivery and development of the programme. Both groups needed a stronger focus on the risks relating to child and adult protection. Improvements were needed in joint working arrangements with health, probation and social care staff. Relationships with advocacy organisations were under-developed, and the service user's voice in governance arrangements was weak.

- 35 This is an area where there is now a balance of strength and weaknesses. There is corporate commitment to the delivery and improvement of the programme. The Commissioning Body and Core Strategy Group are generally operating effectively, with a recent shift in focus to commissioning and service development. Partnership working has improved across the range of key providers, supported by development of the five-year strategy, with a range of outcomes. Appropriate arrangements are in place for MAPPA and adult and child protection. Support to providers has improved with a range of ways for them to be engaged in programme delivery with particular focus on improving the capacity of small providers, resulting in improved relationships. However, councillors are generally not close to the programme. Performance reporting to the Commissioning Body has been weak historically. There is no action plan in place for the Core Strategy Group. There has been high turnover in the Accountable Officer position which has impacted on championing and directing delivery of the programme, although this has improved recently. The contribution of the programme to wider targets which are key for promoting independence is not known.

Corporate commitment

- 36 There is corporate commitment to improving the programme and embedding the programme with corporate targets. There has been improved corporate ownership of the programme following the second no-star inspection rating. Changes in leadership within the council have brought increased focus to the programme. The Chief Executive was well informed on progress with programme delivery and is committed to providing corporate support to ensure the programme continues to improve. This has included subsidising the administration grant to bring in expertise and improve capacity of the programme, with a commitment to maintain significant levels of financial support towards administration costs. The vision and objectives for the Supporting People programme are aligned with those for the Community Strategy and Liverpool First, Liverpool's Local Strategic Partnership. Relationships with other departments and senior officers within the Council have improved. This can be partly attributed to the development of the five-year strategy as this provides clarity on the direction of the programme and the impact this could have on other areas of the Council and its partner agencies.
- 37 Senior councillors are close to the Supporting People programme. The Community Services portfolio holder attends and now chairs the Commissioning Body, and with the Executive Director for Community Services, has recently begun a programme of visits to a variety of services. The Leader of the Council also receives updates on the programme as part of his regular briefing session with officers. This ensures the portfolio holder has a good understanding of the programme and the progress it is making. It also ensures they are in touch with service provider and service user issues on the ground.

- 38 Councillors are generally not close to the programme. The Social Care and Health Select Committee have regular reports on delivery of the Supporting People improvement plan. However, they have chosen not to scrutinise Supporting People as part of their work programme. Ward councillors may raise issues regarding individual schemes or providers, but they do not receive regular information on delivery of the programme in a form which they can quickly understand. This reduces the effectiveness of corporate support to the programme.

Commissioning Body

- 39 The Commissioning Body is operating effectively. The meetings are chaired by the Portfolio Executive Member. Membership is at an appropriate level from within the Council and partner agencies, and all members demonstrate an understanding of the diverse needs of vulnerable individuals. Attendance has improved since the last inspection with the Primary Care Trust (PCT) and Probation attending 90 per cent of meetings in the last year. The terms of reference are regularly revised with the latest revision in March 2007. Voting rights are clearly described within the terms of reference, with one vote per partner organisation. There is an appropriate level of discussion and challenge at the meetings from all partners.
- 40 The Commissioning Body membership has been reviewed to improve effectiveness in delivering the five-year strategy. Membership of the group includes officers at an appropriate level within the PCT and Probation, and the Executive Director of Supported Living and Community Safety. Membership has recently been extended to include the Executive Member for the Social Care and Community Safety Portfolio as the non voting chair, the Assistant Executive Director of Neighbourhood Services, and the Director of Liverpool First. This ensures that the Local Strategic Partnership and housing strategy are integrated into the governance of the programme.
- 41 The strategic steer of the Commissioning Body has improved and the focus is now on moving the programme forward and commissioning services. Instrumental to this was the completion of the needs analysis and service reviews and development of the retraction plan for ineligible spend. These resulted in the interim action plan, five-year strategy and four-year commissioning plan. This is beginning to lead to improvements in the delivery of the programme, and outcomes for service users.
- 42 There are some weaknesses in relation to the operation of the Commissioning Body. The terms of reference include how conflicts of interest will be dealt with. However, conflicts of interest are not formally identified as part of the agenda and not identified prior to discussion of services or providers. This is particularly relevant given the level of provision from in-house services. The terms of reference do not include any formal arrangement for dealing with non attendance or delegated authority for decision making.

- 43 The performance management of the Commissioning Body was weak historically and is only beginning to be addressed through the recent introduction of the performance management framework. It is recognised that the main focus of the Commissioning Body over the last 12 months was delivery of the improvement plan agreed with the CLG and Audit Commission. Prior to the introduction of the new performance management framework performance indicator reporting was on an ad hoc basis. In addition there is limited information on shared targets collected or reported, with this limited to baseline figures against the LAA targets. This has impacted on the ability of the Commissioning Body to use performance information to drive forward improvement in the programme.

Core Strategy Group

- 44 The Core Strategy Group is operating effectively. There are terms of reference in place which are regularly revised. These set out clearly the primary role of the group, and include the voting and decision making process. Monthly meetings are held and generally attendance is high with 90 to 95 per cent for most key groups. Membership of the Core Strategy Group is appropriate. A wide range of partners and stakeholders including representatives from Youth Offending Team (YOT), Probation, Drug and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT), homelessness services, housing strategy and adult social care. In addition, provider representatives are elected from the Merseyside Providers Forum and the Small Providers Forum, and two elected service user representatives from the Service User Forum. New meeting arrangements commenced in April 2007 to develop a two stage meeting arrangement with time to discuss confidential matters around individual provider performance.
- 45 There are clear links between the Core Strategy Group and the Commissioning Body. The relationship between the two has been strengthened through the revised terms of reference for both groups, and through moving into the commissioning stage of the programme. There is evidence of reports escalated from the Core Strategy Group to the Commissioning Body. There is some evidence of the Commissioning Body providing the Core Strategy Group with direction and delegated tasks. For example, taking forward the service user satisfaction monitoring. This improved the accountability of the Core Strategy Group.
- 46 The operation of the Core Strategy group has improved. Considerable time was spent by the Group considering the detail and outcomes of service reviews but it is now looking at the development of services and issues such as increasing user involvement. There is now better joint working with an improved understanding of each others roles and priorities. This has resulted in improved outcomes for the group. For example, better links have been made with the housing services, the establishment of the multi-agency Move on Group, work with Community Safety and Housing to support clients who are perpetrators of anti-social behaviour (ASB), and integral involvement in the development of the five-year strategy.

- 47 Whilst the priorities for the group for the next financial year have been identified, there is no forward work plan for the work of the Core Strategy Group. The Supporting People action plan is used as a basis for agenda items but this does not necessarily include all the issues that the group should be addressing. Members of the group are aware of future priorities. However, without a formal work plan it is difficult to demonstrate the Group is acting as strategically as possible focussed on improvement issues.
- 48 There are some weaknesses in the operation of the Core Strategy Group. Whilst conflict of interest is covered on the terms of reference, this is not formally requested as part of the agenda. There are no formal arrangements in place for monitoring or dealing with non attendance. For example, there was an issue with Children's Services attendance which the Council was not aware of until highlighted as part of the inspection. At some meetings there is low number of partners attending. This limits the level of discussion, partner contribution and challenge which can take place.

Accountable Officer

- 49 There has been a high turnover in the Accountable Officer post over the last 18 months. This has impacted on the management of the programme and the ability to champion the programme at a corporate level, and make links with relevant strategies. It is recognised that improved, focused, leadership has been in place for the last six months following the integration of the Accountable Officer role into the Assistant Executive Director for Adult Community Services. This has resulted in some early progress in championing and focusing the direction of the programme. This post will be filled permanently in July 2007.
- 50 The Accountable Officer has recently made appropriate links with other partners to support delivery of the programme. For example, links were made with wider adult social care and multi agency working arrangements to support the review of high cost cases. The Accountable Officer is to become a CitySafe member (Liverpool's Crime and Disorder Partnership) following revision of the structure in March 2007. This was the outcome of working jointly with Community Safety, to develop a service for families at risk of eviction due to anti-social behaviour. This helps to ensure effective co-ordination of Supporting people and mainstream services.

Health, Housing, Social Care and Probation/criminal justice partnership arrangements

- 51 Partnership working has improved in the last nine months following completion of the needs analysis and development of the five-year strategy. This has helped to reinforce to key partners the benefits of the Supporting People programme for services they provide and client groups which they are working with. In addition, the position of Lead Officer has been raised to senior management level, enabling more effective contribution to partnerships. There is further commitment to improve partnership working within the five-year strategy and supporting action plan. This has helped to enable the programme to become more integrated with partners to support the delivery and improvement of the programme.

- 52 The Council's joint working with housing has improved, and outcomes are starting to be achieved. This has resulted in closer working between housing providers within the city to begin to improve access to move on accommodation. The Lead Officer is playing an active role in the Housing Strategic Partnership and Community Cohesion Sub Group. Other evidence of joint working with housing includes contributions to the review of the Council's allocation policy, the use of housing resources for the commissioning of the planned supported housing stock condition survey, and the use of the housing needs assessment to obtain further needs information on vulnerable adults.
- 53 The Probation Service is effectively engaged in the Supporting People programme. Probation staff are aware of the programme and there are targets on Supporting People within the Merseyside Probation Service Business Plan. A joint accommodation strategy is in place between Probation, Supporting People and other strategic partners. The representatives on the Commissioning Body and Core Strategy Group demonstrated understanding of their roles and the needs of vulnerable people beyond offenders. Core probation functions are making a positive contribution to delivery of the Supporting People programme. A joint protocol for Housing Offenders was developed in November 2006 following the needs analysis which complements the priorities for offenders within the five-year strategy.
- 54 Adult and child protection have been given priority. The Council have worked jointly with a neighbouring authority and jointly published a revised framework for the protection of vulnerable adults. The Accountable Officer chairs a multi agency safeguarding adults board which ensures Supporting People is appropriately represented and engaged in adult protection. The adult protection process is well managed. A senior manager with responsibility for safeguarding children is a member of the core strategy group. All service providers have had adult or child protection training as appropriate. The service review process was used to identify any protection issues. All contracts and SLAs have a requirement to be signed up to the protection policies and procedures. There is a multi-agency process for the review of allegations of professional abuse to detect patterns by providers should they arise. This reduces the risks to vulnerable adults and children.
- 55 The Multi Agency Protection Panel Arrangements (MAPPA) are working effectively. The arrangements are comprehensive and reviewed regularly. They have been strengthened with clarity about the role and improved attendance by all, including attendance of a senior manager from Children Services where appropriate. This ensures that Supporting People staff and the programme are involved in managing the risks for service users in housing and supporting high risk offenders.

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- 56 Links between Supporting People and Health are improving. The Lead Officer recently became a member of the Liverpool First for Health Group. The joint commissioning units, which will cover all commissioning and funding activity between the Council and the PCT, are beginning to become embedded providing a clearer focus for links with Supporting People commissioning. Links are maintained by Supporting People attending all four joint commissioning groups. The five-year strategy is linking into health, social care, and neighbourhood developments, including hospital discharge and admission avoidance. The joint commissioning unit has a programme of development which includes working with a range of providers and incorporates Supporting People priorities. However, the legal requirements for joint commissioning are not in place and are currently waiting on approval.
- 57 Joint working has been used recently in the development of new services, including some joint commissioning and funding of services. For example, the service specification for a floating support service for families involved in anti-social behaviour has been developed to complement the work of the Vulnerable Families Joint Action Group. There is a commitment to an integrated and co-ordinated strategic approach for the provision of Older Persons Services, reflected by the jointly funded Director of Adult Health and Social Care post. Also Supporting People officers are contributing to relevant strategic reviews which are taking place, for example the review of homeless services.
- 58 The opportunity has not been taken to link Supporting People to prevention performance indicators. Appropriate officers could see how the programme links with prevention such as falls, admissions and suicide. However the impact of Supporting People on these outcomes has not been measured, and is not included in the targets. It is recognised that this will be addressed in the development and commissioning of new services. This will raise the profile of the contribution Supporting People can make to the delivery of health outcomes.
- 59 Supporting People is not yet linked to the key adult strategies in place. The only advanced adult strategy is the one for Older People, where Supporting People is integral. The remaining adult strategies are being developed and there is a commitment that Supporting People will form an integral part of these strategies as they are developed, for example, as in the draft Learning Disability strategy. This will ensure key strategies support delivery of the Supporting People programme and five-year strategy.

Service providers

- 60** There is a range of ways for providers to engage in the programme. This includes the bimonthly Merseyside Providers Forum with a housing focus chaired and organised by providers. The Supporting People Team has used this forum over the last 18 months to update and consult providers. In addition all providers are invited to large biannual Provider Forums which include workshops in key areas such as development of service user involvement and the support charter. There are clear links and regular feedback between the Providers Forums and the Core Strategy Group, with both forums having nominated representatives on the Core Strategy Group. This has enabled providers to influence the delivery of the programme including development of the strategy and to share best practice between providers.
- 61** However, the Merseyside Providers Forum is not operating as effectively as it could be as a Supporting People provider forum. It was originally established as a housing forum. In addition it is not inclusive as not all types of providers attend and not all client groups are represented. In response Liverpool City Council are taking steps with providers to develop an Inclusive Forum which will represent all 21 client groups and providers.
- 62** Appropriate arrangements are in place for supporting small providers. A Small Provider Network is in operation which is focused on improving the capacity of providers and engaging them in the programme. This is operating effectively and is overseen by a capacity building facilitator and supported by terms of reference. There are clear links made between this group and the Merseyside Providers Forum. This provides small providers with an opportunity to influence delivery of the programme, to share good practice and to develop their capacity to compete for future service provision.
- 63** Support for providers from the Supporting People team has improved since the previous inspection. Providers feel more positive now about the service they receive from the Supporting People Team. Programme delivery is better organised, with more information and support available to providers. Communication has improved within the last six months. Officers are more approachable and more visible. A newsletter has recently been introduced aimed at service providers and the website has recently been updated to improve information available to providers.
- 64** Historically training for providers was limited. However this has improved over the last nine months with training on value for money and performance returns. The provider forums are used as an opportunity to train and update providers. An annual training plan has been developed for providers structured in line with the five-year strategy priorities and QAF assessment. This improves the capacity of providers to deliver improving services and meet programme objectives.

- 65 There is still a need to further improve the newsletter for the programme. Whilst all providers have been sent a copy of the newsletter, it is not easy to access as only one copy was sent to each provider, and most schemes are not in the position to duplicate the newsletter. Service providers are not involved in the editorial work to inform the articles included in the newsletter. However, it is recognised that the newsletter is still in its infancy, and the Council have begun to take actions to obtain contributions from providers.

Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS)

- 66 The Council has some commitment to engagement with the voluntary and community sector. The Liverpool Community Network is in place comprising over 1,500 voluntary, community and faith based groups. This network is actively and strategically involved in the programme. A compact is in place between the city Council and the local voluntary sector. The five-year strategy highlights the importance of working with the voluntary sector. In addition the small provider forum enables some voluntary agencies to engage in governance of the programme.

Grant compliance, strategy and needs

- 67 The previous inspection assessed this as an area where there were more weaknesses than strengths. There was a high number of high cost cases where service users were inappropriately receiving support resulting in £10 million of the grant spent on ineligible services. The five-year strategy was weak in a number of key areas and commissioning priorities for the next year not clearly identified. There was a lack of capacity and systems to generate accurate data upon which to shape future commissioning. The needs information within the five-year strategy was not sufficiently analysed and prioritised. There were significant and ongoing difficulties in accessing move on accommodation for some groups.
- 68 This is an area where there is now a balance of strengths and weaknesses. Robust eligibility criteria are in place and a retraction plan has been developed to deal with £8 million of ineligible spend. A new five-year strategy is in place which clearly identifies the vision and priorities for the programme, including an annual plan for 2007/08. This was developed appropriately through extensive involvement of key stakeholders and service users. A comprehensive needs analysis has been completed, including an assessment of unmet need. Plans are in place for the ongoing collection and analysis of needs information. Arrangements have recently been developed to address move on accommodation, however these have not yet started to make an impact. Major weaknesses are the delays in dealing with ineligible spend, some unidentified ineligible spend and the anomalies resulting from the approach adopted to deal with the high cost cases.

