

Inspection report

October 2004

# Supporting People Programme

London Borough of Newham

# Contents

Summary	2
Introduction to the Supporting People Programme	2
Background	2
Scoring the service	2
Recommendations	2
Report	2
Context	2
The locality	2
The council	2
Supporting People – housing related Support Services in Newham	2
How good is the service?	2
Governance	2
Delivery arrangements	2
Financial management	2
Service reviews	2
Value for money	2
User involvement and partnerships	2
Access and customer care	2
Diversity	2
Outcomes for service users	2
Summary	2
What are the prospects for improvement to the service?	2
What is the evidence of service improvement?	2
How good are the current improvement plans?	2
Will improvements be delivered?	2
Summary	2
Appendices	2
Documents reviewed	2
Reality checks undertaken	2
List of people interviewed	2
Demographic information	2

Performance information	2
Positive Practice	2

## Supporting People – Housing related support services

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

# Summary

## Introduction to the Supporting People Programme

- 1 'Supporting People' is the Government's long-term policy to enable local authorities to plan, commission and provide support services which help vulnerable people live independently. The programme went live on 1 April 2003.
- 2 The aim of the Supporting People programme is to establish a strategic, integrated policy and funding framework, delivered locally in response to identified local needs, to replace the previous complex and unco-ordinated arrangements for providing housing related support services for vulnerable people.
- 3 The Supporting People programme brings together a number of funding streams including transitional housing benefit (THB), which has paid for the support costs associated with housing during the implementation phase, the Housing Corporation's supported housing management grant (SHMG) and probation accommodation grant scheme (PAGS) into a single pot to be administered by 150 administering local authorities.

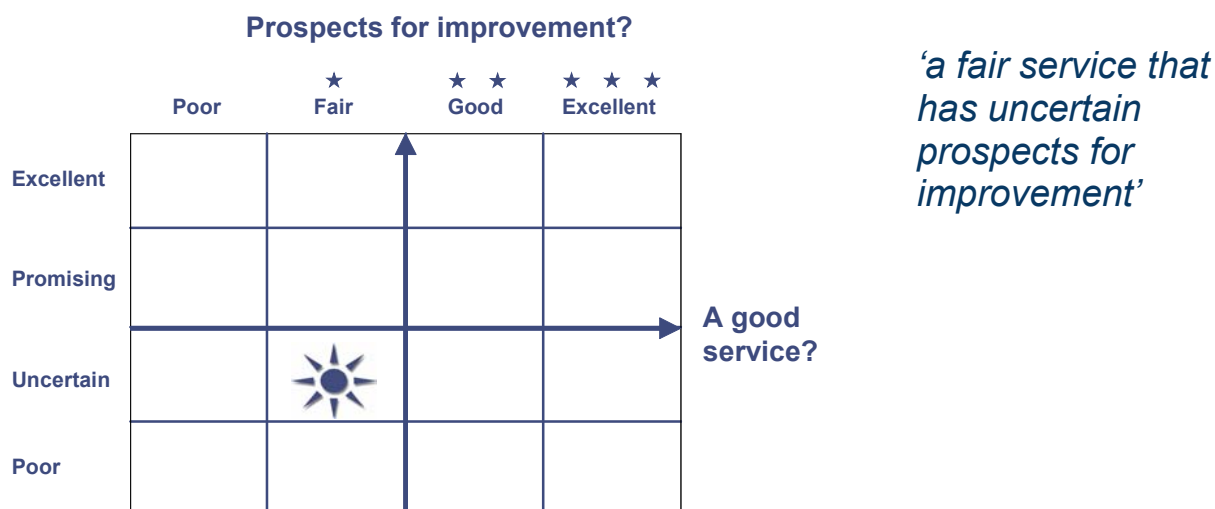
## Background

- 4 The London Borough of Newham is a unitary authority, five miles east of the City of London. The population is 243,891 of which 66 per cent are from minority ethnic communities (all groups other than white British) which is substantially higher than the national average. It is ranked as the 11th most deprived area in England.
- 5 The council is led by a mayor, directly elected in May 2002, one of seven in the country. A cabinet supports the mayor. Each cabinet member is responsible for either a cross cutting portfolio or a specific service area. All cabinet members and advisors are drawn from the borough's 59 Labour councillors. The opposition consists of one Christian Peoples' Alliance councillor.
- 6 The council acts as the administering authority for the Supporting People programme in its area. The council works in partnership with Newham primary care trust (PCT) and the national probation service in commissioning Supporting People services.
- 7 The London Borough of Newham is one of a number of high cost administering local authorities identified by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM). It has therefore been inspected in the second year of the Supporting People programme and earlier than originally anticipated due to concerns raised by the (ODPM) over the relatively high costs of some services.
- 8 The total amount of Supporting People funding available to the council in 2004/05 is £11.2 million. The council receives £248,000 to fulfil its role as the administering authority. The highest cost Supporting People service is just over £800 per person per week in a specialist scheme for individuals with learning disabilities who have also suffered abuse. The lowest cost schemes are support for older people in sheltered housing and cost less than £3 per person per week.

## Scoring the service

- 9 We have assessed the London Borough of Newham as providing a ‘fair’ one-star service that has uncertain prospects for improvement. Our judgements are based on the evidence obtained during the inspection and are outlined below.

Scoring chart<sup>1</sup>: London Borough of Newham - Supporting People Programme



### What works well

- 10 During our inspection we found a number of positive features in the way that the Supporting People programme has been implemented to date:
- ◆ New services have been developed to meet the needs of vulnerable people, including some floating support services that are helping people to become independent or allowing them to maintain independence in their own home.
  - ◆ There are positive outcomes for a number of people who are using services which we were able to see at first hand during the inspection.
  - ◆ The service review programme is on track with over 40 schemes reviewed to date and reviews are being used to help raise the quality of services for the people who use them.
  - ◆ Obtaining the views of people who use services is an essential part of service reviews. The Supporting People team has demonstrated an innovative approach towards obtaining views from some very diverse and challenging groups of people.
  - ◆ The Supporting People team has produced a good range of information about services and charging arrangements which are in large print as standard, available in five languages and a variety of media including in pictorial format for people with learning disabilities.
  - ◆ There are good relationships with local service providers, many of whom praised the Supporting People team for their accessibility and for the fair and professional manner in which they conducted service reviews.

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

- ◆ Diversity is not seen as a separate agenda. At a corporate level and within the Supporting People programme it is clearly viewed as being 'mainstream'. The small specialist BME service providers' forum has been actively supported and encouraged to develop by the Supporting People team.
- ◆ The Supporting People team has the necessary skills and capacity to deliver their work programme.
- ◆ Tight financial control has been exercised over the budget and the programme achieved a balanced financial position at the end of the first year.

### Areas for improvement

- 11 However, we found a number of weaknesses with the Supporting People programme that need to be addressed:
- ◆ Services in Newham are starting from a very low base and there are still gaps in services for some groups of vulnerable people and very low levels of provision for some others.
  - ◆ The distribution of written information about Supporting People services in Newham is poor and could limit access to services. Information about Supporting People in Newham's charter for long term care, better care – higher standards is also poor.
  - ◆ Needs of some minority groups such as travellers have not been considered and methods of obtaining information on the housing support needs of offenders and people who misuse substances are not in place yet.
  - ◆ The council failed to carry out a robust analysis of needs and the window of opportunity created by the ODPM in delaying the deadline for production of the new strategy was not adequately exploited. External consultants have only recently been commissioned to pull earlier work on needs together and will not issue a final report until October 2004.
  - ◆ The core strategy group has not taken a sufficiently proactive role in driving the Supporting People programme in recent months. Agendas for the group are too long and have not been action orientated. Membership has lacked continuity and attendance has on occasion been poor.
  - ◆ Scrutiny arrangements for the Supporting People programme have not been defined and implemented.
  - ◆ Value for money is considered as part of each service review and in summary reports that go to the commissioning body but it has not demonstrated a sufficiently robust approach to challenging some of the very high hourly rates that are being charged by some providers.
- 12 We have judged that the Supporting People programme has uncertain prospects for delivering further improvements. We found the following strengths.

### What works well

- ◆ Around £2.7 million of services within the borough have been developed or enhanced through the Supporting People programme, which is benefiting some very vulnerable people.
- ◆ At service delivery level, the Supporting People team has achieved smooth transition from the planning phase to full implementation of the programme in April 2003.
- ◆ The team has a detailed and achievable work plan for 2004/05 and the majority of providers who expressed their views to the inspection team rate their performance highly.

- ◆ The council has a good track record of responding positively to inspections and improved performance in social services, housing and education can be seen. The council achieved an increase to a 'Good' rating under comprehensive performance assessment (CPA) in 2003.
- ◆ The council's homelessness strategy identifies how Supporting People initiatives could be used to help meet priorities for action and the draft strategy for mental health and supported living acknowledges the improved strategic planning and partnership arrangements that have resulted from Supporting People.

### Areas for improvement

13 There are, however, some areas in which the council needs to improve:

- ◆ The core strategy group, commissioning body and council have not made it sufficiently clear what the future funding priorities are for the Supporting People programme, given the relatively low level of budget to meet the high needs of the population of the borough, the risk of zero increase in funding for future years or even further budget reductions.
- ◆ The draft strategy for mental health and supported living in Newham which links with the development of Supporting People has not been finalised and an action plan has not been produced.
- ◆ The draft older peoples housing strategy makes no explicit mention of how Supporting People can be developed to meet needs, is behind schedule and an action plan has yet to be agreed.
- ◆ There is no clearly articulated information in the community plan on how the Supporting People programme will contribute to achieving results in a number of key areas.
- ◆ There has been a lack of corporate ownership of the programme in the past and little understanding of the issues outside of members of the core strategy group and commissioning body.

## Recommendations

- 14 To rise to the challenge of continuous improvement, organisations need inspection reports that offer practical pointers for improvement. In this context, the inspection team makes the following recommendations and has agreed with the council the timescales for achieving these.

### Service users

- ◆ Improve the distribution of written information about Supporting People services in Newham to potential service users and carers and organisations that represent them (within 3 months of report publication).
- ◆ Include information about Supporting People services in the latest update of better care – higher standards (Newham’s charter for long term care) in the section on ‘helping you to stay independent’ (within 3 months).
- ◆ Provide regular training updates on Supporting People services for front-line staff in housing and social services so that they can signpost potential service users and carers to the best source of information (within 6 months and then ongoing).
- ◆ Decide on methods and then act to seek the views and identify the housing support needs of travellers, people who misuse substances and offenders so that these can be considered amongst other client groups in determining priorities and informing the new strategy (6 months).

### Governance

- ◆ Implement proposals for creating a more focussed role for the core strategy group and improving attendance by making agendas shorter and more action orientated (action is underway).
- ◆ Consider developing a rolling action plan for the core strategy group with clearly defined responsibilities for individual members of the group and timescales which can be updated at each meeting (3 months).
- ◆ Review terms of reference to include arrangements to cover any conflict of interest that may arise and the treatment of confidential or commercially sensitive information (3 months).
- ◆ Ensure that elected members take a more active role in monitoring progress with the delivery and development of the Supporting People programme and oversee the implementation of the recommendations in this report (3 months).

### Reviews

- ◆ Adopt a more challenging approach to assessing value for money by undertaking more detailed investigation of some of the hourly rates charged by providers and presenting these to the commissioning body (action is underway and ongoing).
- ◆ Seek agreement with other London boroughs to the establishment of a suitable forum to enable service review officers to meet with their peers and facilitate sharing best practice and benchmarking (3 months).
- ◆ Share the service review programme with social services contracts officers and with the core strategy group when it is updated (3 months).
- ◆ Consider undertaking joint reviews with social services and/or health staff where possible (6 months).

## Strategy

- ◆ Ensure that there is clear understanding at corporate and at partnership board level of how Supporting People can help to achieve targets and priorities in other strategies (6 months and ongoing).
- ◆ Ensure that related strategies that are still in draft are finalised and include action plans with SMART targets that link explicitly with Supporting People where appropriate (6 months).
- ◆ Decide on the highest strategic priorities for Supporting People services, using needs information to fill any gaps in knowledge, but not concentrating solely on the new information on a small number of client groups that has been commissioned recently (3 months).
- ◆ Consider which services will have the most marked impact strategically and assist in achieving health, social care, probation and housing priorities and targets over the next five years, taking account of any changes in demography (3 months).
- ◆ Identify and construct a short list of schemes that match the agreed priorities which should be implemented if further funding becomes available or could be met by transferring funding from services that are less of a priority (3 months).

15 We would like to thank the staff of the London Borough of Newham, in particular Peter Williams and Jackie Belton, who made us welcome and who met our requests efficiently and courteously.

**Ruth Cutts, Ellis Blackmore and Patrick Mulrenan – Housing Inspectors**

**Roger Statham– Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Probation**

**Alan Jones – Commission for Social Care Inspection**

**Sue Bignell- Service User Inspection Adviser**

**Domini Gunn – Supporting People Inspection & Assessment Co-ordinator**

**Dates of inspection: 12–16 July 2004**

**Email: [r-cutts@audit-commission.gov.uk](mailto:r-cutts@audit-commission.gov.uk)**

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

"© Audit Commission

The official version of this report is also available on the Audit Commission's web site at [audit-commission.gov.uk](http://audit-commission.gov.uk). Copies of this report are also available from the address above. The Audit Commission cannot verify the accuracy of and is not responsible for material contained in this report which has been reproduced by another organisation or individual."

# Report

## Context

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

## The locality

- 17 London Borough of Newham is a unitary authority, five miles east of the City of London. The population is 243,891 living in 91,821 households. The population is one of the most diverse in the country with 66 per cent of people from minority ethnic communities (all groups other than white British).
- 18 The population in the borough is growing far more rapidly than the national average and has a much younger profile than many other areas. A diverse and vibrant borough, Newham still has high unemployment rates and is ranked as the 11th most deprived area in England and the 4th most deprived of the London boroughs. In 2000, 95 per cent of the population were living in wards which were among the 10 per cent most deprived in England. It also has the highest proportion of people with HIV/AIDS, and very high numbers of homeless people.
- 19 Newham's homelessness strategy acknowledges that the housing stock within the private sector is amongst the worst in London and by virtue of its size and relatively low market rents have encouraged its use as an entry point into London by economic migrants. This has meant that a large and diverse multi ethnic population has developed within the borough. The combination of a large transient population and poor housing conditions has placed great strains on the local housing market.
- 20 The borough also suffers from high levels of ill health. It has a very high number of people claiming disability living allowance and attendance allowance and it is in the top one third of local authorities which have households with one or more people with a long term illness. This profile of deprivation and ill health poses formidable challenges for the Supporting People programme in Newham.

## The council

- 21 The council is led by a mayor, directly elected in May 2002, one of seven in the country. A cabinet supports the mayor. The council comprises 60 councillors with the Labour party having 59 of the 60 seats.
- 22 The council's overall revenue budget for the year 2004/05 is £418 million, of which £15 million is spent on housing and customer services and around £109 million on social services.
- 23 The council's overarching aim is that:
- ◆ By 2010 Newham will be a major business location and a place where people choose to live and work.