Grant conditions and eligibility criteria

- 69** Since 2004 the Council has had robust eligibility criteria in place. The criteria at the time were based on a nationally agreed good practice model to inform service providers and review officers which activities were eligible and which ineligible. Eligibility of support activities are assessed as part of service reviews and contract monitoring arrangements. Where activities are found to be ineligible changes will be made to funding arrangements and where necessary to contracts. Generally providers are satisfied with the way ineligibility is dealt with. Providers are now getting clearer and more consistent messages from the Supporting People team when determining eligible spend. This has resulted in the identification of a minimum £8 million spend available for retraction.
- 70** However, some stakeholders do not fully understand the implications of the eligibility criteria. Provider forums and training sessions have been used to update providers on the criteria. Providers were not actively involved in the development of the criteria. Some providers feel there is a lack of clarity between care and support. This means savings are not maximised to be invested in new services.
- 71** There have been delays in dealing with some ineligible spend. Retraction plans were approved in January 2007, and delivery commenced in April 2007 with a plan for £2.8 million to be retracted each year until 2010. It is recognised that this timescale was agreed with the CLG. The PCT and Adult Social Care are increasing funding to cover ineligible costs in line with the three-year retraction plan, to a total of £2,726,444 in 2007/08. However, this has impacted on the Council's ability to reconfigure the programme in line with priorities to meet the needs of service users as set out in the five-year strategy and ultimately in delays in improved outcomes for service users.
- 72** The full extent of funding ineligible services is not known and will continue throughout retraction until all services have been subjected to revised commissioning and procurement arrangements. There were some cases where ineligible services were being funded by Supporting People but discussions with providers about how this was going to be addressed were taking place.
- 73** Appropriate action has now been taken to complete individual assessments for the high cost cases identified in earlier inspections. Where there was no allocated case worker assessments have been completed by a specially commissioned team of social workers. A partnership approach was adopted. This ensures that all high cost case service users have been effectively care managed and their needs reviewed. The retraction plan developed ensures that no service user has been put at risk whilst funding streams have been picked up by the PCT and Adult Social Care services. This has resulted in some positive outcomes for some service users.

- 74 There have been delays in addressing the high cost cases and the financial arrangements underpinning the care-support balance are complex. Some cases have had support packages appropriately reduced and the funding has reduced to reflect this. In some cases the Council has appropriately identified the split of Supporting People and care funding. There was some slippage in statutory social care reviews so two posts were added to the review team to ensure priority of these cases. The pace of retraction and the continuing provision of higher levels of Supporting People support than is needed in some cases means there are delays in accessing the resources to commission services to meet unmet needs.
- 75 There are a number of anomalies in the approach to address the high cost cases, the balance of care and support, and the appropriate level of funding. These include the following.
- Supporting People grant continuing to fund an unknown quantity of ineligible services. For expediency, the programme has applied a pragmatic approach agreeing to fund a standard number of 21 hours of support per service user a week, at a maximum cost of £21 per hour. This is applied on an average basis across some schemes, regardless of whether individual service users have been assessed as needing less, more or in some cases no housing related support.
 - The full extent of ineligible services is not known and will continue throughout retraction until all services have been subjected to revised commissioning and procurement arrangements. This is planned to commence in September 2007.
 - There are examples of overprovision of combined care and support where the level of tenants' needs are significantly lower than the funded provision.
 - Some individuals are receiving direct payments to buy personal care but the scheme continues to receive funding for support and care (although subject to retraction), and this was not identified by the Council.
- 76 The Council is taking advantage of changes to grant conditions to provide a range of support services that includes rent deposit schemes. 2007/08 grant conditions allowed for rent deposit schemes to become eligible for Supporting People grant. Working with the DAT, Supporting People are procuring a floating support service to enable people with drug related problems find, secure and maintain suitable accommodation. A draft specification for the service is currently under development involving the Service User Forum.

Five-year strategy

- 77 The Supporting People five-year strategy (2007-2012) is clear and provides a sound foundation for the future of the programme. It has been rewritten and was approved in February 2007. This is a considerable improvement on the previous five-year strategy. It includes clear aims, vision and objectives for the programme, with links made to partners and other relevant strategies. It includes a comprehensive analysis of information to identify the current position and plans for taking the programme forward. Partners, service providers and staff are clear about what the strategy wants to achieve.

- 78 There has been extensive consultation throughout the development of the strategy with commissioners, providers and service users involved in agreeing priority areas. The strategy is based on a thorough understanding of service users and needs information drawn together and analysed through a variety of methods. Outcomes from service reviews were also considered. These were brought together at a strategy day in November 2006 for representatives from the Commissioning Body and Core Strategy group enabling a wide range of agencies to be involved in identifying priorities and how these can be met. Information on the draft strategy was circulated in the form of a newsletter to all funded services. A period of open consultation was carried out during which stakeholders, providers and service users were invited to submit formal responses. This provided all stakeholders with the opportunity to shape the five-year strategy.
- 79 The strategy provides a focus for delivery of the programme. Gaps and recommendations are identified for each service user group under three headings of investment and remodelling, partnership working and training and research. A supporting annual plan has been developed with timescales for priorities, partners involved and planned outcomes. This is supported by a costed Commissioning and Procurement plan covering priorities over the next four years. An easy read version is under development and an executive summary available on the website. Plans are in place for the review of the strategy, commencing in November 2007 for publication April 2008. This has helped to move Liverpool forward in delivering the programme, with a clear focus on improving outcomes for service users.
- 80 The development of the new strategy is recent and historically the five-year strategy was not used to focus delivery of the programme. The original strategy was not based on comprehensive needs data. Due to the previous inspection results, focus has been on delivery of the improvement plan. This has resulted in the original five-year strategy not being used as a tool for delivering the programme.

Needs mapping, analysis and review

- 81 A comprehensive needs analysis was undertaken in 2006 which has supported the development of the five-year strategy. This addresses the weaknesses identified in the previous inspection. A group of consultants were appointed and a robust approach adopted resulting in high quality needs information. Appropriate contributions were made by service users, planners and stakeholders to the development of the needs analysis. This included:
- mapping existing supporting housing provision;
 - a multi agency survey of socially excluded groups carried out to measure unmet need for housing and support covering 2,269 service users;
 - a survey of sheltered and extra care service users;
 - analysis of client record forms;
 - focus groups;
 - comprehensive demographic profiling;

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- positive engagement sessions with providers, service users and stakeholders; and
- strategic planning days with Commissioning Body and Core Strategy group representatives.

The needs assessment has been used to influence the development of the five-year strategy and resulting priorities for the programme.

- 82** The Council has recognised that needs information is critical in improving delivery and plans are in place for reviewing and updating the needs information. A wider housing needs survey is currently underway. The Supporting People team worked with housing to develop this, and it includes information on vulnerability, support needs and physical improvements to homes and practical support already in place or needed. Initial steps have been taken to develop a cross authority needs analysis. From May 2007 six monthly updates on needs information will be completed to measure emerging trends or changes in service user needs. There is also commitment to carrying out an unmet needs survey on an annual basis from November 2007. A stock condition survey of supported housing is to be commissioned. A dedicated officer is in place to manage and update the needs information. This information will be used to inform and update commissioning priorities for the programme.
- 83** Arrangements are in place to facilitate the sharing of needs information between key partners. Agencies such as DAAT, Community Safety and Neighbourhood Services are within the same portfolio as Supporting People. This means performance and monitoring information to support the needs analysis can be shared in this context. An overarching agreement is currently under development between the PCT and the Council. However, there is no information sharing protocol in place with Probation. Joint data collection methods have yet to be agreed with co-commissioners. This provides more evidence to support future commissioning plans.
- 84** Needs information is now beginning to be used to inform joint commissioning decisions. For example, the Council is working to jointly commission a holistic floating support service with key partners in line with the need identified in the five-year strategy. However, this is still in its early stages with draft specifications and commissioning arrangements being drawn up at the time of inspection.

Strategy for access to move on accommodation

- 85** Work is in progress with an appropriate range of partners to remove barriers and extend housing options for service users. The cross agency Move On Group was established June 2006 following multi agency consultation with relevant partners, and operates as a sub group of the Core Strategy Group. The aim of the group is to identify ways of improving fair and equal access to good quality accommodation and additional types of scheme based support for vulnerable people. Progress within the group was originally slow, however further impetus was obtained when housing and community services became one portfolio breaking down some of the traditional barriers between the two areas. However, the action plan only commenced in February 2007, and the main outcomes to date have been the establishment of the resettlement pilot, and contributing to the review of the Council's allocation policy.
- 86** A pilot resettlement service has been developed to remove barriers to access to move on. Work with the Strategic Housing Partnership has ensured a supply of 36 tenancies to support the resettlement of vulnerable people from short term services. A team of resettlement workers are in place to conduct assessments on potential candidates and to provide a floating support service throughout the move on period. The pilot is aimed at those with Mental Health issues, drug and alcohol dependence, ex-offenders, young people and single homeless people. However this project is still in its infancy, having commenced in April 2007, with only four service users moving on by July 2007. The pilot is expected to contribute to the Supporting People key performance indicator (SPKPI) on planned move ons and the target for 2007/08 set to 85 per cent to reflect the work of the pilot.
- 87** An allocation panel is in place to ensure that access to move on accommodation is used appropriately. The multi agency panel has recently been established to support the work of the resettlement officers, to determine jointly the type of property, location and level of support those moving on require. The focus of the panel is on those who often face barriers in accessing move on accommodation including young people, ex-offenders, drug and alcohol users and single homeless. Allocations are prioritised including consideration of readiness to move on and the value of bed space if the user was to move on. This will ensure that appropriate move on decisions are made, and improve outcomes for service users. However, the panel has only met once and the process is not embedded or rolled out to all providers at the time of the inspection.
- 88** Accessibility to accommodation and difficulty in accessing private sector accommodation has been identified as a barrier to move on accommodation, and the Council have taken some initial steps to begin to address this. A scheme is in place already where a provider is working with accredited landlords to access move on accommodation. DAAT fund the rent deposit, and Supporting People part fund the support provided. Research has commenced to support the development of a new rent deposit scheme. The proposal is to develop a service specification based on existing good practice, and to commence the tender process in June 2007. This will improve access to move on accommodation.

- 89 The issues that impact on the ability of vulnerable people to move on have not been quantified. This was identified as a key action by the Move On Group, a sub group of the Core Strategy Group, but this has yet to be completed. Some work has been undertaken to demonstrate that in the last 12 months 557 short term service users have moved on to their own tenancies in general needs housing. Whilst the perception is that the move on issue is not as great as first anticipated, there is no comprehensive evidence to support this. The number of vulnerable people ready and waiting to move on is not known or monitored, along with the impact this has on acting as a barrier to other vulnerable people accessing short term services, and the sustainability of new tenancies.

Delivery arrangements

- 90 The second inspection recognised that the Supporting People team were more effectively managed and supported than had been the case in 2004 and an overall service plan was in place with individual targets. Improvements had been made to financial reporting. Appropriate Fairer Charging arrangements were in place. However, there was a lack of robust infrastructure to delivery the programme, and significant weaknesses in identifying and managing risk. Performance management arrangements were weak. There was a reliance on external consultants and this was poorly managed so not as effective as it could have been. The team were dispersed and this was acting as a barrier to enabling a whole systems approach to delivery of the programme.
- 91 This is an area where there is a balance of strengths and weaknesses. The Supporting People team has improved resulting in improved capacity to deliver the programme. This is supported by the development of a comprehensive annual plan. There is effective partnership working with the Local Strategic Partnership and the development of the Local Area Agreement. There is improved performance management within the programme. A comprehensive risk register is in place, and contingency plans in place for major risk. However, the annual plan does not contain costings or identification of resources. There are limited joint targets with partners within the current performance management arrangements. Many of these are recent developments in the programme, and outcomes to date are limited.

Supporting People team

- 92** Improvements have been made to the Supporting People team since the last inspection. The team has been brought together within the Community Services portfolio, and the Council provides considerable funding to increase the size of the team. Clear leadership and management and monitoring arrangements are in place providing the team with direction. A new Lead Officer has been appointed with overall responsibility for delivery of the programme, supported by a team manager to oversee management of the team. The team are appropriately skilled and experienced. Procurement and commissioning responsibilities are clearly segregated, and people appointed with the necessary skills to carry out the different roles. Additional resources are brought in from other departments as needed, along with support from consultants. Morale within the team has risen and staff are clearer about their roles and their contribution to overall delivery. This has improved the capacity of the team in delivering the programme over the last 12 months.
- 93** Over the last year the team has improved how it works with partner agencies. The team has established effective working relationships with partner agencies. There has been a change of direction within the team which has resulted in officers being more outward looking, proactive and dynamic. The team is now viewed as approachable and helpful by providers, with a focus on improving services and outcomes for service users. This is supported by providers now having a named officer on the team. Team members participate in various forums operating within the city improving links with the Supporting People programme and other services.

Work planning

- 94** Prior to the development of the work plan, the Council focused efforts on the delivery and monitoring of the improvement plan agreed between the Audit Commission, CLG and Liverpool City Council following the last inspection result. This was reported and challenged by the Commissioning Body, Core Strategy Group and through bimonthly meetings with the CLG and Audit Commission. An interim action plan was developed following the completion of the needs analysis to commence delivery of improvement whilst the strategy was finalised. This ensured that efforts were focused on improving programme delivery.
- 95** A new work plan has recently been approved in March 2007 which is consistent with the priorities within the five-year strategy. This details the action and key tasks with timescales and identification of partner agencies and builds on the outstanding tasks from the improvement plan. Delivery of the plan is reviewed through one to ones with team members and team meetings and linked to individual plans. Links are made to other plans, for example, the training plan. This ensures all team members and partners are clear on what is expected of them.

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- 96 The work plan is not costed and resources are not identified and clearly allocated within the team identified for delivery. The costs for the commissioning of new services have been identified and captured in the three-year commissioning plan. However it is not easy to make links between the two. There are other actions with cost implications, and it is not easy to identify the resources required. This makes it difficult to assess how achievable delivery of the plan is.
- 97 Arrangements are now in place for reporting of the action plan, however these are not sufficient. The action plan monitoring reports rate progress by green/amber/red colour coding. However, there is limited information on the actions taken, the completion of tasks within timescales and the reasons for delays in completing tasks. The level of detail reported to Core Strategy Group was inadequate. This makes monitoring and challenging of the action plan difficult

Local Area Agreements (LAA)

- 98 Effective partnership working is now in place between the Supporting People Programme and the Local Area Agreement. There is appropriate Supporting People representation on the relevant partnership boards. This has been embedded since the appointment of the new lead officer who is actively involved in Liverpool First for Housing and Liverpool First for Health Partnership Boards since January 2007. Key targets relating to Supporting People, including some joint targets with probation, are included in the Safer Communities block of the Local Area Agreement and monitoring arrangements have recently been put in place, with a process for escalation where performance fails. The Supporting People Strategy is consistent with the Liverpool First Community Strategy and the objectives contained within the Local Area Agreement. In addition, a representative from the Local Strategic Partnership has recently been appointed as a member of the Commissioning Body further formalising the links between the programme and the Local Area Agreement.
- 99 The level of Supporting People funding to be aligned with the Local Area Agreement was confirmed with the Commissioning Body. £13,653,171 of Supporting People funding is included in the Local Area Agreement, which represents the portion of the grant spent on socially excluded groups. However, this was approved outside a meeting of the Commissioning Body by the Vice Chair of the Commissioning Body. This does not fully comply with CLG guidance for the process to be adopted in approving Local Area Agreement funding from the programme.
- 100 Improvements are needed to ensure commissioning structures fit with the LAA framework in the future. There is recognition that Liverpool is at the beginning of this integration. However, given Liverpool's current position with the restructuring of the Local Strategic Partnership and the Commissioning Body they are well placed to ensure commissioning structures are integrated. Discussions are underway and the Council are looking at models of good practice from other Local Strategic Partnerships. This will ensure Supporting People is further integrated into the Local Area Agreement processes.

Performance monitoring and management

- 101** Performance and progress on improvement are closely managed. Reports are produced on a variety of strands of the programme, including performance, progress on improvement plans, progress on the Annual Action Plan, service reviews, high risk, high cost cases. Regular reports are provided to Supporting People governance bodies and form part of Departmental and corporate performance reporting. This ensures that focus stays on improving the programme.
- 102** Liverpool is monitoring a number of key performance areas as part of service planning arrangements. This includes the quality of Supporting People funded services, service user satisfaction with Supporting People funded services and monitoring of service providers identified as high risk. Monitoring these measures enables the Supporting People programme to demonstrate the progress it is making.
- 103** However, the performance measures are limited, with few shared indicators. Shared targets are limited to four in the LAA which includes targets around provision for offenders, those with drug and alcohol problems and the homeless. However there are no shared targets in relation to health and adult social care, for example on hospital admissions. Outcome measures are not yet in place. As a result the programme does not capture data demonstrating the contribution it makes to partner agency objectives or the wider programme of prevention. Service user outcomes are not reported to the Commissioning Body. This makes it difficult to assess the impact the programme is having, particularly in relation to those services delivered by key partners.
- 104** Performance monitoring and management arrangements have only recently been introduced. Until recently there was no regular performance monitoring of delivery of the programme, with an ad hoc approach adopted. This has been addressed through the reporting of key targets in relation to objectives within the Supporting People Service Plan to the Commissioning Body for the end of the 2006/07 financial year. This will continue to be reported on a quarterly basis to the Commissioning Body. This means that the Commissioning Body historically have not had an active role in managing the performance of programme delivery.
- 105** Finances are closely controlled and regularly monitored at appropriate levels within the governance bodies of the Supporting People programme and within the Council. Reports are provided monthly to the core strategy group with a summary for the Commissioning Body. Financial projection reports are updated and provided quarterly to the Commissioning Body. Projections include the latest information on finance, savings achieved through retraction arrangements and efficiencies. Planning is based on up to date financial information.