## Supporting People – housing related Support Services in Newham

### Office of the Deputy Prime Minister Framework for delivery

- 24 The ODPM has set out the following structural arrangements for the development and delivery of the Supporting People programme:

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

## How good is the service?

### Governance

- 26 The council has created the structures required under ODPM grant conditions and guidance to ensure the delivery and development of the programme. However, more can be done to ensure that the core strategy group and the commissioning body take a far more proactive role in driving the Supporting People programme in Newham. The new accountable officer for the programme has recognised this and is now working to develop and strengthen the core strategy group.
- 27 The Supporting People team is located within the housing and customer services directorate of the council and until recently the accountable officer was the benefits and customer services divisional director. Recognising that there were issues of capacity within the directorate, responsibilities have been reviewed and the role of accountable officer is now held by the service improvement divisional director.
- 28 The council has established a commissioning body that has clear terms of reference which were updated in December 2003. They are contained within the memorandum of understanding and comply with grant conditions and guidance. The commissioning body is comprised of representatives at director level of the council, national probation service (London probation area) and the Newham primary care trust. One representative from each organisation has a vote and a meeting of the commissioning body will only be considered quorate if at least two voting members or substitute members are present. Minutes show that the commissioning body has been well attended by each organisation over the course of the last year.
- 29 Scrutiny arrangements for the Supporting People programme have not, however, been defined and implemented. The role that councillors should play in overseeing effective delivery of the programme is not well understood.
- 30 The council has established a core strategy group. The terms of reference for the group and membership were reviewed in April 2004. The group includes representatives from service providers as well from the council's housing and

social services departments, the probation service, the PCT and the mental health trust through a number of jointly appointed representatives. Although roles and responsibilities are defined in the terms of reference, there is no mention of the action to be taken if there is a conflict of interest or how confidential or commercially sensitive information is to be treated. As service providers are key members of the group this needs to be addressed.

- 31 Minutes show that the majority of meetings during 2004 have been poorly attended, although service providers have been present at each meeting. In particular, there has been a lack of continuity in people attending from the PCT and the PCT has been under represented at a number of meetings this year. Probation has had regular representation at meetings, but following staff changes within the service there were uncertainties over how they would be represented at future meetings. This has now been resolved and the probation service should now be able to play a full part in strategy development.
- 32 The stated role and responsibilities of the core strategy group are clear in the terms of reference. However, the group has not taken a sufficiently proactive role and focused on delivering on its stated aims. Agendas have been too full and dominated by the presentation of reports that are often for information only. This has restricted the effectiveness of the group. The council has recognised the issues and is taking action to address them.

## **Delivery arrangements**

- 33 The Supporting People team has the necessary skills and expertise to deliver the work programme, but the supply and range of services in Newham is starting from a low base. Opportunities to legitimately increase services using transitional housing benefit prior to April 2003 were not fully exploited and many of the services that are in place have higher unit costs than might be expected using ODPM comparative data. The new five year strategy gives the council and its partners an opportunity to address some of these issues, but the time available for this will be tight given that needs analysis did not start until April 2004 and will not be concluded until October 2004.

### **The Supporting People team**

- 34 The council made a slow start in establishing a Supporting People team and due to other priorities that were deemed to be more urgent within the council; the team manager did not take up his post until January 2002. This led to concerns within ODPM and although a great deal was achieved in the one year period before the programme went live in April 2003, it has left Newham behind some other councils who had far longer to assess needs, prepare and develop new services.
- 35 The Supporting People team consists of a team manager, a principal review and contracts officer and three senior review officers. An IT project manager is still working within the team as the bespoke software system that the council purchased for the Supporting People programme is still not fully operational. The team has no dedicated administrative support but can bring in assistance from time to time if it is required.
- 36 Members of the team come from a range of backgrounds within local government and housing and have a wide skills base. The most recent recruits to the team were the review officers who joined the team in September 2003. All reported that they had received satisfactory induction and had attended national training as well as shadowing the senior officer on reviews. A formal corporate appraisal and development system is in place and in operation across the team with the accountable officer line managing and appraising the team manager.

- 37 The team has a service delivery plan and there is a clear work programme for undertaking service reviews and for preparing the new five year Supporting People strategy. Actions to drive the development of the five year strategy are however, largely allocated to the team manager with no clear remit for members of the core strategy group.

### **Existing services**

- 38 The range and supply of Supporting People services in Newham started from a very low base. There are no Supporting People services in place yet for some groups of people such as those who misuse substances or travellers and very low levels of provision for some others such as people with a physical or sensory impairment.
- 39 The data appendix at the end of this report provides a detailed picture of how Newham compares to the regional and national averages. However, it is striking that in overall terms the borough receives less Supporting People grant per head of population (£0.86p) than the average for comparable London boroughs (£0.97p). When the higher than average deprivation levels are taken into account Newham does not compare well and an additional £1.7 million would have been required to bring it up to the same level as comparable councils.
- 40 The council, with its partners in health and probation, had an opportunity to address the historically low level of services by developing and commissioning new services that would help to meet the high levels of need in the borough. This could have been achieved by utilising transitional housing benefit (THB) as a funding source prior to the Supporting People programme going live on 1st April 2003.
- 41 The council did commission additional services amounting to £2.7 million which provide around 600 additional units of support between early 2002 and April 2003 when the programme went live. The largest growth was in services for younger people (£1.6 million) and for people with mental health problems (£0.54 million). The council does, however, now recognise that opportunities to develop legitimate services using THB were not fully exploited. This may leave the borough at a disadvantage as the future prospects for an increase in the grant in real terms are uncertain.
- 42 Although there are a smaller number of Supporting People services in Newham compared to the population, many of the services that are provided are at a substantially higher cost than the average for London or when compared to England as a whole. When community alarms and sheltered accommodation (which can skew comparisons) are removed, unit costs in Newham are £80.37 compared to London at £68.40 and England at £76.37. The service review programme is therefore essential to ensure that the limited services that are in place are directed at the highest areas of need and provide the best possible value. This is examined in detail later in this report.

### **Needs and strategy development**

- 43 A housing needs survey was undertaken across Newham in 2003. As part of the work a specific analysis of supported care needs of residents in the borough was undertaken. The report includes a wealth of information on the housing and the support needs of vulnerable people and includes specific data on the needs of frail older people and those with physical impairments. The survey clearly identifies areas where Supporting People funded services could help to meet needs. For example over 700 people needed advice/support in carrying out repairs to their homes and 460 people needed help managing finances or claiming benefits.

- 44 The council does have its own in-house home improvement agency (HIA) which provides services across the borough. The draft older peoples' strategy acknowledges the valuable contribution that this already makes, but it still falls short of meeting needs. The supplementary needs analysis that was undertaken specifically for frail older people shows that at the time of the survey in 2003 there were over 600 people (11 per cent of respondents) who needed help maintaining safety or security of their home or advice in carrying out repairs.
- 45 It is unclear from the minutes of the core strategy group whether the housing needs survey or the more detailed analysis that was undertaken for frail older people and those with a physical impairment was considered by the group, or was used to begin to identify priorities for investment in the future should funding, perhaps as a result of service reviews, become available.
- 46 In order to help to inform development of the new five year strategy, external consultants have now been commissioned to assist with a targeted analysis of needs. In view of the relatively small Supporting People budget and uncertainties over future funding the commissioning body has decided that to embark on an elaborate and comprehensive analysis of needs would be unhelpful and possibly counterproductive.
- 47 The core strategy group is reported to have suffered a hiatus in their development because of the extensions of the deadlines by the ODPM for completing the strategy, but left it until early in 2004 to commission an analysis of needs for client groups where existing service provision appears to be low. The consultants are however, utilising the many existing sources of information that are already available and a progress report made in June 2004 shows that they have made some progress in identifying the profile and to some extent the needs of:
- ◆ homeless families;
  - ◆ offenders;
  - ◆ people with a physical or sensory impairment;
  - ◆ young people leaving care; and
  - ◆ people who misuse substances.
- 48 Further work is now being undertaken with these client groups which will include an event for homeless families in September 2004 and some ideas for focus groups and one to one interviews. The consultants report states that it has yet to determine how it will obtain the views of offenders. A written report is expected to be provided by the consultants in October 2004. This leaves very little time for the findings to influence the strategy or to allow the core strategy group and commissioning body to agree priorities. Although the strategy should meet the ODPM deadline for submission, this will require by necessity a pressured timetable rather than allowing a longer more considered approach.

## Financial management

- 49 The Supporting People team has exercised tight financial control over the budget and subject to final verification, the council has ended the first year with a very small under spend that has carried forward to 2004/05. All contracts were signed by the 2003 deadline and financial reports have been made to the commissioning body at each meeting. Although there have been problems with the IT system that was purchased for the Supporting People programme, payments have been made manually and the majority of providers report that they have received timely and accurate payments.

### **Fairer charging**

- 50 In 2002 the department of health introduced a fairer charging policy providing guidance to local authorities on how to set charges for non-residential services. Councils are not required to charge for services but in the event of a decision to charge, they are expected to follow the principles contained in this guidance.
- 51 The council has not yet agreed a policy on fairer charging and social services do not currently charge for most non-residential services. However, a charging policy and assessment arrangements for some Supporting People services were agreed and implemented in April 2003. There is clear information for service users and for officers on the charging arrangements for Supporting People services and the policy is being reviewed and updated again currently.

### **Achieving savings**

- 52 When guidance was issued by the ODPM a number of services, for people with learning disabilities and with mental health problems were re-examined on a case by case basis. This was to ensure that the proportion of the service being funded through Supporting People grant and the proportion funded through other budgets such as community care reflected the actual services being provided. Adjustments of around £380,000 were made between social services and Supporting People budgets which have had a cost neutral effect overall.
- 53 Due to changes made by the ODPM in the grant allocation to councils in 2004/05 Newham received around £82,000 less in funding than it did in the previous year. This meant that it was unable to offer any service providers an increase in contract prices for inflation in 2004/05 and is seeking to make savings of around 2.5 per cent from all providers on current contract prices.
- 54 This savings target has been made known to all service providers, but the council is aware that it cannot enforce this and it is largely dependent on the goodwill of the providers. Although the majority of the providers that we spoke to were understandably less than happy with the financial constraints, there was no backlash against the Supporting People team and recognition that there was negotiation and ongoing dialogue with the team, rather than the rigidly inflexible approach they said some other councils had adopted.
- 55 To date, after a process of negotiation, savings of around £300,000 have been agreed with seven providers and a further £100,000 is likely to result from the de-commissioning of Newham council's in-house homeless persons hostels, which are no longer required, in October 2004. The overall target reduction has therefore been achieved. It is, however, important that there is a fair, clear and transparent approach towards securing savings from other service providers so that there can be no criticism of the process.

### **Service reviews**

- 56 The service review programme in Newham is on track and to date the commissioning body has received summary reports on over 40 schemes provided by 23 different service providers. The views of service users and stakeholders are actively sought during reviews and used to raise the quality of services. Opportunities to share best practice and achieve greater consistency would be assisted by the establishment of a cross-authority review officers group.

### **Implementing the review programme**

- 57 The service review process is central to ensuring that services are effective, provide good value for money and comply with Supporting People grant conditions. Until services are reviewed, contracting decisions which will influence the future shape of services and meet strategic priorities cannot be made. The

ODPM requires all administering authorities to review all the Supporting People services that they contact for during the three years from April 2003 to March 2006.

- 58 The review programme has been constructed after taking account of ODPM guidance and includes an assessment of risks. For this reason the first tranche of reviews has concentrated on floating support services and on accommodation for single homeless people and for refugees. The council's own in-house sheltered accommodation is scheduled in the last batch of reviews which will take place in 2006.
- 59 The programme is currently on track and has time built in to follow up on action plans. This is key to ensuring that recommendations are being implemented by providers and quality is being raised. There is a clear document for providers explaining all aspects of reviews which includes a process for providers to follow if they are dissatisfied with the outcome of a review, although this has not had to be implemented to date.
- 60 A number of service providers and schemes are providing services with a mixture of funding from Supporting People grant, social services community care budget and in some cases an element from health services. It is therefore important that all parties are aware when reviews are taking place so that there is a minimum of disruption for providers and duplication is avoided.
- 61 For example, health services were planning a review of a rehabilitation service, following hospital discharge, for adults with mental illness. They had not taken into account that a linked service from the same provider had been pulled forward for an early review by the Supporting People team and action was scheduled during the same month. The latest version of the Supporting People service review work programme needs to be shared with members of the core strategy group and with social services contracts officers and opportunities for joint service reviews explored wherever possible.
- 62 The council has ten high cost services where the Supporting People unit costs exceed £400 per person per week. The total value of these contracts amounts to almost £3 million (27 per cent of expenditure). Two of these schemes have already had financial adjustments made to apportion a larger share of the costs to social services following a case by case re-assessment of each client's needs. The remaining high cost schemes, all have reviews either in progress or they will be started before the end of 2004.
- 63 The result of each service review is presented to the commissioning body which has received over 20 reports to date (including 13 in July 2004). Summaries contain essential information and make an assessment of the strategic relevance of the service, value for money, score against the quality assessment framework (QAF) key indicators and make recommendations for future contracting. The commissioning body has not, however, asked to see the action plans that have been agreed and could not therefore be confident that they addressed the issues raised during reviews. As a result of feedback during our inspection the commissioning body has acted swiftly to address this and will now receive action plans with summary reports.

### **Involving service users**

- 64 The Supporting People team places a high priority on obtaining the views of the people who use services and those of stakeholders. Validation visits are made as a part of all service reviews and this raises particular challenges in an area that is as diverse as Newham, where the skills of interpreters are often required during reviews. A standard letter in large print in simple language is sent to service

users before each review starts and can be produced in a variety of different languages as required.

- 65 The Supporting People team review officers come from a range of different backgrounds and have a good range of skills but recognise the importance of bringing in specialists on occasion. For example, a service review has recently been undertaken at a specialist scheme for women with learning disabilities who have suffered from abuse. Women may be from any ethnic group and may also have physical or sensory impairments or mental health problems.

### Supporting People Case Study 1

---

#### **Service Reviews**

##### **Obtaining service users views**

Service users: Women with learning difficulties fleeing abuse.

To ensure that women felt safe and could feel confident to air their views, a local organisation and an advocacy service were enlisted to first hold a workshop for residents. The Supporting People review officer was present for part of the workshop to explain the process. The workshop gave service users time to ask questions about what would be involved and to go through the questions that would be asked, think of questions that were relevant for them and make suggestions for changes to improve accessibility. All material and questions were produced in pictorial form. Interviews were then held with four service users and another who had moved on, by the two advocates working alongside the Supporting People team review officer.

##### Outcome for service users

The results give an important insight into the things that mattered most to the people using the scheme.

This has resulted in an action plan that incorporates the improvements that service users want to see, as well as ensuring the service attains level C on all QAF key indicators.

- 66 We commend the thoughtful approach that has been employed to ensure that views from a challenging and diverse group of clients were sought in a meaningful way.

### **Sharing information and improving practice**

- 67 The majority of the providers who attended a meeting with the inspectors praised the Supporting People team for the fair and professional way in which the reviews were undertaken. There is a clear, documented appeals process and good information on the Supporting People pages of the council's web site for service providers. There was however, a perception amongst providers that Newham review officers awarded lower marks when scoring services against the QAF than other councils where they also provide services.
- 68 Service review officers meet with their counterparts from other councils at training events and conferences and talk from time to time on an ad hoc basis. However, there has been no recognised forum where the review officers could meet with their peers from other councils in a structured way to share best practice and benchmark. The team welcome the concept and the Supporting People team manager will be discussing this with other North East London lead officers when they next meet. This could help to address the points raised by service providers over consistency.

## Value for money

- 69 Value for money is considered at each service review and reported to the commissioning body. However, a more robust approach and stronger control is needed to ensure that some services with very high hourly rates can really be justified in relation to the intensity of the clients needs and the quality of the service provided. The commissioning body need to take a more proactive role by asking for clearer explanations of higher than average costs and exerting greater control over contracting decisions.