Fairer charging

- 106** Clear arrangements are in place for the processing of Fairer Charging Assessments. Potential eligibility for Supporting People Fairer Charging is identified as part of the Supporting People Subsidy Application Form. Assessments are passed to the Benefit Maximisation Service within Liverpool Direct Limited for a full fairer charging and benefit assessment for the service user, and all other family members. The Supporting People team have access to housing benefit systems to check for Housing Benefit eligibility to ensure only appropriate cases are passed to the Benefit Maximisation Service. There is a Service Level Agreement in place with the Benefit Maximisation team with a target time of 28-day turnaround on applications. This enables service users to access financial assistance to pay for chargeable welfare services including housing related support, as well as other potential income.
- 107** Supporting People Fairer Charging is integrated into the corporate Fairer Charging Policy as part of the Supported Living Fairer Charging Assessment. This ensures commonality of approach for all Fairer Charging Assessments for services and programmes within the Community Services Portfolio.
- 108** Fairer charging assessments are linked to wider income maximisation work. The Benefit Maximisation Team carries out wider benefit assessments of all referred cases, with 50 per cent of their customers applying for Fairer Charging. All Fairer Charging recipients were reassessed last year as part of the fairer charging policy review to ensure access to benefits was maximised. The Benefit team organise regular campaigns. The Benefit Maximisation Team will hold surgeries for example in one stop shops, and have worked alongside the local pension service.
- 109** The outcomes of Fairer Charging assessments and the links to wider income maximisation work are not closely monitored by the Supporting People team. The number of applications referred to the Benefit Maximisation Service is monitored. However the team does not monitor the success of take up. The information on outcomes of the benefits maximisation work eg additional benefits, and access to backdated benefits cannot be disaggregated to show outcomes for Supporting People cases only. However, plans are in place to address this.

Risk management

- 110** A comprehensive analysis of risk has been undertaken. A risk register has been developed around a continuous and cyclical eight stage processes of business risk management, and approved January 2007. Programme risks include financial risks and sudden provider failure. The risk register is now reported to the Commissioning Body and Core Strategy Group on a quarterly basis. There was an appropriate level of discussion on the risks and challenge of action taken at the Commissioning Body. This ensures that potential risks to the effective delivery of the Supporting People programme are acknowledged and arrangements in place for aversion and contingency planning. Actions to mitigate or minimise the risks have been identified and are included in the team's service plan. Risks are clearly identified and managed within other elements of programme delivery. For example, a comprehensive risk analysis has been incorporated as part of the procurement plan, and used as one element to determine the order of service procurement. Unforeseen events are unlikely to significantly disrupt the programme.
- 111** Contingency plans are in place for the main risks to the programme. A list of accredited providers has been established to provide emergency cover, in the event of a sudden closure of a service, of services to that particular client group. IT failure is covered by corporate IT contingency plans. In addition a £0.5 million contingency fund has been agreed in 2007/08 for unforeseen financial demands faced by the programme. Initial steps have been taken to ensure providers are aware of their responsibilities around business continuity and emergency planning, but there are limited outcomes to date. There are examples of where disruption to services has been handled effectively, with support to a very vulnerable group of service users continuing when experiencing the short notice withdrawal of a provider from the programme. Services to vulnerable people will be protected even when the programme faces unforeseen disruption.

CLG data upload

- 112** Workbook returns are closely monitored. Over 90 per cent of service providers are submitting their returns on time. Non returns are promptly followed up and sanctions threatened against those providers who do not comply. Historically there has been a lack of quality control to validate returns from providers. This has recently been addressed through the new contract management arrangements and use of an internal control team. Data uploads contribute to CLG's assessment of the Supporting People programme on a nationwide basis.

Commissioning and performance

- 113 The previous inspections assessed this as an area of weakness. Grant conditions were breached with not all interim contracts signed and in place. No service reviews were fully completed or signed off by the Commissioning Body. This resulted in delays in amending contracts to deliver better value for money and securing higher standards of provision and impacting on the ability to shift resources or decommission services. There had been an ad hoc approach to the validation of services, and no regular contract monitoring visits made by the team. Strategic reviews had not been carried out. Complaints were not reported to the Commissioning Body and an appeals process recently introduced.
- 114 There is a balance of strengths and weaknesses in this area. The review process adopted has been thorough, consistent and fair. There are comprehensive arrangements in place for future contract monitoring, and quality assurance which were being introduced at the time of inspection. There is a commitment to increase the quality of services, and appropriate improvement planning arrangements in place. Some services were reconfigured following service reviews. However, there have been considerable delays in the completion of service reviews impacting on the ability to reconfigure services in line with priority needs. A risk based approach to service reviews was adopted, however this means not all services had a validation visit as part of the review. Arrangements for improvement planning monitoring are not embedded. Reporting arrangements for complaints is not robust and considerable delays were experienced in issuing providers with the review reports.

Contracts

- 115 There were delays in the completion of the service reviews. Liverpool was granted a 12-month extension by the CLG to the original 31 March 2006 deadline. This has resulted in considerable delays in issuing service providers with steady state contracts, with none in place at the time of this inspection, in achieving value for money savings and to have the ability to recommission services. As a result all services are in the final notice period of their interim contracts. These contracts are to be replaced by short term interim contracts with expiry dates tailored to fit in with sector wide commissioning reviews arranged by client group. This work will inform service specifications for the competitive tender of all services within the next two years. Whilst service reviews have resulted in changes to service provision, the delays have hindered the ability to significantly remodel and recommission services to address local needs.
- 116 On the whole, the team has carried out the service review process well, in a consistent and thorough manner. All 535 services have been assessed for strategic relevance, eligibility, value for money and quality. Though protracted service providers were generally satisfied with the process. Stakeholders, such as Probation, were not directly involved in service reviews but were consulted on relevant services and potential outcomes and recommendations. The outcomes of the service reviews were used to inform the development of the revised five-year strategy, and future commissioning decisions.

- 117** Not all services received a validation visit during the first round of reviews. Five-hundred and thirty-five service reviews were completed but only 314 schemes had a validation visit. Given the large number of schemes, the overall approach was based on risk with each provider organisations receiving a validation visit and supported by further visits to a cross section of services where the initial visit raised concern. Validation visits were not completed on the 62 community alarm services, however, service user satisfaction surveys were undertaken. This represents a missed opportunity to validate results, inform improvement planning, speak to service users and to check the support planning arrangements.
- 118** Robust arrangements are under development for future quality assurance and contract monitoring which takes account of managing the current contracts and services, and future commissioning arrangements. A layered approach has been developed. The first level is ongoing contract management focusing on the quality, performance and raising standards, the service review process to manage risk and the pre-tender review process to support service development. This approach commenced in April 2007 supported by a series of routine health checks which consider service quality, contract compliance, addressing concerns with the service and eligibility, and validation visits. The second level is a four stage service review methodology looking at managing the risk and focusing on outcomes. The third level is the pre-tender review which focuses on embracing best practice in service development. This follows a holistic strategic sector review which will result in tendering across all services within the sector. However, the new approaches are not yet embedded and there have been limited outcomes to date.
- 119** Not all providers are aware of the future contract monitoring arrangements, and some feel they have not been closely involved in developing proposals. An event was held at the provider forum in March 2007, but further consultation and communication is planned. This means some providers are not clear on what is expected of them.
- 120** There are no performance targets included in the majority of existing contracts. The majority of providers are still on interim contracts and these do not include targets for service providers on areas such as accommodation availability, quality, access or throughput. Targets are being included in a small number of new contracts being introduced to commission new services, for example, a teenage pregnancy service. However the majority of existing contracts which are interim contracts in their final notice period do not. This means that contracts are not currently being used to present service providers with challenging standards for their service.

Quality assurance

- 121** There is clear commitment to improving the quality of services delivered. The new contract monitoring arrangements include targets up to 2010 on improving the percentage of providers performing at level A and B of the QAF standard across the core and supplementary objectives. Supplementary objectives for service user involvement and living environment have been introduced, and included in validations from September 2007 onwards. Validation visits will be used as part of the annual contract monitoring arrangements to validate KPIs, the QAF self assessment and to monitor improvement plan delivery. This will ensure that providers are complying with contracts and provide the impetus to improve services.
- 122** Robust quality assurance arrangements are in place to ensure standards of work involving validation visits are consistent and transparent. They are outlined in the 'Operating Standards for delivering a Validation Visit programme'. They include a range of arrangements including all reports being signed by the Programme Co-ordinator, a 10 per cent check by the Programme lead officer, and level B & A assessments being confirmed by group decision. This ensures there is a level playing field and consistency for all reviews.

Reporting

- 123** There have been delays in issuing providers with the formal report following service reviews. Service providers were given verbal feedback following completion of the review and from August 2006 onwards a preliminary feedback summary sheet with recommendations. However, all review reports were not signed off by the Commissioning Body until February 2007 and issued to providers in March 2007. In some cases a long delay, up to 18 months, occurred between completion of the review and the issuing of formal outcome reports, resulting in some providers having difficulty in planning their service. This has improved with providers experiencing a recent review/validation visit being provided with feedback immediately.
- 124** Appropriate arrangements are in place for the reporting of reviews. There were regular reports to the Commissioning Body on progress with reviews and outcomes including risks to vulnerable people. There is evidence of challenge by Commissioning Body members, with contribution to the improvement plans and decisions around service reconfiguration.

Cross authority

- 125** Historically the Council did not fully participate in cross authority work but this has changed in the last six months. The Council are now committed to learning from good practice, and sharing their experiences with other authorities. The Council are now active members on the Merseyside Cross Authority Group, the North West Strategy Group, Core Cities and the North West Contract Officers Group. This has involved participating in the North West Outcomes Pilot, and learning from other authorities experiences of developing IT systems.

- 126** Agreements are in place with other authorities to help reduce the burden on service providers. Liverpool City Council is signed up as a member of the North West Contract Group Accreditation process. Protocols are in place resulting in 27 of 135 services being passported. The Council are signed up to the North West Information sharing protocol to support the management of risk posed by providers across the region. Elements of the North West Steady State Contract and Monitoring tool kit have been used in the approach to Liverpool's new service review methodology. This will reduce some of the burden for those providers working in different authorities.

Improvement planning

- 127** Appropriate arrangements are in place for improvement planning. The majority of providers were involved in the development of, and issued with, an improvement plan alongside the review outcome report. The majority of housing providers have been assessed as level C but improvement plans have been agreed or are being negotiated to drive services up to Level B and then level A. Close monitoring of the two schemes not achieving level C has taken place. The improvement plans have also been used to support the development of the workforce plan identifying areas of common weakness where provider's capacity could improve. This has resulted in improved outcomes for service users.
- 128** Arrangements for the monitoring of improvement plans have only recently been developed and are therefore not yet embedded. Improvement plans will be monitored through the new programme of validation visits. The level of improvement required by a provider has fed into a risk-based approach for future validation visits. Providers who are not due to receive a validation visit will be required to give a six-monthly update which will feed into future validation visit programmes.

Complaints

- 129** The Supporting People team has recently introduced a comprehensive complaints procedure. The new procedure was introduced in March 2007 specifically for the Supporting People programme and is aligned to the service provider and departmental complaints procedure. Providers have a good awareness of the procedure, and there are a number of leaflets which highlight the opportunity to complain. The Supporting People complaints procedure is intended for early stage complaints with the client able to pursue the corporate procedure if not satisfied with the outcomes. The numbers of complaints to date have been low.

- 130 However, the reporting arrangements for complaints are not robust. To date the Commissioning Body has only received one report on complaints. This did not indicate the level of compliance with the standards set, for example, whether the response was within timescale. The Commissioning Body has recently made a decision to only receive key themes and trends with any complaints which could not be resolved, with reports going to the Core Strategy Group. However this was not embedded at the time of the inspection. Portfolio reporting of complaints is in place, however historically this did not easily identify those complaints which relate to Supporting People. This makes it difficult to ensure complaints are dealt with appropriately.

Appeals process

- 131 An appropriate appeals process in place. The policy was developed using nationally acknowledged good practice, and agreed in May 2006. The process includes an appeal panel appointed by the Commissioning Body to hear any appeals and this consists of representation from the partner agencies and the Chair of the Liverpool City Council Social Care and Health Service Committee. Providers are aware of the opportunity to appeal. However, there have been no appeals to date.

Outcomes

- 132 The service review process has resulted in some service reconfiguration in line with the five-year strategy priorities. Twenty-two provider organisations representing seven client groups made changes to services. Outcomes included increased access to services, better quality service delivery, increased privacy and better quality accommodation. There has been negotiated reduction in capacity of six services as a result of physical changes to the accommodation to change from shared facilities to self contained units giving service users more normalised living conditions, improved living environments, greater privacy and personal independence. Five schemes were changed from accommodation based schemes to floating support to improve access to services. One floating support service has changed to a tenure neutral service improving access to vulnerable people regardless of tenure status. Five services had support to improve the quality of service delivery through the development of more robust policies and practices. However, there have been considerable delays in reaching this stage in the programme.

Value for money

- 133** The previous inspections found that limited action had been taken to ensure that the programme was providing high quality services to service users at the most efficient cost. The Council was beginning to have a better understanding of those providers whose costs were too high, and where the Supporting People grant needed to be replaced with statutory funding. A robust value for money tool had been developed to influence future decisions. However, Supporting People costs were comparatively high, some service users were receiving a higher level of support than they needed, limited progress had been made in tackling high legacy costs, and limited savings achieved in the programme. There was no strategic approach to undertaking best value reviews of internal providers, and a lack of capacity to contribute to or benefit from the work of regional groups.
- 134** This is an area where there are more weaknesses than strengths. A robust value for money methodology is in place and has been applied consistently. Savings of £1.268 million are to be realised in 2007/08. However, there is a high level of services not delivering value for money and considerable delays in addressing this. There are limited outcomes from the use of benchmarking or cross authority working to improve value for money. The development and delivery of the procurement plan has been delayed. The Council cannot demonstrate that the administration grant or additional budget allocation from the Council is delivering value for money.

How do costs compare?

- 135** Since the programme went live in April 2003 the average unit cost of floating support services has increased and the average unit cost of accommodation based services has fallen. The increase in unit cost for floating support services is the result of there being less generic support and more specialist support. This includes services such as the teenage parent service, and floating support for the prevention of homelessness for both singles and families.

Table 1 Unit cost comparisons between April 2003 and May 2007

Weekly Unit Costs	April 2003	May 2007
Accommodation based services	132.56	118.99
Floating support services	59.45	63.42
Community alarms	3.66	3.61
All provision	88.46	78.40

- 136 A robust value for money policy has been developed. The methodology was developed with consultancy support, and revised in December 2006 following consultation with providers. The methodology uses five key components to identify if a service offers value for money including strategic relevance, service outcomes, quality, performance and price. Parameters are set for each type of provision with an upper threshold for number of hours support per week, and for the cost per hour. Detailed investigations are carried out where provision is outside the thresholds. Positively the approach recognises that high costs may be justified for some services, or retraction plans put in place where not appropriate.
- 137 The value for money methodology has been applied consistently. All existing and newly procured services have been consistently assessed against the programme's robust value for money policy. When the policy was revised, assessments were revisited to ensure all services were subjected to the same assessment. New services, such as one for teenage parents, are also subject to the same assessment. Value for money policies have been applied consistently and with equal rigour to services regardless of whether they are internally or externally provided.
- 138 The team has taken action to improve provider awareness of the policy. In response to provider feedback a half day provider forum was held on value for money in December 2006 and changes made to reflect feedback at the event on the specialist nature of some services. However, providers still demonstrate mixed awareness and understanding of the methodology.

Benchmarking

- 139 There are limited outcomes from the use of benchmark data. Costs have been compared internally across sectors for consistency to use in the value for money assessments. Other benchmarking exercises which have taken place include core cities on older people and the centre of excellence on high cost packages. Benchmarking information is not used routinely to monitor costs or performance on an ongoing basis, or reported to the Core Strategy Group or Commissioning Body. This is a missed opportunity to scrutinise cost and quality indicators to drive improvements in value for money. The Council is now part of regional benchmarking arrangements giving them access to regional information on rates and taking part in refining activity to provide more detailed information, for example on support worker salary rates across the region.

Procurement

- 140 A robust procurement plan has recently been developed to procure new services and improve value for money. Risks are clearly identified along with impact and control measures. A three-year plan has been developed with a target time of new contracts being in place for tendered services by early April 2008 for the first round of services. This takes account of lead in times within the EU legislation. Resources for delivery of the procurement plan have been identified and accounted for within the new staffing structure. A project board is to be developed to oversee delivery of the plan, supported by regular progress reports to the Commissioning Body. This will help to ensure that progress in delivery is on schedule.