### Service cost comparisons

- 70 The council has very few services with unit costs that exceed £400 per person per week. It does, however, have a significant number of services where costs are well in excess of regional and national averages. This is based on comparative data supplied by the ODPM based on the data all councils submitted in July 2003 (the Platinum cut data).
- 71 Unit costs are significantly higher than the regional and national average for the following services:
- ◆ Accommodation based services for older people with support needs. Sheltered accommodation in Newham is costing on average £36 per person per week, compared to the regional average of £24 and national average of £17.
  - ◆ Accommodation based service for people with learning disabilities. This costs on average £339 per person per week in Newham, compared to the regional average of £219 and national average of £273.
  - ◆ Accommodation based services for adults with mental health problems. The average cost in Newham is £270 compared to the regional average of £188 and national average of £174.
  - ◆ Floating support services for young people at risk. This costs an average of £130 per person per week compared to £73 regionally and the national average of £71.
- 72 Unit costs that are substantially lower than average should also be challenged, as this could be an indicator of poor quality or services that are at such a low level that they are unable to meet users needs. The council has significantly lower than average unit costs for people with physical or sensory impairments, young people leaving care, people with HIV/AIDS and rough sleepers.
- 73 The data appendix at the end of this report provides further information and illustrates the variations in cost and provision of services in Newham against the regional and national averages.

### Addressing VFM through service reviews

- 74 Value for money is being considered during service reviews and each summary report to the commissioning body includes a brief paragraph showing how the hourly support cost compares to other services in Newham and when compared to regional and national averages. The ratio of service users to staff and number of support hours provided is also shown. There is, however, no benchmarking information provided that can demonstrate how the cost that the council pays compares to those in neighbouring boroughs or for similar specialist services.

- 75 Reports to the commissioning body need to be concise, but explanations for some of the variations in costs are too insubstantial to allow informed decisions to be made. Some services may be exceptionally high quality and therefore warrant higher costs, but this needs to be linked to outcomes and be fully explained in reports. For example, stating that services are 'more like those provided in extra care housing' as a justification for higher costs is not sufficiently robust. Similarly, units costs which are close to national averages but only because very few support hours are being provided and at a high hourly rate need a far clearer explanation.
- 76 Review officers reported that it can be difficult to unpick the reasons for the high hourly costs of some services. Accounts for individual schemes are requested at reviews, but providers were sometimes unable or unwilling to submit these. There is a particular problem where a provider has several different schemes but costs are not apportioned accurately to each. The team is currently seeking to address the problem by issuing all providers with a simplified version of the workbook that was used earlier this year for completion and return to the Supporting People team.
- 77 In some cases the commissioning body has acted to de-commission services where it is clear that they were not delivering or strategically relevant and has on other occasions directed the Supporting People team to obtain further information. The council is currently negotiating for savings on a very substantial contract, but the basis for the negotiation appears to be reliant on what the provider is willing to offer, rather than what the commissioning body wishes to contract for.
- 78 During the course of the inspection, visits were made to 16 different schemes (run by 9 different providers). Where possible, the inspectors talked to frontline staff and to the people using services, with assistance from an interpreter in some cases. This enabled inspectors to form a view on whether services were likely to comply with current grant conditions and appeared to be providing reasonable value for money. Key issues arising from the visits are highlighted below:
- ◆ The nature of the services provided in two schemes that were visited which are for adults with mental health problems indicate that a greater proportion of the funding would be more appropriate to other budgets, particularly as one scheme is providing 24 hour rehabilitation in the community for people following discharge from acute hospital care. These schemes are due to be reviewed by the Supporting People team shortly.
  - ◆ There are questions over what is actually being provided in terms of housing related support to clients in two small services which provide low level floating support. Clients did not appear to have support needs that were commensurate with the level of funding.

## **User involvement and partnerships**

- 79 Service users have a voice in the development of services in a variety of ways. The partnership boards that have been established for a number of client groups include service users and are key to securing involvement and provide a route for consultation. Joint appointments between the council, PCT and mental health trust are strengthening partnership working between health, housing and social services and the Supporting People team has an input into key planning groups. The probation service has, however, experienced staffing difficulties and must now ensure that it plays a full part and that the support needs of offenders are recognised and addressed.

### Involving service users

- 80 Partnership boards have been established for older people, people with learning disabilities, adults with mental health problems, and for people with physical or sensory impairments. Officers from the Supporting People team are members of boards or of their sub-groups. Service users sit on each of the boards and this allows their views to be heard at first hand by the team.
- 81 The Supporting People team, with partners has also held a number of consultation events for particular client groups. For example:
- ◆ the Supporting People team and partners organised an event where they met with young people in order to understand their needs and inform service developments;
  - ◆ a planning day was held in March 2003 for the development of the older peoples housing strategy which was attended by around 20 service users; and
  - ◆ members of voluntary organisations for people with learning disabilities took part in a focus group to identify the support needs and to comment on draft information leaflets.
- 82 However, action to ensure that service users who are unable to come to meetings or are from hard to reach groups such as offenders and people who misuse substances where there are currently no user groups needs further thought. In particular, a number of service providers said that more needed to be done to capture the views of frail older people and ensure that their needs can be met more effectively.

### Providers

- 83 There is an active providers' forum in place and also a specialist network for small BME service providers (the SSS BME forum).
- 84 A providers' forum was held at the end of 2003 in which providers were briefed on progress on the transfer and implementation of the Supporting People programme, the development of the shadow strategy and plans to develop the five year strategy. More recently, providers were briefed on the issues which had arisen in the first group of service reviews and the lessons which had been learnt. At the latest meeting in June 2004, providers were given information on the forthcoming Supporting People inspection.
- 85 During the course of the inspection, service providers were asked to complete a questionnaire rating the council's performance in implementing the Supporting People programme in key areas. Inspectors also met with representatives from 21 different service providers as a group to listen to their views on a range of Supporting People related issues. The results of these two exercises show that in general, the majority of service providers view Newham in a favourable light, particularly when compared to some other councils. The main issue highlighted on questionnaires related to some initial problems with payment schedules.
- 86 The Supporting People team and manager are felt to be particularly accessible and responsive when providers need information or guidance. Their proactive approach towards seeking providers' views to help to develop the new strategy was also welcomed.

*'Newham Supporting People team are contactable regarding any query and respond as soon as possible'. - Service provider questionnaire comment.*

*'We receive a monthly Supporting People newsletter which contains up dates and news – very useful and informative'. - Service provider questionnaire comment.*

- 87 Key areas highlighted during our meeting with providers where they would like to see improvements are:
- ◆ a more 'joined-up' approach, particularly between practitioners in housing and social services;
  - ◆ training for some providers and their staff;
  - ◆ greater consistency across councils – reviews and performance information;
  - ◆ to be able to use Supporting People and community care budgets more flexibly as individual users needs change; and
  - ◆ the need for increased move-on accommodation to prevent services silting-up and long waiting lists for services.

### **Health and Probation partnerships**

- 88 The PCT is represented on the commissioning body at director level and there are joint appointments across the PCT and social services for older people, adults with mental health problems, people with learning disabilities, those with physical disabilities and for people who misuse substances. There are also joint appointments with the mental health trust and it is in mental health services that real benefits from joint working can be seen. A range of new housing support services have been commissioned using Supporting People funding, some of which we were able to see during the course of the inspection.
- 89 Supporting People is perceived within the mental health housing strategy to have strengthened joint planning for housing support for vulnerable people. The Supporting People team manager is a member of the mental health housing and supported living forum and has used the forum as the consultation arena for this service user group.
- 90 The probation service should be a major player in the Supporting People programme, but internal reorganisation within the service means that there has been a question over continued representation on the core strategy group. This has just been resolved by the probation service and it is hoped that it can continue to play an active role in the development of the new strategy. We were also pleased to note that a new joint appointment of a housing worker for probation and the council has been made which will enable a referral system to be set up that will inform needs assessment.
- 91 The criminal justice interventions team (CJIT) is a new operation and is focussed on drug users who are involved in the criminal justice system. There are a number of issues related to partnership working and effective links with Supporting People is essential. The permanent project manager has been in post for one month, and the scheme is funded for three years initially. The CJIT operates within a complex structure and the manager reports to the DAT coordinator. The arrest referral team is, however, the starting point for much of their work. Accommodation is a critical part of the effectiveness of each criminal justice intervention programme and we were pleased to note that the Supporting People team manager is a member of the CJIT steering group.
- 92 Links between the Supporting People team, youth offending team (YOT) and the drug action team (DAT) have not been strong and this has led to some missed opportunities to develop housing related support for people who often suffer from a multiplicity of problems. Although one service for people who misuse substances is due to open later in 2004 using Supporting People pipeline funding, representatives from the DAT appeared to be unaware of this and the DAT adult drug treatment plan for 2004/05 records zero funding through Supporting People grant.

- 93 There is a recognition that links need to be improved and action now needs to be implemented to ensure that the same good links that are in place between the Supporting People team and for example the mental health and learning disability partnership boards are replicated with the DAT and YOT.

### **Cross authority working**

- 94 Newham has taken an active part in cross borough work in London through:
- ◆ participation in the London wide Supporting People lead officers monthly meetings co-ordinated by the ALG, from 2001 until late 2003 to oversee the implementation of Supporting People in London, including the shadow London strategy and supply mapping; and
  - ◆ participating in the North East London Supporting People officers group (NELSPO) which has also has met monthly since 2001.
- 95 More recently, the arrangements have been restructured, with the London wide meeting of all Supporting People leads discontinued in favour of realigning the sub groups to coincide with the five Housing Corporation led investment sectors for London. Newham hosted two sub regional groupings meetings in late 2003 and this sub group will meet again as part of the Thames Gateway regeneration initiative. The director of housing chairs the ALG housing directors meeting and has a seat on the regional housing board. The council leads also on a number of sub-regional issues such as the choice-based lettings (CBL) consortium.

### **Access and customer care**

- 96 Some good information on Supporting People services has been produced for users and carers. It is available in a variety of formats and media, but it is not on display in local service centres and as accessible as it should be. Information on Supporting People services in the council's charter for long term care 'better care – higher standards' is poor. The council has a relatively high turnover of staff so it is important that training and information for frontline staff is provided on a regular basis.

### **Information**

- 97 The Supporting People team has produced some very good written information for users and carers. Leaflets are produced as standard in large print, are available in English and four other languages and there is a pictorial version for people with learning disabilities. Information can also be translated into other languages and in other media such as Braille or on audiotape.
- 98 Supporting People services are clearly listed in the A-Z of council services, making it easy to find the Supporting People webpage. The webpage contains copies of the leaflets and explains how to get versions in Braille or on audiotape. It also has some good guidance for providers on what information to produce for users and how to involve them, plus a copy of the Supporting People draft user involvement strategy.
- 99 'Better care - higher standards' is the council's charter for long term care and has been produced in partnership with the PCT and other local NHS hospital trusts. This is an important document as it describes the help available to Newham residents who are over the age of 18 and need long term care or support from social services, housing and health. Supporting People services are not mentioned in the section on 'helping you stay independent' and feature briefly in the 'finding a suitable place to live' section, after information on moving into a residential home. This does not help to inform vulnerable people who already have a home about the range of services that can be accessed through the Supporting People programme.

## Access

- 100 A key gateway into services in Newham is the local service centres which are situated in main shopping centres around the borough. Two were visited during the course of the inspection. We found that the environment at both the centres is welcoming. Staff were polite, wearing ID badges and visitors were being seen quickly. Performance data was displayed prominently at both the local service centres we visited.
- 101 However, there was no literature on display relating to Supporting People services and enquiries to frontline staff based on real life scenarios were met politely but with little knowledge of the housing related support services that could have helped; neither was the inspector signposted on to any other source of information.
- 102 Joint training has been provided for staff in social services and health in order to equip them for advising residents on Supporting People funding and access. A written briefing has also been provided for social services staff. Staff turnover is however, acknowledged to be a problem within the council and the need for more frequent training for frontline staff may be indicated by our experiences at the two local centres.
- 103 When the lack of written information in local service centres was raised with officers, there was a perception that it was unnecessary to provide information through the centres as only around 2,500 people use Supporting People services and enquiries are unlikely to be made via these centres. If that is the case, then alternative venues for supplying information should be found; health centres, benefit offices, voluntary organisations and public libraries could, for example, be considered.

## Diversity

- 104 Diversity is not seen as a separate agenda. At a corporate level and within the Supporting People programme it is clearly viewed as being 'mainstream' and there are specialist Supporting People services in place for people from a wide variety of ethnic and cultural backgrounds as well as for people who have HIV/AIDS. The small specialist BME service providers' forum has been actively supported and encouraged to develop by the Supporting People team.
- 105 The London Borough of Newham is one of the most diverse BME communities in the country and the BME population is projected to grow by around eight per cent by 2010 with a 25 per cent growth in the Bangladeshi community.
- 106 As a result, provision for diverse communities is part of the council's mainstream strategic vision for Supporting People and its overall BME strategy. A position statement on equalities was prepared in June 2004 setting out the way in which the Supporting People programme meets the Council's overall BME strategy. Monitoring against the overall requirements set out in the statement has yet to be implemented.
- 107 Issues for BME communities are addressed in the draft Supporting People strategy in terms of the need to protect smaller BME providers. However, as identified earlier, the initial Supporting People budget, which was based on legacy funding was not consistent with the scale of needs overall in the borough or the specific needs of BME communities.
- 108 A Small Specialist BME provider forum has been set up to maintain the diversity of providers and is represented on the core strategy group. This group is also linked to a BME strategy for the housing association sector. The development of the group is seen as an example of positive practice for ensuring that BME

groups are given a say in the development and monitoring of the strategy. The group praised the Supporting People team for their initial support, which has now enabled them to work independently.

- 109 Supporting People services are being provided for the special needs of some of those communities which include:
- ◆ a refuge for Asian women fleeing violence;
  - ◆ sheltered housing for Asian elders;
  - ◆ floating support schemes for refugees; and
  - ◆ supported housing and floating support for people with HIV/AIDS.
- 110 Proposals are being developed for language support to homeless BME residents, and other support services to a wide range of homeless people.
- 111 The needs of some groups such as those with support needs arising from drug and alcohol abuse, and offenders have been late in being assessed, and the needs of some small groups, such as travellers, have not been considered.

## Outcomes for service users

- 112 In common with many of the other councils that have been inspected, the Supporting People programme in Newham is delivering tangible, positive changes to some of the services it funds and through this, the lives of those people who use services. Visits to services and meetings with the people who use them during the inspection show that people place a high value on the support that they receive. Some people are being afforded the opportunity to live in their own home for the first time in their lives.
- 113 New services that were commissioned through the Supporting People programme during 2002/03 included:
- ◆ small scale supported accommodation for individual with learning disabilities;
  - ◆ 100 floating support places for adults with mental health problems;
  - ◆ 40 units of floating support for elders and increased community alarm services; and
  - ◆ enhanced provision for women fleeing from domestic violence and for young people at risk.
- 114 The following case studies are just two examples of the positive impact some services have had and clearly illustrates how much people value services and the difference that it makes to their lives.

## Supporting People Case Study 2

---

Service user group: *adults with mental health problems*

Type of service: *supported accommodation*

Issues to be addressed

Ms X is 30 years old and had been living in a registered care home managed by a housing association. She had services provided to her, such as cooking and cleaning, and did not feel confident that she would be able to move to less supported accommodation.