- 141** However, development and delivery of a procurement plan has been delayed. The procurement plan could not be developed until completion of the service review process and the production of the new five-year strategy. The first round of tendered contracts will not commence until September 2007. To date no steady state contracts have been issued. The model for steady state contracts is still under development. This has been developed based on the regional working group, but is still subject to legal agreement and final consultation. All contracts with providers are currently under notice of termination and will be reissued as a 12 to 24-month contract dependent on the outcome of the review. This allows the Supporting People team more flexibility to procure services through tendering arrangements. However, the delay has resulted in uncertainty for providers and further delays in securing efficiency savings and delivering value for money savings, impacting on the ability to recommission and develop new services.
- 142** Action has been taken to inform providers of the future plans to put all services out to competitive tender over two years. This included presentations at the Merseyside Providers Forum, the Small Providers Network, and a workshop at the large Providers Forum in March 2007. Small providers are being prepared for tendering by jointly commissioning and funding training on tendering. Most providers are aware of the future procurement proposals, some providers are unaware of this process and the potential impact on their service.
- 143** The Supporting People programme is working closely with partners to ensure that the future procurement of services is more joined up. The team has contributed to the joint commissioning strategy of services for older people and is also working closely with staff jointly employed by the Council and the PCT to develop mental health services. Some services have already been jointly procured, such as the teenage pregnancy service, or are designed to be complementary, such as a floating support service to complement a family intervention project. A number of other services are in the advanced stages of being jointly procured.
- 144** There is recognition that small providers need extra support to develop their capacity to deliver the programme. There is a forum dedicated to small providers at which training, for example on value for money work book completion, has been delivered. The training programme is also geared towards assisting small providers improve their understanding and capacity to deliver the programme.

Improving value for money

- 145** The Supporting People programme is contributing towards the Council's Gershon efficiency targets. Some cashable and non cashable efficiency savings have been identified through negotiations with service providers resulting from the service review and contract monitoring processes. Total savings of £1.268 million are projected for 2007/08 which represents three per cent of the programme grant. This represents £0.424 million on cashable savings through the reduction in contract price including the withdrawal of ineligible support, the realignment of services and the removal of spot subsidy. Non cashable savings of £0.844 million have been identified through increased capacity with no financial increase to contract prices. This includes the merger of subsidy contracts, and reconfiguration across services. Savings are to be reinvested in line with the strategic commissioning priorities identified in the five-year strategy. For example, reducing generic floating support and increasing specialised floating support, and the procurement of additional units of support in priority areas at no additional cost.
- 146** Liverpool continues to fund ineligible services and there have been delays in addressing value of money through service reconfiguration. The high cost case review has resulted in some services where value for money has not been addressed. Liverpool has identified £8.254 million of ineligible expenditure. These services are included in the retraction plan agreed by the Commissioning Body in January 2007. Partner agencies have reached agreement on the level of retraction funding over a three-year period from 2007/08. This will release £8.254 million of revenue funding to pump prime new service development and to meet the commissioning priorities identified in the five-year strategy. There is still some evidence of the use of spot contracts which is not considered value for money. The cessation of spot contracts had already generated savings of £0.388 million in 2006/07. However, the delays in identifying the ineligible spend and completing the service reviews has resulted in delays in retraction. This in turn results in delays in meeting the needs of service users where there are currently gaps in services.
- 147** The programme has clear plans to spend money released by retraction agreements which commence during 2007/08. £2.7 million of retracted funding during 2007/08 is being invested in an inflationary increase, the first since the programme started in 2003, for service providers, a small amount of financial contingency and £1.7 million towards commissioning priorities. These are clearly identified and costed in a three-year commissioning priority plan.

Cross authority approach

- 148 Liverpool recognise the advantages of cross authority working, however, there has been limited action to date. A consistent approach to value for money or exchanges of expertise has not been agreed and there are no cross authority procurement opportunities identified yet. However there is a commitment to work with other authorities to improve information to support delivery of the programme. Funding approval has been sought to support the completion of a cross authority needs assessment. This will enable steps to be taken towards future joint commissioning of services. A joint service for advice and support for people with HIV is being developed with a neighbouring authority, where it was identified that there was not the need for a specific service within Liverpool.

Administration grant

- 149 Liverpool cannot demonstrate that expenditure on the administration of the programme is value for money. However, there is limited data to demonstrate that the costs of administration are value for money. Liverpool can demonstrate that they are making considerable progress in putting in place a relevant structure, policy and procedure framework to take the programme forward in return for the high levels of expenditure on administration arrangements. Examples include the establishment of a service users group, a programme wide training programme, future contracting and monitoring arrangements and preparations for wide scale procurement activity. Liverpool compared favourably on a limited assessment of team sizes and funding spent on administration. However there is no benchmarking activity undertaken to compare salary levels, spending on consultancy support and or assessment of what the programme receives in return for the increased expenditure.

Service user involvement

- 150 The previous inspection recognised that there was growing service user engagement in shaping some accommodation strategies, and positive work to encourage the contribution of service users in service reviews. However service users and carers were not effectively engaged in service design, management or monitoring at a provider or strategic level or the governance of the programme. Service users had not been involved in the development of the five-year strategy, common assessment framework, or the support planning framework.

- 151 There is now a balance of strengths and weaknesses in this area. Service user involvement is being developed and there are some examples of outcomes to date. A service user forum has been established with capacity building support for those involved. The positive engagement events were a successful way of getting service users involved in the development of the strategy and planning services. Arrangements are now being put in place to involve service users in the governance arrangements. Outcomes from service user involvement included contributions to the five-year strategy, development of the support charter, and some work on scheme design. However, the service users involved are not representative of all user groups. There is mixed performance in the use of advocates and no formal links with the carers' forum. Further work is needed to further develop and embed opportunities for involvement. This is recognised in the Council's improvement and work plans.

Opportunities

- 152 The Council has begun to develop a structured approach to service user involvement over the last six months and are starting to see outcomes from this approach. Supporting People are funding a part-time worker within Liverpool Community Network to develop service user involvement. The Council has established a Supporting People Service User Forum which has been meeting since December 2006. The group is working effectively with approximately 50 people attending each month. Two sub groups have been established, one for publicity and events and one for Community Experts. A service user work plan has been developed with the aim of developing the Service User Group to become more independent, and this is supported by activities such as training and development. A capacity building team is working with the group from the Liverpool Community Network to identify individual learning needs, and by offering service users the opportunity to work as volunteers in their offices. Initial outcomes include the development of the terms of reference for the group, establishing an editorial group to develop a service newsletter, and involvement in the development of the Support Charter. This ensures service users are involved in delivery of the programme.
- 153 However, the service user group is not fully representative. It is recognised that more work needs to be carried out to ensure the group reflects the diverse range of service users. Attendance at the group is encouraged by, for example, changing venues and recording minutes on audio to make them more accessible. Links that already exist with various groups across Liverpool through the Liverpool Community Network to increase diverse representation on the service user group. The new service level agreement (SLA) with Liverpool Community Network for user involvement will include specific activities in relation to this. This will help to ensure the voice of service users is representative.

- 154** Service users are beginning to become involved in governance arrangements. Two services users have now been elected to sit on the Core Strategy Group. There has been commitment to this for some time but it could not be realised until the Service User Group was up and running. The representatives will be supported in their role by Liverpool Community Network through mentoring and training. An older person representative has sat on the Core Strategy Group for some time nominated from the Older Persons Network, although this is not a Supporting People service user. The new arrangements enable service users to have a voice in the development and running of the programme.
- 155** There is mixed performance in the use of advocates. Advocacy for individual service users relies on them being matched to appropriate services and the arrangements for this are not yet fully developed. An advocacy strategy is being developed in partnership between the Council and the PCT. The steering group includes a Supporting People representative. The Council has made good use of advocacy on a number of occasions in ensuring service users' views have been put forward, but the arrangements are less robust in ensuring that individual service users have access to such services. The Council engaged Age Concern and Shelter to act as advocates to gain service user views in services that, following review, present a risk of failing. This was to enable an independent approach to gathering the views of users in services that potentially faced decommissioning.
- 156** Supporting People has not had formal links with the Carers Network, but these will be made through the revised posts of quality officers. Consultation with carers is underway. However there are informal links such as members of the carers group came to positive engagement sessions. The Liverpool Service User Forum is also open to the carers group.

Involvement in contracting and monitoring

- 157** There is evidence of some service user involvement in contracting and monitoring arrangements. This has generally been carried out in an appropriate manner. For most validation visits service users were involved through a questionnaire, and a meeting with the review officer as part of the validation visit. In addition there is evidence of involving service users in the recommissioning and decommissioning of services, as described earlier in the report in relation to using Age Concern and Shelter as advocates in an at risk scheme. Advocates are also being used to engage with service users. The Carers Forum is currently commissioned to support the review of community alarms provision. Arrangements are also now in place to ensure that all new specifications will go through the Service User Group. This ensures that service users' views are involved in determining the services to be provided.
- 158** However, there is limited evidence of the results of service reviews being fed back to service users. There are some examples where this happened, but this was not in a structured or formal manner. The areas where results were fed back tended to be where reduction of services was being discussed. Service users are not clear how their views have been taken on board.

- 159 Service users have not been involved in procuring services to date. However joint commissioning in future will involve users in developing services. This is already happening in some cases, such as the development of the drug and alcohol service. The intention is then to move to involving service users in selecting providers following the tendering of services.

Outcomes from service user involvement

- 160 Service users have been actively involved in the development of the five-year strategy and in developing proposals for new services. A Positive Engagement session was held in February 2007 aimed at service users and providers to engage with them and to involve them in identifying what services they wanted and to have an input into the services being developed. This provided the opportunity for service users to talk about their experiences of support, talk about how it could be, and begin to design how services could be improved. This was facilitated through one workshop looking at a floating support service for older people and the development of a home improvement agency, and another group focusing on a floating support service for homeless families, ex-offenders and those leaving rehabilitation. The session was also used to begin to develop the Supporting People Support Charter. This ensures that service users are engaged in the programme and in informing the programme development and delivery.
- 161 There are a number of other outcomes from service user involvement. Service users were involved in the recruitment of senior managers. The forum has had some initial success in amending policies, and providing a coherent input to the Core Strategy Group. Service users were actively involved in the development of the Support Charter both in its content and its design. Service user involvement has enabled service users to contribute towards the development of the workforce plan. This increases ownership of the service users.
- 162 Service users are beginning to become involved in scheme design. Service users have been involved in producing the specifications for five services (homeless families' service, older people's floating support service, resettlement pilot, Home Improvement Agency (HIA) and a drug and alcohol abstinence service). These specifications will be built on and used to tender for services over the next 12 months. This ensures that service specifications incorporate the needs and views of the service users, and that services focus on achieving the outcomes important to service users.
- 163 However effective service user involvement is still recent and is not yet embedded within the programme. Further action is needed to develop and widen the opportunities for service user involvement and to ensure that all client groups are able to contribute. For example, the service user groups are not representative of all service user groups.

Access to services and information

- 164** The previous inspection recognised more public information was available and a greater awareness of Supporting People services in the wider Council. However, access continued to be a problem for many Supporting People service users. There were growing waiting lists for a number of services and difficulties existed securing move on accommodation and support. The Council had been working to improve access for vulnerable people within existing housing allocation systems and trying to refine and establish greater accountability in the nomination process. There was no directory of Supporting People services in place, and no service user involvement in the design and development of information/leaflets.
- 165** There are now more strengths than weaknesses in this area. Access Liverpool provides one point of contact for access to sheltered, frail elderly and adapted properties. The Move On Group is focusing on removing barriers to access. Appropriate signposting and referral arrangements are in place. There is a range of accessible information available, and the service user Community Expert Panel now has a role in developing this. However, the website is not easy to navigate and is not service user focused. Take up of fairer charging is low, and limited promotion work carried out with providers. The directory of services is only available via the internet.

Access and referral to services

- 166** Access Liverpool is a positive scheme that provides access to sheltered housing, frail elderly schemes and adapted properties through one point of contact. The project is a partnership between the Council, RSLs, Age Concern, the Housing Corporation and the PCT. For adapted properties, an occupational therapist works as part of the project to ensure suitable matches are made between adapted properties and customers. There is an adapted property register, although this is for social housing only at present. Access Liverpool also provides help to people with learning disabilities to find housing. There are currently 80 people on the register and to help meet these needs it has been agreed with a RSL partner to make six units available in a new affordable housing scheme for shared homeownership. Access Liverpool is being successful in helping vulnerable people into appropriate housing. In 2006/07, 371 older people were rehoused, 72 people into accessible housing and 11 people with learning disabilities were helped.
- 167** Work has commenced to begin to remove barriers to older people with complex needs trying to access sheltered housing. The needs analysis identified there was a need for access to sheltered housing and support for elderly people with complex needs such as a history of rent arrears, drug and alcohol abuse, and anti-social behaviour, who are traditionally excluded from applying. The Resettlement Pilot will work through Access Liverpool to ensure that elderly people with complex needs are given the resettlement support required to encourage providers to accept them into schemes. However, the pilot is not yet operational.

- 168 The Supporting People officers are working to ensure potential service users can access services. The Supporting People Move On Group has contributed to the review of the Council's allocation process to ensure provision for vulnerable groups, and remove some barriers which exist, such as the process around suspensions and getting them lifted. However, it is not known at this stage how much has been considered as the final policy has not been circulated.
- 169 Appropriate signposting and referral arrangements are in place. The Careline⁴ 24-hour service and the One Stop Shops work closely together making appropriate referrals. A number of staff in the One Stop Shops are trained in British Sign Language. Managers of the Shops are expected to make links with the voluntary sector in their areas so that clients can be signposted appropriately. This is supported by agreed criteria, guidance and training including job shadowing. Careline acts as the access point for Supporting People services and will refer clients to the team as appropriate. Referrals made are used to improve services with referral routes mapped and broken down by self referrals and by the different agencies. Recent analysis has shown that there are few referrals from GPs and the Community Mental Health Team and information has now been targeted at these groups to raise awareness.

Information

- 170 Providers are generally satisfied with the provision of information and felt this had improved significantly in the last six months. A suite of leaflets are now available in the Council's offices and a poster is being distributed to a variety of venues and agencies. This means information is accessible to service users and potential service users and is generally available in key public places.
- 171 The Supporting People User Group Community Expert Panel is beginning to have a role in the development of information. This includes the development of an easy read summary of the five-year strategy. In addition the group are involved in the development of the draft Support Charter. These documents can only be publicised when the content and format has been reviewed by service users and 'kitemarked' or approved for publishing. This ensures that this information is accessible to services users and presented appropriately.

⁴ Careline is Liverpool City Council's award winning 24/7 social care call centre, providing a central contact point for enquiries about services for children, adults, homeless families and people with mental health problems.

172 Information is easily accessible in a range of formats. This includes interpretation and translation materials, audio and Braille through NOVAS, a social enterprise. Language Line is also used to ensure that a full range of languages are covered and to enable quick access when this is necessary. The Council is working corporately on a customer contact project which includes the production of information and the corporate marketing of leaflets. Leaflets currently produced are expected to include strap lines in the agreed community languages and to signpost to versions in large font, braille and audio. Community Services has started an 'easy read' project managed by service users and aimed at looking at key documents and putting them into an easy read format. This ensures that the diverse range of service users can access information on the programme. However, presently there is limited information for Supporting People users presented in an easy read format.

Directory

173 The Directory has been updated and linked into Help4me⁵ as on an online accessible document. This is used to publicise 500 Supporting People services alongside a directory of all other support services and agencies. This will contain all other services the Council provides or commissions over the next few months. The directory was considered by providers and some changes made before being implemented in March 2007.

174 The Council has developed a comprehensive and well laid out Directory of Services for Providers following consultation with them. However this is not available as a public document, because the Council's view is that it quickly becomes out of date. This means there is no published hard copy of the directory available. However, the Council will encourage customers who are not able to access the website directly to utilise kiosks at various points across Liverpool, One Stop Shops and Careline. However, the Council is missing an opportunity to make better use of a well presented document and this could present a barrier to a service user accessing services.

Website

175 The website is not easy to navigate and is not particularly user friendly. A link is available to the Supporting People web pages from the Council home page. Key information and leaflets are available on the website, for example, fairer charging leaflets. Some links are made to other agencies and external sites. However it is not easy then to find information on particular elements of the programme without an understanding of how the programme is structured.

⁵ The Help4Me a national directory of services across a number of local authority which includes details of what support services can offer to people, where services are located and how to access. Liverpool City Council uses the Help4me directory to publicise details of other services that can be accessed in the city outside of what is funded by Supporting People.

- 176 The website has been designed to be accessible to people who have communication difficulties. A Browse Aloud facility is provided for people who may have sight impairment. In addition pages can be displayed in different ways to improve the visual impact. This means that information is available to vulnerable minorities within Liverpool.

Better Care Higher Standards

- 177 The Council's Better Care: Higher Standards has been recently reviewed with the Supporting People content increased and information provided on accessing services. The document is comprehensive, but aimed more at service providers and stakeholders than service users. An easy read version is under development to improve accessibility.

Services charges and access to fairer charging

- 178 Information is available on fairer charging but further work is needed to extend information and access. A fairer charging leaflet has been produced which is easy to understand, and talks through the application process. This is also available on the website. There is overall promotion of fairer charging which includes surgeries held in One Stop Shops, local libraries and in future this is planned for sheltered housing schemes. However, there has been limited targeted promotional work with providers to improve awareness of fairer charging. Action is planned to address this through service specifications.
- 179 Whilst take up of Supporting People fairer charging is monitored, it is not known how this compares to potential take up. There were 18 fairer charging applicants in 2006/07 and all have been accepted. There is a perception that potential take up of fairer charging will be low due to the levels of deprivation and dependence on housing benefit within the city. However, without this information the team are not able to identify areas of low take up or target promotional activity.

Diversity

- 180 The previous inspection assessed that appropriate progress had been made in this area, but further work was required to ensure equality of access and the level of cultural sensitivity required to appropriately serve the needs of a range of hard to reach minority groups. High priority had been given to addressing the needs of the city's diverse population, and there was a high level of BME take up of services compared to the representation in the local community. However, there were some key gaps in relation to the availability of services to minority groups, and the five-year strategy did not identify how key gaps will be addressed.

- 181** There are now more strengths than weaknesses in this area. Appropriate arrangements are in place for the completion of equality impact assessments. Equality actions are included in the service plan, and integrated into the procurement process. A comprehensive needs analysis has been carried out which considered the needs of socially excluded groups, and baseline demographic information. Client record forms are used for ethnicity monitoring and to test cultural sensitivity and the Council aims to ensure that those from a BME background are able to access services. Work is taking place to address the gaps in services for excluded groups. A number of services are in place which are culturally sensitive and more are planned. Links have been made to other services and agencies to support this area of work.
- 182** Appropriate arrangements are in place for equality impact assessments. Support is available to help providers carry out equalities impact assessment. A toolkit has been developed, a process is in place and training provided to managers carrying them out. Equality impact assessments are built into service plans to set out which services are to be included for that year. The Supporting People five-year strategy has been assessed and is currently being subject to quality assurance before being agreed as completed by the corporate equalities team. The pilot resettlement project has been completed and an equalities impact assessment will be carried out on services as they are commissioned. Four diversity training sessions are being offered to providers as part of the overall training programme developed for them.

Identifying diverse needs

- 183** There is a commitment to improving equality and promoting diversity in the delivery of the programme. In 2006/07 the Supporting People team had nine equalities action within the Equalities action plan and good progress has been made against these. This includes monitoring access to services through the client record forms, raising the profile of the Supporting People programme resulting in attendance at the BRM housing network, and identifying unmet need through the comprehensive needs analysis.
- 184** Diversity issues are integrated into procurement. There is a procurement guide and standard proformas to ensure diversity issues are addressed in procurement exercises. Procurement is an area covered in the service equality action plans and training has been developed to cover this area. Briefings have been given to providers on what is expected on diversity when services are being procured.
- 185** Comprehensive information is available which helps to identify the diverse needs of service users involved in the Supporting People programme. The needs analysis carried out in 2006 was comprehensive and considered the diversity of service users within the city, as well as the demographic profile. There is a range of research and data on the community profile of Liverpool to identify diversity issues. The recent housing needs survey included focus groups with a number of socially excluded groups. Survey work has been carried out to identify why some older groups do not access sheltered housing. The team is now much better placed to identify the diverse needs of service users.

- 186 The Council through its Supporting People programme are seeking to ensure that providers reflect the diversity and equalities priorities of the Council. Client record monitoring has identified that a disproportionate number of users of Supporting People services are from the BME communities. This triggered the survey of providers in April 2007 to identify how they are meeting the diverse needs of their clients. The surveys have been returned and the information is in the process of being analysed.
- 187 Supported housing schemes delivered through the affordable housing programme have been developed on an ad hoc basis in the past, in response to particular needs being identified. Bids for Housing Corporation capital funding were made on the basis of identified needs, and revenue funding agreed to support schemes. However the lack of strategic approach has meant that schemes may not have been the most appropriate in meeting priority needs. For example, the scheme to be shortly completed for Jewish Elders. In future Supporting People will work with strategic housing services to use housing needs information to identify schemes including the re-provision and remodelling of existing schemes. This will ensure that available resources are best targeted at meeting supported housing priorities.

Excluded groups

- 188 The Council aims to ensure that service users from BME communities are able to easily access services. The Council has set a service plan objective of improving access to services for service users from a BME background. In 2006/07 a target was set of 10 per cent of service users being from a BME community, and actual performance exceeded the target at 12.5 per cent. This is higher than the BME profile within Liverpool which is currently 6 per cent which demonstrates those from a BME community have fair access.
- 189 The Council's needs assessment for Supporting People services included good information on socially excluded groups through the multi agency survey carried out. This has allowed the Council to identify groups who are not accessing services and where there are gaps in services. In some cases this has identified that further research is needed into the type of service that can best meet the needs identified, for example, services for sex workers in the city. Further research work is planned to fill gaps in the needs assessments in relation to excluded groups. The Gypsies and Travellers needs assessment has been commissioned through the Merseyside Forum, and is scheduled for completion by September 2007.
- 190 The Council has taken action to work with excluded groups and to identify gaps in current service delivery and to involve them in improving services to meet their needs. One of the positive engagement sessions held in October 2006 was for socially excluded groups. This included a session on their experiences of the programme, identifying how Supporting People could be better, and looking at unmet need. The work has been used to identify where services need to be commissioned.

- 191** The Council has good links with the voluntary sector. The Voluntary Services Council includes 12 networks of communities of interest such as race and disability. Liverpool First also has community interest networks. These are used to help in reaching particular communities. In addition over 100 agencies working with socially excluded groups were identified through the multi agency survey which has allowed the Council to map the groups that can be contacted. For example there is an agency for drug services for BRM communities
- 192** Excluded groups are identified within the five-year strategy and influenced the priority setting for the commissioning of services. A number of services are planned which will meet the needs of excluded groups. The Commissioning Plan for 2007/08 includes floating support services for older people including those who are homeless, homeless families, those from the Somali community with mental health needs, and floating support for people leaving hospital or institutions with mental health needs. This will help to address some of the gaps identified in services for excluded groups.

Cultural sensitivity

- 193** The Council has an effective system for gathering information on the diverse needs of its clients. The Service User Index System (SUIS) is used across Community Services and gathers information on clients by ethnicity, gender, age and disability. This provides a valuable source of data and also allows cultural sensitivities to be identified. The information has been used in Home Care contracts and will now be used when procuring future Supporting People services to requiring potential providers to show how cultural sensitivities will be met.
- 194** There are a number of services which have been developed specifically to reflect the culture of the communities which they serve. For example, support to Chinese Elders in a Supported Housing Scheme and the development of loan products for the Muslim community in regeneration areas. Work is also underway to commission services for some excluded groups. An example is a floating support service for people from the Somali community with mental health needs. The latter has involved the homelessness service, training and employing a member of the community to provide this service. The needs of women from BME communities suffering domestic violence are being met through the extension of an existing floating support scheme. The scheme employs multi-lingual workers and works closely with the local mosques to work with the perpetrators as well as helping victims.
- 195** The Council is represented on the Black and Racial Minority Housing Network, which is a network group of the Voluntary and Community Sector for housing issues which has its own action plan for addressing diversity issues in the city. Representatives from Supporting People now attend the group but it is too early for their influence to be seen. However the scheme for the Somali community has been discussed by the group and through the involvement of the various partners has enabled the activities in developing this scheme to be better co-ordinated.

- 196 There is some evidence of providers addressing culturally sensitive issues and this was assessed as part of service reviews. As part of each review the client record data was analysed to determine access to services and take up. It was also validated through the QAF. There are examples where cultural issues have been addressed. For example, one review identified that service users were making racist remarks. This was followed up with cultural sensitivity sessions for service users. One organisation did not include the needs of Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender groups in the Equality Policy, but this has now been rectified.
- 197 Where appropriate, links are being made with other services to support individual communities. For example, one scheme has made links with a Chinese Community Centre to help access the Chinese Community. The refugee support network has been used to link a number of projects for asylum seekers and refugees.

Outcomes for service users

- 198 The previous inspection assessed that the Council needed to do more work on a joint agency basis before service users were able to access the range and quality of housing and support services they needed to achieve positive outcomes. Further work was needed to ensure effective referral and support planning arrangements were in place. The Council did not have a robust system to strategically drive and performance manage better outcomes for people. There was a lack of progress in addressing the needs of people with complex needs whose funding was inappropriately transferred to Supporting People, and individual risk assessment had not progressed for most of the high cost service users. There had been some progress in reconfiguring services for older people to improve access. Demand outstripped supply in some priority areas, for example floating support for those with mental health problems, or single homeless people accommodation.
- 199 This is an area where there is now a balance of strengths and weaknesses. The Council can demonstrate that there have been improvements in the Supporting People services provided. There is a commitment to improving outcomes for service users and the quality of support provided through the development of the Support Charter. There are many examples of positive outcomes for service users through the support provided. However, there have been considerable delays in increasing the choice of services available to meet the needs of service users as a result of the delays in completion of reviews, eligibility and value for money assessments. Appropriate arrangements are not yet in place for outcome measurement.

Supporting People service improvements

- 200** The programme can demonstrate that there have been improvements in the contracted services. An objective of improving the quality of Supporting People funded services was set within the 2006/07 service plan, with a target of 25 per cent of services being rated as A or B against the QAF. By the end of 2006/07, 40 per cent of services had self assessed at level A, or B. However, the majority of services are still to have their QAF scores validated. A small number of services were identified as 'high-risk' following the service reviews as a result of concerns over quality. These have been targeted for intervention and action taken to improve quality to meet the minimum standards, or to look at options for decommissioning.
- 201** There is a commitment to improving outcomes for service users and improving the quality of support provided. This is evidenced by the development of the Support Charter for service users. Developed by service users, providers and service commissioners, this states that 'good quality person-centred care and support is the basic right for all vulnerable people using services within Liverpool and we will work with providers, commissioning partners and key stakeholders to deliver this.' The document is currently in draft format as final amendments are made by the service user group. However it is intended that a copy will be provided to each service user by their provider, as a promise of the level of support they can expect to receive. This has been developed in line with the national outcomes framework, with support listed under the five headings of: be healthy; stay safe; enjoy and achieve; make a positive contribution; and achieve economic wellbeing. This ensures that service users and providers know the level of support which should be provided.
- 202** There are many examples of positive outcomes for service users through the support provided. Over 500 people have moved on from short term to general needs housing. Clearly identified desired outcomes for service users are also used to help develop the models of new services. For example, a successful drug and alcohol abstinence project has been used to develop further services. The original project in the last twelve months supported 57 clients, 55 of whom completed treatment and are drug and alcohol free. Fifty-three clients have moved on to independent living, 22 gaining their own tenancy. Over half the clients have engaged in education, training and employment. A new floating support service for older people has been developed to meet an identified gap in services through the provision of low level preventative services to reduce unnecessary admission to care homes and acute hospital facilities, as identified through the Positive Engagement sessions with service users.
- 203** Outcomes and improvements in services and support provided have been identified in a number of key areas. Positive engagement sessions held in October 2006 with service providers, service users, carers, commissioners and advice agencies were used to identify what works well in relation to support for older people, socially excluded groups, those with Learning Disabilities and those with Mental Health needs. This helped to identify positive examples across a range of services of the outcomes for individuals and ensured they were engaged in improving existing services and developing future services.

Choice for service users

- 204** Overall the amount of housing related support provided by the programme has increased. The level of accommodation based support has decreased and the level of floating support has increased. Community alarm support has remained at the same level. Details are included in the following.

Table 2 Changes in Housing Related Support Provision - April 2003 to May 2007

Accommodation Based	6,127	5,662
Floating Support	1,614	2,056
Community Alarms	2,668	2,593
All provision	9,829	10,331

- 205** Work has begun to address a number of the gaps and priorities identified within the five-year strategy. Two new services went out to tender at the end of May 2007, following the development of service specifications with relevant partners and service users through the positive engagement days or service user group. These will provide a floating support service for families involved in anti-social behaviour, and an abstinence based drug and alcohol accommodation project. The pilot resettlement service to improve access to move on accommodation has recently commenced. Work has begun on developing the service specifications for a mental health discharge/resettlement service and floating support service for the Somali Community with Mental Health issues, both due to be in place by March 2008. Research into the rent deposit scheme has begun and the introduction of the scheme brought forward to the current financial year in light of changes to the grant conditions.
- 206** However, there have been considerable delays in commencing the commissioning of services. This is due to delays in developing a comprehensive understanding of needs and a robust five-year strategy. These delays are further exacerbated by delays in addressing ineligible spend, particularly in relation to the high cost cases. This has impacted on the ability of the Council to free up resources to commission new services. Some further delays are expected and this has meant that some service users are not able to access the services which they require.

- 207** An opportunity has been made for all service users to comment on the programme and services they receive. The Council have taken steps to measure the satisfaction of service users. A questionnaire was distributed to all service users and a 20 per cent return achieved. This indicated that service users are generally satisfied with the support they receive, with 95.8 per cent of respondents satisfied. This was also used to assess the support they receive. Eighty-eight per cent stated they had a support plan, 86 per cent could identify that they had a support worker and 88 per cent felt their support plan reflected their wishes. Work is under way to improve the process for the collection of this information in future. This provides one way for the Council to check service users are receiving appropriate support planning arrangements, and to identify areas for improvement.
- 208** There is commitment to improving move on from short term accommodation based services. One of the key performance indicators identified in the Service Plan for 2006/07 was the percentage of service users moving on in a planned way from short term services. A target of 35 per cent was set for 2006/07 which was exceeded by year end performance of 52.5 per cent. This represents 789 service users moving on in a planned way, 531 of whom moved on to their own tenancy. However, the approaches taken to date to address the barriers to move on have had limited outcomes to date due to the early stage of the initiatives detailed above. Forty-one per cent of providers are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the arrangements for accessing appropriate and timely move on.
- 209** Weakness in the range of and accessibility of services has been identified and plans are in place to address these in partnership with other commissioners, providers and service users. A commissioning plan has been developed which clearly identifies services to be commissioned over the next three years, in line with priorities identified within the five-year strategy. Work has begun recently to address these issues. The plan is reviewed regularly and amendments made to fit in with partners priorities. For example, the commissioning of a floating support service for homeless families has been delayed to take account of a strategic review of homelessness underway within the Council. This ensures that the services commissioned meet the needs identified by all partners, and will provide greatest benefit to service users.

Support plans

- 210** The Council has raised the importance of support planning with providers. Training has recently been delivered on support planning, and further training planned. A Support Charter has been developed through the Positive Engagement Sessions which will ensure that providers are clear on what is expected in relation to support planning. This will help to improve links between existing support planning arrangements and the adoption of the new national outcome monitoring framework. Support Plans seen at provider visits were satisfactory with a number reflecting current good practice around being outcome focussed and target driven.

- 211 The checking of support plans by the Supporting People team has not been as robust as it could have been. As a result of the risk based approach not all services had a validation visit carried out, therefore the quality of support planning arrangements has not been reality checked. This will be improved through the new programme of validation visits and future contract monitoring arrangements.

Outcome measurement

- 212 Minimal measures are in place for monitoring outcomes from service users, and reporting of these has been limited. There is a reliance on the standard Key Performance Indicators one and two to demonstrate outcomes for service users. Reporting of the KPIs to the Commissioning Body and Core Strategy Group has only commenced recently. Some case studies are collected to demonstrate outcomes for service users in individual cases. However this information is not collected in a systematic or comprehensive way. This means the Council cannot demonstrate the wider outcomes from the Supporting People programme.
- 213 The Council has not yet developed a robust approach to use of indicators with other agencies, such as health or wider adult social care which relate to improving independence. For example, there are a number of health priorities which would benefit from a shared approach. This means the programme cannot demonstrate the impact it is having on the wider quality of life of people within Liverpool.

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

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

- 214 The second inspection found that the wider Council had given priority to this area of work, and a number of fundamental building blocks had been put in place to secure the additional capacity and expertise that was required to move the programme forward. However, the improvement tasks facing the Council were significant and complex. Progress against objectives had been hindered by problems in staff capacity, stability and consistency. A number of recommendations made at the initial inspection were not achieved within timescale, and some were outstanding. There was slow progress and pace of change. There was a lot of work still in progress at the time of the inspection, and limited evidence of improved outcomes for service users.
- 215 There are now significantly more drivers than barriers in this area. A number of historical barriers have been addressed resulting in a considerable shift in the direction of the programme over the last nine months. There is a clear track record of delivering change. The pace of change has been appropriate with a focus on ensuring high quality outcomes. There are improvements in a number of areas which impact on service users including increased involvement opportunities, and some increase in provision in line with the five-year strategy. Targets set have been exceeded. However, there have been delays in addressing some weaknesses of the programme identified in earlier inspections. Delays in addressing value for money and eligibility have resulted in delays in retraction planning and achievement of efficiency savings, however clear and deliverable plans are now in place to address this.