Action taken

The care home was de-registered in 2002, and residents were given life skill training to encourage more independence. Ms X is very pleased with the changes, and now takes responsibility for her own cooking and cleaning. Supporting People requires resident involvement, and Ms X has become more involved in the running of the scheme. Residents are also now responsible for their own bank accounts. At a recent house meeting, she suggested a savings scheme for resident trips, and as a result residents are now able to financially plan their own leisure activities.

Outcomes for service users

Ms X is happy with the changes, and appreciates the greater level of privacy, independence and involvement. As a result of this, she is confident that she will be able to move to less supported accommodation soon.

## Supporting People Case Study 3

---

Service user group: *care leavers*

Type of service: *supported accommodation*

Issues to be addressed

Ms Y is 18 years old, and had been staying with foster parents. She moved to a supported housing scheme which offers life skill development for care leavers with medium to high support needs.

Action taken

Ms Y has been at the scheme for 18 months. She has moved from a shared flat to her own flat, both within the scheme. She has learned skills such as cooking and budgeting with the help of a key support worker. During her time at the scheme, she has attended further education, and has obtained a place on a nursing degree course at a London based university.

Outcomes for service users

Without the intensive support offered at this scheme, she believes that she would not have the skills and confidence to move to her own accommodation and undertake higher education. She will shortly be moving to her own independent accommodation in another part of the borough.

- 115 These case studies clearly show the impact that Supporting People services can have for the individuals who receive them. However, as highlighted earlier in this report, the level of Supporting People services within the borough is not matched

to needs. There are some vulnerable people who cannot currently access services as there are waiting lists or services have not yet been developed.

## Summary

- 116 We have assessed the Supporting People service provided by the London Borough of Newham to be a fair, one star service. The council and the Supporting People team have successfully implemented the Supporting People programme during the first year, 2003/04 and improved outcomes can be demonstrated for some service users. Service providers have praised the Supporting People team for their accessibility and responsiveness and generally feel that reviews are conducted in a professional and fair manner.
- 117 There are, however, key issues that need to be addressed.
- ◆ The core strategy group needs to take a more proactive role in driving development of the new five year strategy, directing the Supporting People programme and ensuring effective delivery through the Supporting People team. To do this the group needs continuity of membership and a commitment from members to attend and actively participate at meetings.
  - ◆ A more robust approach is required to ensure that the housing related support services for which the council contracts are providing good value for money. The commissioning body needs to take a more proactive role by ensuring that clear and credible explanations can be given for some of the every high hourly rates charged by some providers.
  - ◆ Supporting People services in Newham are starting from a low base and although some new services were commissioned during 2002/03 they are still not commensurate with the levels of deprivation and ill health in the borough. There are gaps in services for some client groups and others receive very limited support. This will need to be addressed through the new strategy and some hard decisions will have to be made on priorities, and the future of some services given the financial constraints and uncertainties that all councils are facing.

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

118 In reaching our judgement we look at three key areas.

- ◆ What is the evidence of service improvement?
- ◆ How good are the current improvement plans?
- ◆ Will improvements be delivered?

## What is the evidence of service improvement?

- 119 At service delivery level the Supporting People programme has been successfully implemented in the first year and the Supporting People team has delivered on its work programme.
- 120 Contracts with providers have all been signed and although there have been problems with the software that was purchased for Supporting People, they have been circumvented and the majority of providers are satisfied that payments have been accurate and timely. Subject to verification, the programme has achieved a balanced financial position at the end of the first year.
- 121 Over £2.7 million of new or enhanced services were commissioned during 2002/03. It is clear from service reviews and from the visits that the inspection team made to a number of schemes, that these are making a real difference for some service users and helping them to maintain or achieve independent living.
- 122 The programme of service reviews that the Supporting people team are undertaking is on track and is being used to improve the quality of the services being delivered. Obtaining the views of service users is an essential part of each review. This is helping to raise quality and address specific issues which are important to the individuals who receive services, rather than just concentrating on the quality assessment framework (QAF) indicators.
- 123 Although the basic structures and processes that are necessary to deliver the service are in place, there is as yet no tangible way of measuring outcomes from the £11 million that has been invested in services. For some client groups such as adults with physical or sensory disabilities, for people who misuse substances and older people there has been very little by way of tangible improvements to the range of services available to them as a result of Supporting People services. Services that have been developed are relatively small scale and do not match the level of need in the borough.
- 124 Although the population of the borough is predominantly young, the population of people over the age of 80 is growing rapidly. Supporting People funded service provision for older people is still heavily reliant on accommodation based sheltered housing schemes and community alarms. There is a small in-house home improvement agency, which provides advice to older people requiring repairs. But analysis of the housing needs survey undertaken in 2003 shows that while the HIA service is valuable, it does not keep pace with needs.
- 125 The council has failed to grasp the opportunity to introduce a range of legitimate floating support schemes for vulnerable older people through Supporting People grant. This is due in part to the absence of a strategy to meet the housing and related support needs of older people in Newham and clear priorities which dovetail with health and social care plans. This is now being addressed and a draft strategy is nearing completion, but it leaves the borough with little room for manoeuvre unless some other services can be reduced or reconfigured.
- 126 At a corporate level the council does have a good track record of responding positively to inspections and taking action to address weaknesses. The council has improved on its corporate assessment (CPA) rating of 'Fair' in 2002 and is

now assessed as 'Good'. Performance within social services has also shown marked improvements and the department has emerged from a troubled period to become a one star department that is serving some people well, with promising prospects for improvement.

- 127 Performance information drawn from social services performance assessment framework indicators in 2002/03 show that the council is performing significantly above the average for helping adults with mental health problems and helping older people to live at home. It also performs well in terms of preventing admissions of older people to residential or nursing home care and helping people with learning disabilities to live at home.
- 128 The council's annual audit letter in 2003 also points to the improvements in education and to the Audit Commission's inspection of housing and council tax benefits in 2003 which judged the service as two star (good) with promising prospects for improvement. The council's housing strategy has also been rated very highly by the Government office for London.

### **How good are the current improvement plans?**

- 129 The Supporting People team has a service delivery work plan for 2004/05 which specifies the key tasks that must be undertaken, deadlines to be met, resource implications, expected outcomes to be achieved and any risks. There is also a project plan for preparation of the new five year Supporting People strategy. This provides a sound basis for moving forward throughout 2004/05. However, the future priorities for the Supporting People programme have not been clearly articulated and corporate ownership has not been strong.
- 130 The new strategy will essentially be the improvement plan for Supporting People services in the borough. We have therefore looked at the way in which strategy development is being addressed and how it is linking with the council's corporate strategies and plans such as the community plan and with those for specific client groups such as older people, adults with mental health problems, homeless people or people who misuse substances.

### **Links with related strategies and plans**

- 131 The council has produced a community plan, but there is no clearly articulated information on how the Supporting People programme can contribute to achieving results in a number of key areas.
- 132 A strategy for the homeless is in place which focuses on the needs of homeless people for housing support. The strategy covers the key groups of homeless people as required in government regulations. It clearly points to action that is needed to support vulnerable people such as young people, people with mental illness, older persons and people with disabilities who are in temporary accommodation.
- 133 The Newham joint housing strategy for people with learning disabilities was produced in November 2002 and makes links with the Supporting People shadow strategy at various points in the document. The action plan identifies how people and their families will be involved in quality monitoring through Supporting People reviews. The strategy identifies a number of very small scale new developments, which have now been commissioned using Supporting People funding, such as 9 units of floating support. However, current services fall short of the level of need indicated in the strategy.
- 134 The draft older people housing strategy draws on national research and good practice examples. It contains a good analysis of what there is currently in terms of housing and demographics of council tenants. There is a sub group which

looks at housing for older people of which the Supporting People team manager is a member. But the timetable for production of this strategy has slipped, there is no mention of Supporting People in the draft that we have seen and there is still work to be done to ensure that an agreed action plan with specific measurable targets is developed to underpin the strategy.