Record of effectively implementing change which has led to improvements in programme delivery

- 216 Historically there have been a number of barriers to delivering the programme. These included not addressing inappropriate and ineligible funding until very recently, delivering the programme through a dispersed team with weak leadership and management which resulted in lack of communication between providers and team members and silo working and the lack of a robust needs analysis and comprehensive five-year strategy. Considerable efforts have been made over the last 12 months to remove these barriers, and this has resulted in an updated needs analysis, strategy and retraction plan which means the programme is now able to move forward into the commissioning stage and develop new services to address gaps. The team is now appropriately resourced and managed with increased leadership and corporate support providing the ability to further improve delivery of the programme.

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- 217** Improvement work has been focused on the delivery of the previous inspection recommendations. The Audit Commission report in 2005 contained a number of key recommendations with timescales for delivery. This was followed by work in January 2006 with the ODPM (now CLG) which resulted in the production of the Liverpool Supporting People - ODPM project plan. The outcome of this work formed the basis of further discussions with the CLG and the Audit Commission between January and March 2006 which resulted in the development of the jointly agreed Liverpool Supporting People Improvement Plan. The priorities and timescales within the improvement plan differed from the original inspection recommendation timescales. The council positively engaged in regular monitoring of this plan with CLG and the Audit Commission.
- 218** It is recognised historically that there have been delays in the programme, however, the recent pace of change has been considerable and time taken to ensure that improvements are carried out in a methodical and robust way. Corporate commitment to improving programme delivery is evident, particularly over the last 12 months. Four inspection recommendations still require completion, however good progress has been made in taking action to address the recommendations and clear plans are in place to complete these to ensure that the expected outcomes will soon be realised. Progress was slow in some areas as the Council had to address some of the foundations of the programme including undertaking a comprehensive needs analysis, and the development of the five-year strategy before some of the other recommendations could be implemented. Many of the completed recommendations have been developed further to ensure the programme delivery is further improved.

Table 3 Progress against 2005 recommendations

Recommendations	Progress
<i>R1 Undertake a social work/specialist assessment of all those Supporting People service users who have been identified as requiring this so that statutory duties are properly met, and that any outstanding risks to the individual are fully addressed. Ensure there is regular reviewing of their situation and effective inter agency support as required. To be implemented by March 2006.</i>	Completed.
<i>R2 Ensure that there are sufficient new tenancies identified and robust support plans put in place for those individuals who have been identified as wishing to, or who have the potential to move on to less intensively supported environments. To be implemented by September 2006.</i>	Completed.

Recommendations	Progress
<p><i>R3 Tighten management oversight of the programme and the risk register to ensure a stronger focus on child and adult protection arrangements, reporting of complaints, emergency planning and contracting practices. Sign all outstanding interim contracts. To be implemented by December 2005.</i></p>	<p>Partially complete - some further work to address contingency planning.</p>
<p><i>R4 Give clear guidance to staff, service providers and service users on the availability of support outside office hours, and indicate the likely circumstances that require a separation of the functions of the support provider from those of the housing provider. To be implemented by December 2005.</i></p>	<p>Completed.</p>
<p><i>R5 Ensure a clear focus on the diverse needs of Supporting People service users and the outcomes being achieved within the service review programme, five-year strategy and performance management systems. To be implemented by February 2006.</i></p>	<p>Completed.</p>
<p><i>R6 Revise the Annual Plan to provide clear detail on how service users currently living in inappropriate accommodation will have their needs addressed and to secure joint agency support for the ensuing actions. To be implemented by February 2006.</i></p>	<p>Completed.</p>
<p><i>R7 Develop a strategic approach to undertaking best value reviews of internal Supporting People providers. To be implemented by March 2006.</i></p>	<p>Completed.</p>
<p><i>R8 Develop a comprehensive user involvement strategy that ensures Supporting People service users, their carers and advocacy groups are effectively engaged in service governance, management and monitoring at a strategic and individual service provider level. To be implemented by April 2006.</i></p>	<p>Partially completed - review of service user strategy in progress with established service user forum.</p>
<p><i>R9 Establish joint commissioning and effective partnering with other agencies in order to ensure some key shared targets such as avoidable admission to hospital and timely discharge are achieved. Work is undertaken to improve the sharing of information across agencies. To be implemented by April 2006.</i></p>	<p>Partially completed - some further work required to embed joint commissioning and information sharing.</p>

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Recommendations	Progress
<i>R10 Engage all stakeholders in developing a joint training and workforce strategy to address outstanding workforce retention, development and capability issues. To be implemented by August 2006.</i>	Completed.
<i>R11 Develop a clear strategy for the working in partnership with neighbouring Councils. To be implemented by August 2006.</i>	Partially completed - some further action required to embed.

219 Other key improvements in delivery of the programme include the following.

- Good performance against targets set in the 2006/07 service plan. All six targets set were either met or exceeded.
- The completion of a comprehensive and robust needs analysis, with arrangements in place to update and review needs information.
- Agreement on the strategic priorities for future commissioning which reflect identified need and the strategic priorities of all partners. This is reflected in the five-year strategy, and accompanying commissioning plan.
- Improvements in the way partners, stakeholders and providers are engaged in the programme. This included the use of Positive Engagement sessions to enable input into the development of the five-year strategy.
- Improved relationships with providers since the last inspection. This has resulted in providers being engaged in delivery of the programme, and having greater confidence about future services. Communication with providers has improved, as has the training and support provided. The improved relationship can be used as a catalyst for further service improvements. This includes specialist support for small providers.
- Improved information on the Supporting People programme with the development of leaflets in a range of formats.

Improvements in outcomes experienced by service users

220 There are a number of areas where the programme can demonstrate improved outcomes for service users. Improvements have been made in relation to service user involvement. Meaningful mechanisms are in place to enable services users to be involved in the development and delivery of the programme. This included the use of the Positive Engagement sessions including groups of vulnerable or socially excluded service users. Service users are actively now involved in the governance arrangements, and have a number of service user forums in place to contribute to different parts of the programme development.

- 221** The level of provision has increased for some groups of service users. Floating support services have been reconfigured to provide less generic provision towards more specialist provision. This has resulted in a teenage parent service, a floating support service for the prevention of homelessness (both singles and families), and an increase in Irish Traveller provision to include floating support for Traveller families living in conventional accommodation.
- 222** The completion of the needs analysis and five-year strategy has led to improvements for service users. These have identified and prioritised the areas where services needed to be developed or reconfigured. This means that any savings or investment can be directed to those services which are most in need.
- 223** However, the delays in dealing with the retraction planning for ineligible services impacts on the ability to deliver outcomes for service users. This has resulted in Supporting People grant being tied up inappropriately in services and not being used to develop services for vulnerable people who need them most.

Direction of travel of key performance indicators

- 224** The Supporting People programme performance is exceeding targets set. Out turn performance has exceeded targets set for local performance indicators. These include a target of 25 per cent of Supporting People services rated as A or B, compared to an outturn of 40 percent. A target of 35 per cent of short term service users moving on in planned way, compared to an out turn of 52.5 per cent for 2006/07.
- 225** Information from the wider Adult Social Care performance information would indicate that there is good performance for people who are vulnerable being supported at home to live independently. There has been a 12 per cent increase in numbers of adults with mental health issues supported to live at home. Liverpool is amongst the top performers for Council's in supporting adults aged under 65 with a learning disability to live at home and this target has increased by 8.5 per cent from 2005/06. There has been a percentage reduction in hospital readmissions by 8.1 per cent; and a decrease in the number of older people who have fallen. In terms of older people, there has been a 14 per cent increase in the number of older people being supported to live at home and there is also a small improvement in the numbers of older people receiving intensive home care. However, it is not clear what contribution the Supporting People programme is making to these performance indicators.

Demonstrate improving value for money over time

- 226** There have been delays in addressing value for money issues as a result of the extension to the service review process and the identification of funds to be retracted following the review of high cost cases. However, both of these are completed and some savings have been identified following the service reviews. A robust value for money methodology is in place. It is expected that value for money will be improved through the tendering of new services, and the service review methodology. Total savings of £1.268 million are projected for 2007/08 which represents 3 per cent of the programme grant.

How does the Council manage performance?

- 227** The previous inspection assessed this as an area where there were more barriers than drivers. The quality and robustness of strategic planning was insufficient to enable the Council's vision for future service delivery. The five-year strategy was weak in relation to focus on outcomes for service users and had limited information on future direction of the programme. Implementation plans to support further development of the programme needed detailing and complementary plans did not fit together at a strategic or resource management level. Performance management of the programme was weak. There were no systems in place for identifying or learning from complaints, and a lack of a systematic approach to learning from others and service users.
- 228** There are now more drivers than barriers in this area. The vision, aims and objectives for the programme are clearly aligned to other key strategies, and throughout improvement plans, including defined targets. Improvement planning and monitoring arrangements have improved, and the programme is now integrated into corporate performance management. Actions have been identified within existing plans which address many of the areas for improvement identified during the inspection. However, the programme has historically suffered from a high turnover in Accountable and Lead Officers resulting in weak and inconsistent leadership.

How good is the programme's improvement planning?

- 229** The Supporting People vision and objectives are integrated into wider corporate objectives and improvement planning processes. Links are evident between the Council's corporate plan, the Community Strategy and the Local Area Agreement. The objectives within the five-year strategy are clearly defined, and key actions in the annual plan contribute to the delivery of the objectives.
- 230** The Council have improved the delivery and monitoring of improvement plans since the last inspection. The key focus for the Supporting People programme since the last inspection has been delivery of the agreed improvement plan based on the CLG and Audit Commission intervention and resulting recommendations. Regular update reports went to the Commissioning Body and the Council to enable them to monitor and challenge progress with delivery. The Improvement Plan was been actively monitored by senior representation from Audit Commission, CLG and Liverpool City Council on a bimonthly basis. Support was also provided by the Council's corporate Scrutiny and Best Value Team responsible for embedding service planning and performance management within Council services. As a result of delivering this improvement plan many of the building blocks to support delivery of the programme are now in place. This has resulted in better delivery of the programme, and an appropriate pace of change.

- 231** The programme has clearly defined targets which are consistent with the service plan objectives. However, performance has not been regularly monitored against the targets until recently. Service plan reports indicate the objective of the service, and how achievement and targets will be measured. This includes detailed analysis of performance to date, and action being taken to further improve performance.
- 232** The delivery of the Supporting People programme is integrated into the Council's performance management framework. Each individual service within the Council develops a service plan with key improvement priorities, key performance indicators and an equalities action plan as part of the Council's Performance Management Framework. These are quality assured by the Council's Scrutiny and Best Value Team. The reporting of progress against the service plan to the Commissioning Body has commenced recently. This ensures that performance in delivery of the programme is monitored centrally.
- 233** Arrangements are in place for improvement planning of the programme. The action plan supporting the five-year strategy will form the improvement plan for the programme. This will be monitored through the Commissioning Body to ensure delivery and improvement continues. However, this plan is not fully costed but identifies outcomes, partners involved, key tasks and timescales. The Supporting People team are clear in their roles which are supported by the service planning framework with personal development reviews and regular supervision sessions identifying individual objectives and training needs.
- 234** Improved performance monitoring arrangements have been developed. To support contract monitoring arrangements quarterly desk top analysis of performance reporting of providers will be carried out based on the three national KPIs and five Supporting People SPIs. Quarterly summary reports on performance will be presented to the Commissioning Body. However, this framework is not yet embedded and there are limited outcomes to date. In addition, there is limited evidence of outcome monitoring, and work is yet to begin on the optional indicators to support the CLG framework.
- 235** A number of plans are already in place, and in some places delivery commenced, which address many of the areas for improvement highlighted during the inspection. For example:
- a review of the ineligible services plan including actions to reassess the work carried out to date, and actions to address any double funding issues;
 - plans to further reduce the level of ineligible funded services through a further review of the Learning Disability high cost cases;
 - a rolling programme of sector wide reviews to inform a procurement programme competitively tendering services across all services;
 - arrangements to improve future outcome measurement and reporting through adoption of the national outcome framework from quarter one 2007/08;
 - clear plans in place for future commissioning of services with timescales which fit with key partner priorities and strategic reviews of timescales;

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- plans to further improve the provision of supported housing schemes through National Affordable Housing Programme, including increasing the proportion of units completed to mobility/wheelchair standard;
- adoption of the two supplementary QAF objectives on environmental living standard and service user involvement;
- a stock condition survey of supported accommodation;
- an ongoing five-year service review programme which aims to deliver annual efficiency of target of 2.5 per cent;
- training of peer reviewers (service users) to participate in contract monitoring from late June/early July 2007;
- adoption of the National Outcomes Framework; and
- development of a pre-tenancy training programme for supporting service users who are ready to move on.

Are there arrangements and a culture in place to support continuous improvement

- 236** Historically, there has been weak and inconsistent leadership. Over the last 18 months there have been high levels of turnover at both Accountable Officer and other key officers, including the Lead Officer, in interim positions. This has resulted in delays in delivering the programme. However, over the last six months leadership has improved. The position of Accountable Officer was formalised within the position of Assistant Executive Director of Community Services and filled on an interim basis by consultancy support. This vacant position will soon be filled permanently with a person with the relevant skills and experience. A lead officer has been appointed with the relevant skills and experience, and has brought learning from working in another large metropolitan Council and through membership of national Supporting People forums. Changes in council leadership have also increased focus on delivery of the programme. This will give the programme the stability and leadership it requires.
- 237** The Council is committed to learning from the experiences of others. The team have looked at good practice to develop the building blocks of the programme such as the risk management system. Other examples include the development of the IT system. Liverpool now has the capacity and commitment to contribute to the cross authority groups and national groups to identify best practice, develop joint approaches and influence the national agenda. The team is committed to learning from others to develop service specifications, for example, the development of a rent deposit scheme or the resettlement pilot. The Council has been open to the support and advice of the CLG and Audit Commission, and responded to this positively. This has resulted in improvements which will continue to improve delivery of the programme.

Does the Council have the capacity to improve?

- 238** The previous inspection assessed this as an area where there was a balance of drivers and barriers. Priority has been given to improving the knowledge and expertise in managing the Supporting People programme, and significant resources invested in consultancy support. Management focus of the programme had been strengthened. However, Supporting People future financial burdens were not incorporated into the Council's medium term financial plan. Work was underway to update the procurement policy. There was no IT strategy for the programme or plans on how to promote more effective systems for joint working with partners. The approach to workforce management and development across the supported housing sector was under developed.
- 239** There are now more drivers than barriers. The Council has made more appropriate use of consultants to bring expertise to the delivery of the programme. Corporate support is available in the form of officers and budget to supplement the administration grant. ICT is being investigated to improve efficiency, particularly in relation to performance and contract monitoring. There is increased capacity within the Supporting People team, and future plans to further improve this capacity and that of providers. However, there is a high level of projected underspend with £2.69 million projected for 2007/08. There is now a procurement plan in place, however, this had limited application at the time of the inspection.

Access to the appropriate skills, tools and finances to deliver improvement

- 240** Specific expertise has been commissioned to carry out specialist projects. For example, a consultancy firm has been used to complete the needs assessment resulting in a robust and comprehensive assessment. A number of consultants have worked closely with the team on an ongoing basis over the last 18 months. However, efforts have been made more recently to embed some of those skills within the team. Corporate resources are accessed as required, including legal services, marketing, and scrutiny and best value. A capacity builder is employed to facilitate the small provider forum. Using experienced consultants and other specialist staff has enabled progression with key areas of the programme.
- 241** Effective corporate support is in place to support the diversity agenda in delivery of the programme. The Council has self assessed that it has reached Level 4 of the Equalities Standard and is working towards Level 5. The last external assessment was at Level 2. Recent legislative requirements have been met with the introduction of the Disability Equalities Scheme and the Gender Equalities Scheme. Diversity and equalities work is supported across the Council by the corporate equalities team whose role is to provide advice and support in ensuring equality schemes are implemented and monitored, and particular projects are taken forward. There is a suite of diversity training on offer although it is not mandatory for staff to attend other than as part of their induction training. Diversity is strengthened through Equality Officers or service leads for each of the Council's services. This helps ensure that diversity is mainstreamed into service activities.

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- 242 The Council are looking at developing ICT systems to deliver improvement and efficiencies. Officers have investigated how other ALAs use the Programme IT Management System, and are planning to use the system for new service review programme, and to monitor quality and performance across all providers

Financial and human resource planning

- 243 Financial planning arrangements are appropriate. The Council has projected the future financial risk of the programme, with initial budget forecasts in line with potential programme grant reductions. The Council is committed to ensuring capacity to deliver the programme. The Council has continued to provide additional funds to support the administration grant provided by CLG, and the contribution is increasing over the next three years from £751k in 2007/08 to £797k in 2009/09. However, there has been no assessment of the sustainability of this contribution from the Council, or the level of additional resources are needed in future to support programme delivery.
- 244 Historically the budgets to support delivery of the programme were not appropriate. In 2006/07 the programme received an administration grant of £383k from the CLG and budget of £100k from the Council. However the Council had to meet excess of £475k over the last 18 months which was not originally budgeted for.
- 245 Year on year reductions in the grant have been managed appropriately. However, the level of projected underspend for the programme is high at £2.269 million (6.8 per cent) after taking into account the year one commissioning plan, inflation increases and £0.5m contingency fund. This can partly be attributed to the efficiency savings of over £1 million in 2006/07. There is some recognition that this is to ensure sufficient funds in light of potential future grant reductions and to take account of the cost of current services. However, this is high given the level of unmet within the city and money tied up with ineligible funding.
- 246 Efforts have been made to improve the capacity of the Supporting People team to ensure it has the appropriate skills and tools to deliver the programme. The Accountable Officer post is now a permanent role for the Assistant Executive Director (AED) of Community Services. The new AED will bring the appropriate skill and expertise required to take the programme forward. The Supporting People team are clear in their roles which is supported by the Service Planning framework with Personal Development Reviews and regular supervision sessions to identify individual objectives and training needs. Over the last 12 months the team have been provided with a range of training, including adult protection training. A permanent new team structure has been approved which is in line with the skill sets required for moving into the procuring and commissioning stage of the programme. This will enable the team to progress with delivering improvements.

- 247 There is a commitment to improving the future capacity of the team and providers to deliver the programme. A workforce plan has been developed with consultancy support. This is linked to a training plan for the team. The workforce plan looks at the labour supply and gaps in Liverpool, the HR framework, and analysis of existing skills, training needed and competencies for key roles. This focuses on the changes in Supporting People programme, service user needs and the impact this will have on staff and services. In addition, an annual training plan has been developed for providers structured in line with the five-year strategy priorities and QAF assessment. Work is also planned to improve the capacity of small providers, particularly around procurement and tendering, to enable them to have the capacity to compete in future procurement exercises.

Procurement

- 248 Procurement arrangements clearly set out how Supporting People services will be strategically planned, commissioned and procured. However, this is not yet embedded. The service specification process has commenced for some new services, and this will be followed by the procurement process. Procurement capacity is being enhanced to prepare for the increased activity associated with tendering all Supporting People services over the next two years. Funding approval has been given to recruit two more procurement specialists to support the procurement manager employed on Supporting People issues.
- 249 Sound commissioning plans and policies are in place but these are only beginning to be applied in practice. A thorough understanding of local housing related support needs means decision makers are well placed to make informed commissioning and procurement decisions. The Supporting People programme is committed to maintaining a mixed market of service provision. The commitment is expressed in approved policy documents. Small providers are encouraged and supported to develop their capacity and procurement skills to be prepared and able to bid for services when they are competitively tendered.

Investing, and attracting inward investment, to deliver improvements

- 250 The Council, and the partners, are committed to seeking external funding to support improvements to services. This included additional funding from the CLG for positions to support the service review programme. Capital funding from the Housing Corporation, Places for Change funding from the CLG and Extra Care Housing Funding from the Department of Health has been sought to improve the quality of specialist accommodation. This will include the funds to convert shared accommodation into en-suite accommodation, and the development of training facilities. This will help to improve the accommodation and facilities available to service users. Locally, funding from the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund is used to support the Handypersons Services and the Preventative Technology Grant is user to complement Supporting People funding in service provision.

Appendix 1 – Performance indicators

Demographic information

Table 1 Demographic information

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

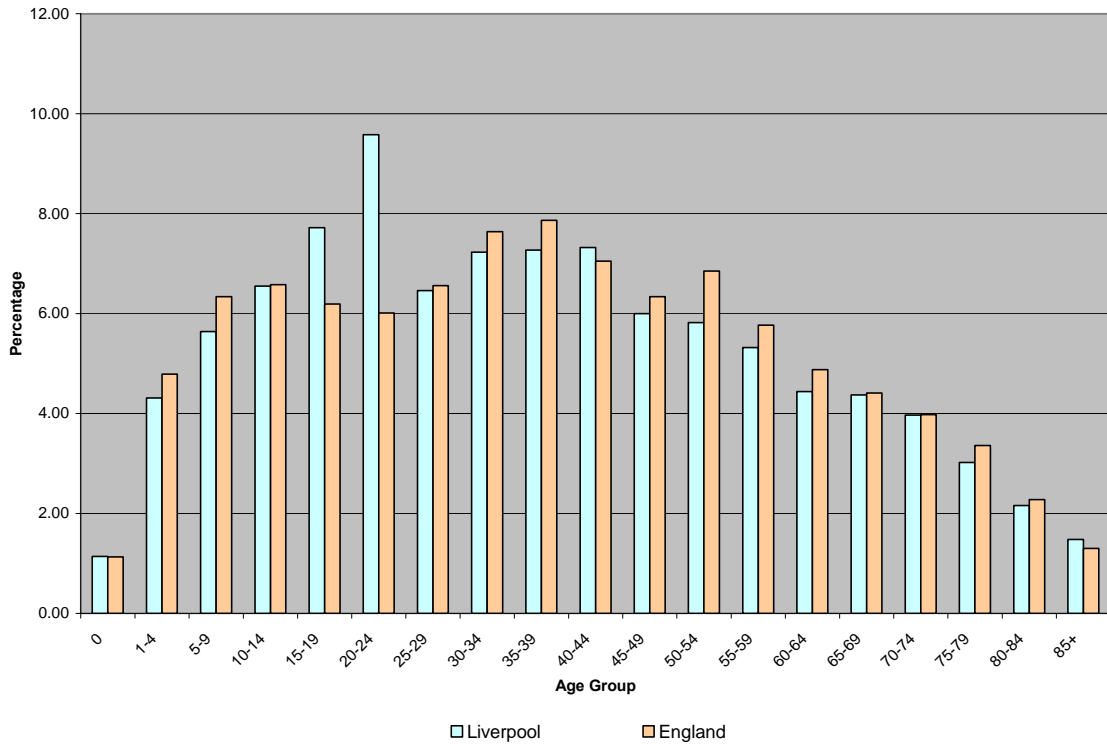
Measure	Liverpool	England
Population (mid-2005) ⁶	447,500	57,851,100
Percentage of the population aged 65+ (mid-2004)	17.2	18.5
Percentage from minority ethnic groups (all groups other than White – British 2004)	5.7	10.44
Percentage unemployment (claimant count rate) ⁷	5.6	2.4
Deprivation Index (1 highest, 354 lowest) ⁸	2	-

⁶ Source: midyear population estimates (2005)

⁷ Source: claimant count with rates and proportions (May 2007)

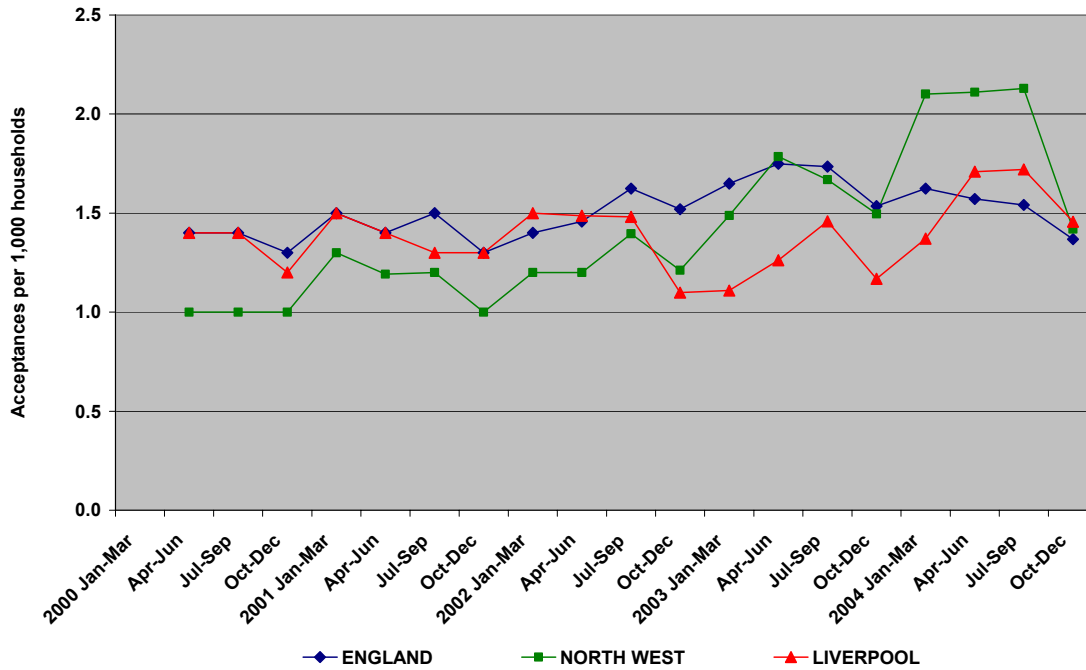
⁸ Source: deprivation Index 2004, average ward score for the authority.

Figure 1 Percentage of the population⁹ in each age group compared with England



⁹ Source: midyear population estimates (2004)

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



Performance information

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

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

Supporting People Data

Figure 3 Total service provision funded through Supporting People

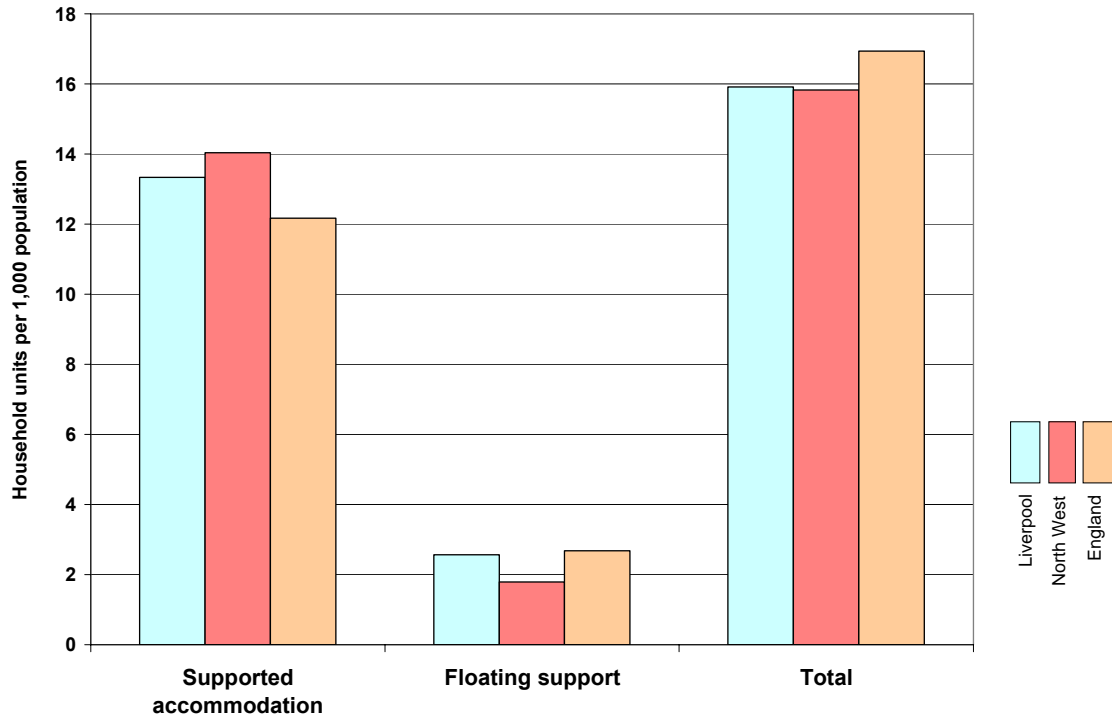


Figure 4 Services for older people with support needs compared with the region and England

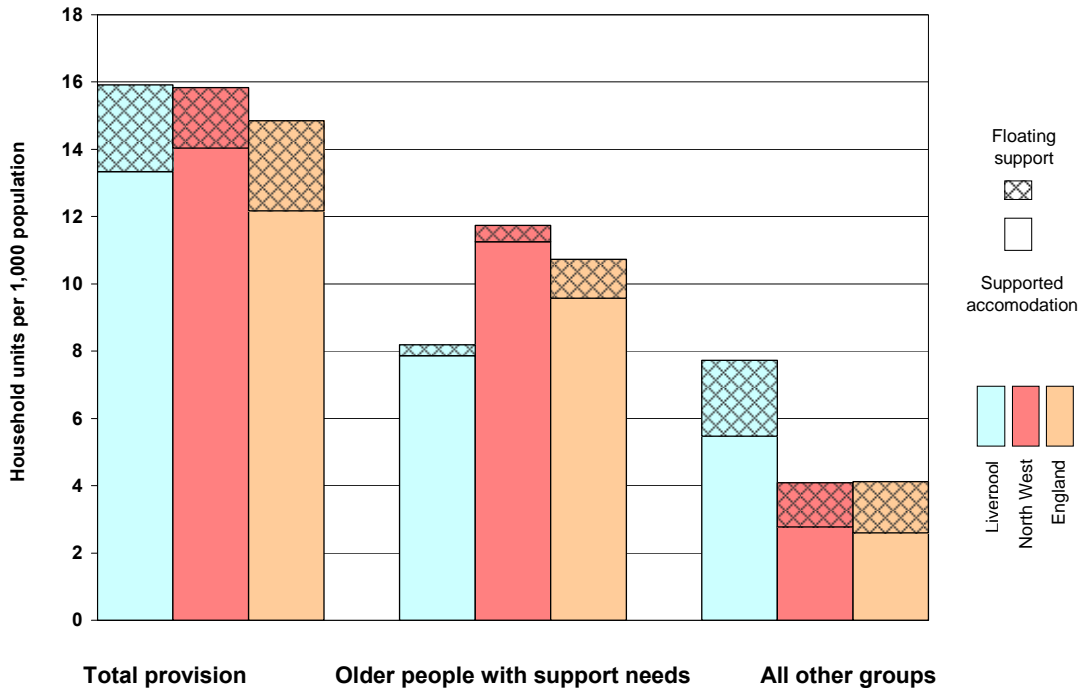


Figure 5 Services for other groups compared with the region and England

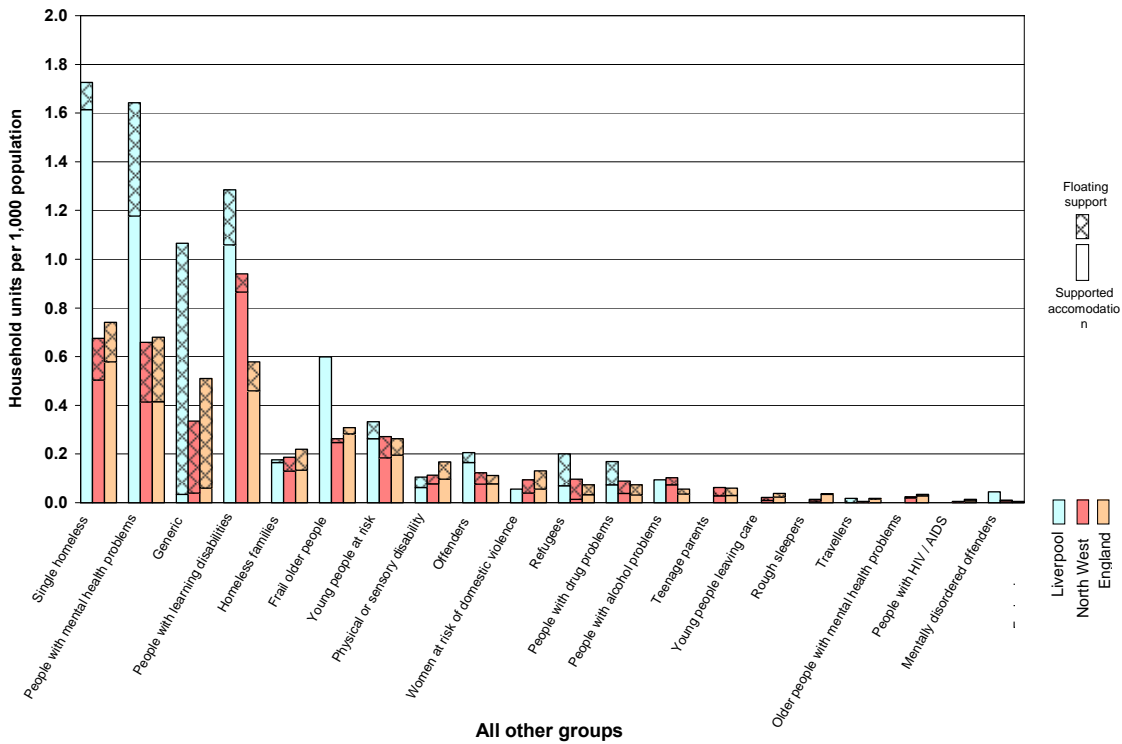


Table 2 Funding for Supporting People

Liverpool	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
Final Supporting People grant	£ 45,786,028	£ 43,479,985	£42,728,115	£41,900,943
Pipeline allocation	£ 733,831	£ -	£ -	£ -
Administration grant	£ 372,535	£ 383,711	£ 383,711	£ 383,711

Figure 6 Unit costs of supported accommodation compared with the region and England

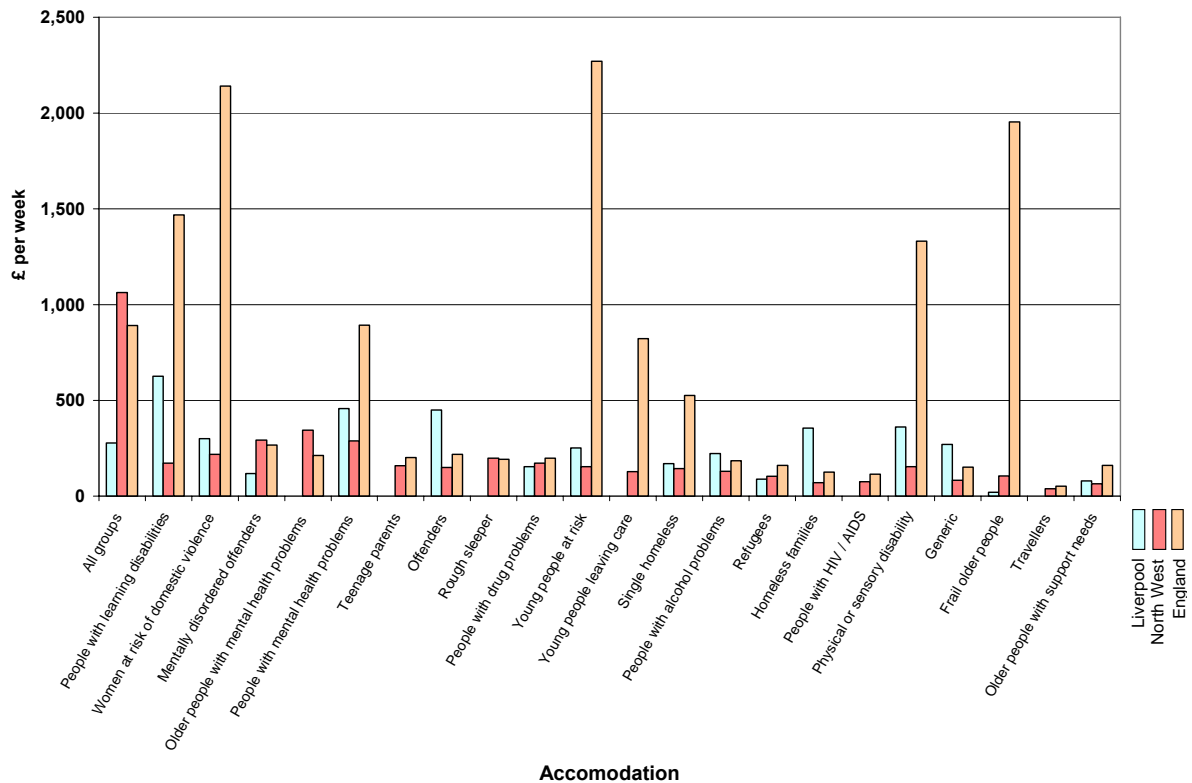


Figure 7 Supporting People grant per head of population per week compared with nearest neighbours¹⁰, all metropolitan boroughs and all English councils (2004/05)

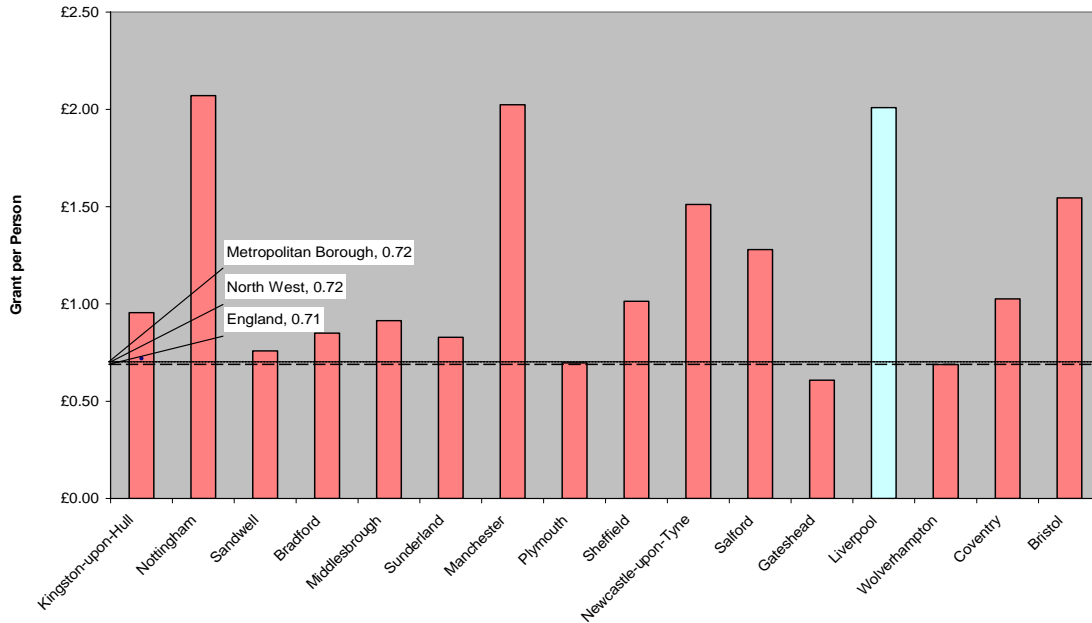
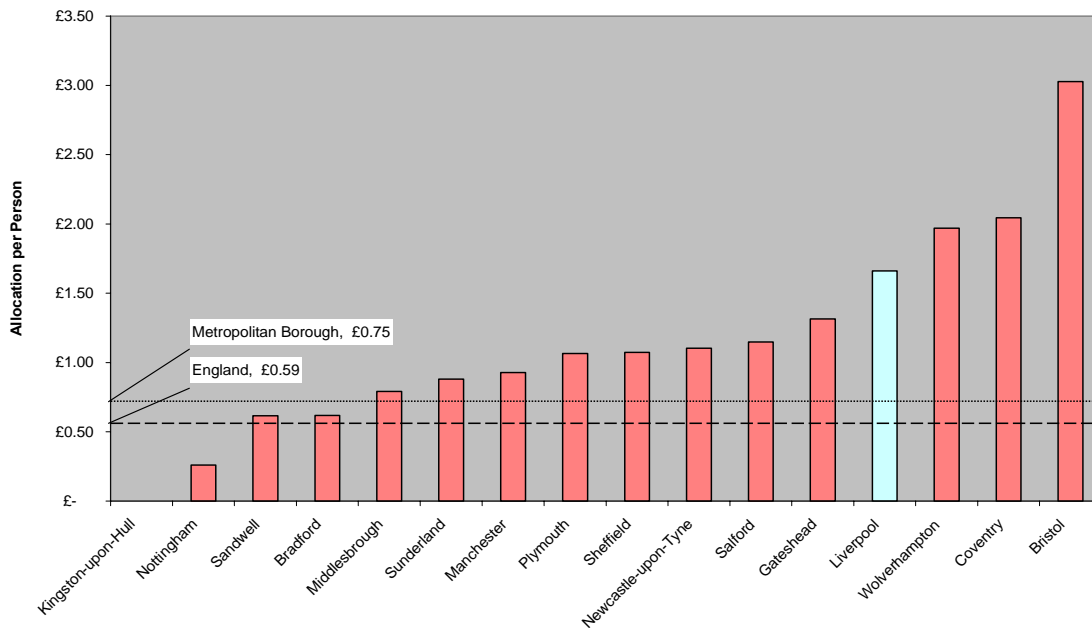


Figure 8 Pipeline allocation per head of population compared with nearest neighbours¹¹, all metropolitan boroughs and all English councils.



¹⁰ A comparator group of similar councils.

¹¹ A comparator group of similar councils.

Figure 9 Share of spending between user groups (£000s)

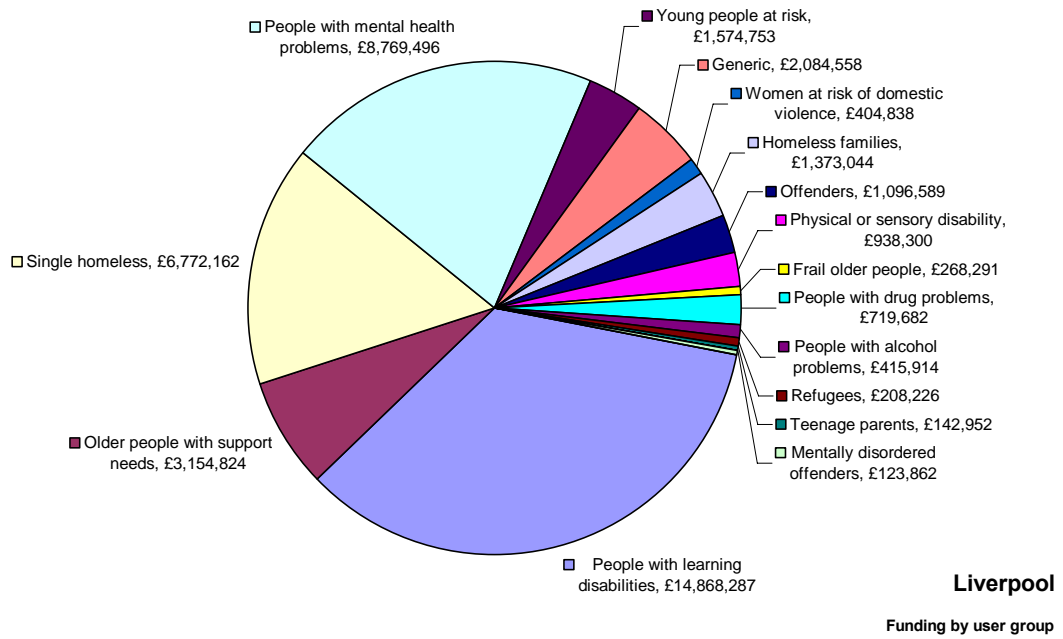


Figure 10 Share of spending between types of provider (£000s)

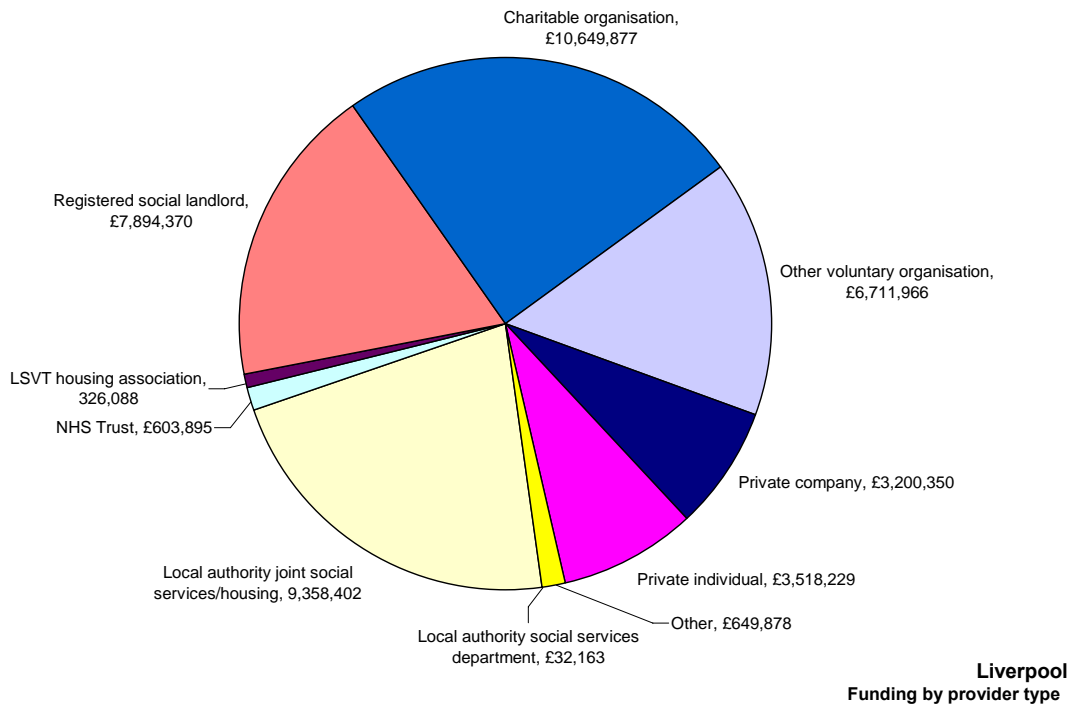


Table 3 Social Services star ratings October 2006

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

	Serving people well?	Prospects for improvement?
Adults' Services	Most	Promising

Social services performance indicators

Table 4 Performance Assessment Framework indicators 2005/06

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

Liverpool	
Significantly above average (•••••)	Adults with mental health problems helped to live at home (C31) Adults with physical disabilities helped to live at home (C29) Employment, education and training for care leavers (A4) Adults with learning disabilities helped to live at home (C30) Percentage of items of equipment and adaptations delivered within seven working days (D54)
Above average (••••)	Delayed transfers of care (D41) Adults and older people receiving a statement of their needs and how they will be met (D39)
Average (•••)	Older people helped to live at home (C32) Adults and older clients receiving a review as a percentage of those receiving a service (D40) Adults and older people receiving direct payments at 31 March per 100,000 population aged 18 or over (C51)
Below average (••)	
Significantly below average (•)	

Best value performance indicators

Table 5 Performance on relevant indicators in 2005/06 compared with metropolitan councils

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

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

Appendix 2 – Reality checks undertaken

- 1 When we went on site we carried out a number of different checks, building on the work described above, in order to get a full picture of how good the service is. These on-site reality checks were designed to gather evidence about what it is like to use the service and to see how well it works. Our reality checks included:
 - a questionnaire survey which was sent to all service providers of housing related support services;
 - focus groups with service providers and frontline staff;
 - visits to supported housing schemes, to talk to service users, managers and frontline staff;
 - visits to a number of service user access points to test the level and extent of information available to service users;
 - observing meetings of the Commissioning Body, Small Provider Forum and Service User Group;
 - examination of a sample of completed service reviews;
 - telephone calls to test how easy it is to access services;
 - review of the website;
 - file reviews of high cost cases and associated system checks; and
 - interviews with a wide range of stakeholders, including partners, the mayor, councillors, the Chief Executive, other senior officers, managers and staff.

Appendix 3 – Positive practice

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

Service user Support Charter

- 1 A Support Charter for service users has been developed through the Positive Engagement Sessions and Service User Forum. The Charter is signed up to by all key partners, and sets out for service users what they can expect to receive in relation to support. This has been developed in line with the new national outcome monitoring framework. This will help to improve links between existing support planning arrangements and the adoption of the new national outcome monitoring framework.

Positive Engagement events

- 2 A series of Positive Engagement Sessions have been held with service users, providers, stakeholders and Supporting People officers. The events focused on different groups of service users including floating support for older people, development of a Home Improvement Agency, floating support service for homeless families, ex-offenders and those leaving rehabilitation. The events were based on three key areas.
 - Discovery - looking at service user experiences of Supporting People.
 - Dream - to ask service users how provision could be.
 - Design - to begin to pull together practical ideas for improving services.
- 3 This enabled service users to be involved in the development of the five-year strategy and to contribute to the identification of future commissioning priorities. The event was also used as an opportunity to develop the Support Charter.

Unmet needs analysis and involvement of socially excluded groups

- 4 A key element of the needs analysis was a multi-agency survey of unmet need in socially excluded groups. This was sent to a wide range of agencies including homeless drop in centres, criminal justice agencies and substance misuse services. Over 2,000 returns were received providing comprehensive information on excluded groups. The results were broken down by individual client groups and included identified housing need and support needs. This was supported by information collected from the service and sector review, and developed further through service users from socially excluded groups participating at the Positive Engagement events.

Workforce planning

- 5 There is a commitment to improving the future capacity of the team and providers to deliver the programme. A workforce plan has been developed with consultancy support. This is linked to a training plan for the team. The workforce plan looks at the labour supply and gaps in Liverpool, the HR framework, and analysis of existing skills, training needed and competencies for key roles. This focuses on the changes in Supporting People programme, service user needs and the impact this will have on staff and services. Work is also planned to improve the capacity of small providers, particularly around procurement and tendering, to enable them to have the capacity to compete in future procurement exercises.