- 135 There is a draft strategy for mental health and supported living in Newham which was produced in 2003. This acknowledges that strategic developments in Newham took a significant step forward with the introduction of the Supporting People initiative and improved partnership working.

*'Once the Supporting People initiative was underway, for the first time the planning and commissioning of housing and housing-related support for people with mental health support needs as well as other people who were vulnerable or who had special needs, was undertaken in partnership and with the involvement of a range of key stakeholders'. - Mental health housing and supported living strategy.*

- 136 This strategy identifies the services that were developed in 2002/03, some of which were commissioned using THB/Supporting People funding. Service development priorities for 2003-2005 are listed in the document but the action plan section of the document with tasks, lead responsibility and time scales has never been completed.

#### **Agreeing priorities for the strategy**

- 137 The council's approach to analysing needs, user involvement and how Supporting People is represented on various planning groups has been examined earlier in this report. The role of the core strategy group and the need for it to adopt a more hands on approach to drive strategy development has also been highlighted. The new accountable officer has recognised this. Agendas will be improved and the group will become more strategically focussed and concentrate on driving the development of a robust, effective Supporting People five year strategy.
- 138 However, in order to ensure that future plans are robust and achievable there first needs to be agreement between the council, the PCT and the probation service on the key priorities for the next five years. From this should flow strong corporate ownership of the Supporting People programme and the new strategy in all three organisations.
- 139 Various documents submitted for this inspection show that corporate ownership of the programme has not been strong in the past and that accountability for the programme has rested largely with the Supporting People team manager and senior officers within the housing and customer services directorate. There is a perception amongst some councillors and officers not directly responsible for the programme that much of the problem with the Supporting People grant has been caused by unfair funding formula, which classes Newham as an outer London borough and disadvantages it financially.
- 140 This is not the case for Supporting People funding and corporate understanding and ownership of the programme needs to be strengthened. The future for Supporting People services which can provide support for some of the most vulnerable people in the borough are dependent on 'getting it right' in this new strategy. This cannot be assured until there is an informed discussion and clear agreement on future priorities for the programme that will assist the three organisations in achieving their priorities and targets.

## Will improvements be delivered?

- 141 The council faces major challenges as the current range and level of services are not matched to local needs and there are gaps in services for some groups of vulnerable people. Funding may need to be shifted and re-directed towards the highest priorities. The council and its partners in the commissioning body need to take a more robust approach towards challenging the cost of services and adopt a more strategic approach to commissioning.
- 142 The Supporting People team has the capacity, skills and systems to deliver on their existing 2004 programme of work and submit a strategy to the ODPM by the deadline in 2005. Performance management systems are in place within the directorate and Supporting People team and the commissioning body receives comprehensive regular reports on provider performance, service reviews, the financial position and current relevant issues. In this respect the necessary systems and process are in place.
- 143 However, the council and its partners from the PCT and probation will not be judged by the population of the borough on well written strategies and plans, but on whether actions result from them that lead to improved services. In particular, for those groups of vulnerable people who are currently receiving no Supporting People service or services which are too low compared to needs.
- 144 This poses real challenges for the council and its partners in health and probation services, given the uncertainties over future funding. At the time of writing this report, the grant for 2005/06 and beyond is unknown, but it is conceivable that the council could receive less through Supporting People funding in the future rather than more.
- 145 The service review programme and the visits that we have made to a number of services during the inspection suggest that there are a minority of high cost services where part of the funding may be more appropriate for health or community care budgets. This may lead to some savings, but they may not be enough to allow sufficient new services to be developed to meet identified needs.
- 146 The key will be to taking a very robust approach to the strategic relevance of existing services and to value for money. Some services may be desirable and meet a need, but given the bigger picture of need in the borough may have to reconfigured or scaled down to allow funding to be redirected to the highest priorities. Strong action to challenge some of the very high hourly rates that are being charged for some services will also need to be taken by the commissioning body.
- 147 The core strategy group, commissioning body and ultimately the council may have to make some hard choices and must act quickly to ensure that future funding priorities for the programme are absolutely clear.

## Summary

- 148 Although there are a number of strengths and some positive outcomes can be demonstrated from the Supporting People programme to date, we have assessed the prospects for improvements as 'uncertain'. This is not intended to detract from the hard work of the Supporting People team, which has a clear work programme and is delivering well against their service plan. The Supporting People team is also using the service reviews that it carries out to work constructively with providers and improve the quality of services.
- 149 However, the core strategy group, commissioning body and council have not clearly articulated what the future priorities are for the Supporting People programme or how these can be met if the council receives no increased funding

or faces further budget reductions as a result of national policy. Some hard and unpalatable choices may have to be made and corporate ownership and accountability for the programme needs to be strengthened. Unless this happens, some of the most vulnerable residents of the borough will not receive the services that they need to allow them to live as safely and independently as is possible.

## Appendices

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

### Documents reviewed

Before going on site and during our visit, we reviewed various documents that the council provided for us. This list is not exhaustive, but key documents included:

- ◆ Service review timetable and the reports from completed reviews.
- ◆ Supporting People delivery plan 2003-2005.
- ◆ Supporting People interim strategy.
- ◆ Older peoples draft housing strategy.
- ◆ Joint housing strategy for people with learning disability.
- ◆ Mental health housing and supported living strategy.
- ◆ DAT services plans and reports.
- ◆ Teenage parents plan.
- ◆ Best value performance plan.
- ◆ Community plan.
- ◆ Procurement strategy.
- ◆ User leaflets relating to Supporting People and newsletters.
- ◆ Draft user involvement strategy.
- ◆ Better care - higher standards.
- ◆ Contracts.
- ◆ Minutes of the core strategy group and commissioning body meetings.
- ◆ Terms of reference for the core strategy group and commissioning body.
- ◆ Charging and contracting policy.
- ◆ Annual audit letter 2002/03.
- ◆ Housing and homelessness strategies.
- ◆ Minutes from provider and SSS BME forum meetings.
- ◆ Newham PCT business plan.
- ◆ Financial reports and ODPM data.

### Reality checks undertaken

When we went on site we carried out a number of different checks, building on the work described above, in order to get a full picture of how good the service is. These on-site reality checks were designed to gather evidence about what it is like to use the service and to see how well it works. We also followed up on issues relating to the management of the review and the improvements flowing from it. Our reality checks included:

- ◆ East Thames Care Ltd – 6 separate accommodation based schemes for: women with learning disabilities fleeing abuse, very sheltered housing, young

people leaving care, people with HIV/AIDS, older people with mental health problems, adults with mental health problems.

- ◆ Tamil Community Housing Association Ltd - Accommodation based service for refugees.
- ◆ Newham Asian Women's Project - Scheme for women fleeing domestic violence.
- ◆ Heritage Care - 2 accommodation based schemes for adults with mental health problems.
- ◆ Karin Housing Association - Floating support for refugees.
- ◆ Stonewall Housing Association - Accommodation based scheme for gay men who have suffered abuse.
- ◆ Stonham Housing Association - Accommodation based scheme for offenders.
- ◆ Hanover Housing Association - Sheltered housing.
- ◆ Kush Housing Association - Floating support for people with HIV/AIDS.
- ◆ Newham Night Shelter - Winter accommodation for rough sleepers and day centre (summer).

## List of people interviewed

We met a range of people involved with the service:

Katrina Anderson	Integrated commissioning manager - mental health
Jackie Belton	Housing – Divisional Director (service improvement) and Supporting People Accountable Officer
Mick Blackburn	Criminal Justice Intervention Team (CJIT) manager
Dave Burbage	Chief Executive
Anslem Crawford	Social services - contracts officer
Bernie Dando & Werner Ullah	Integrated commissioning manager substance misuse & acting Drug Action Team (DAT) co-ordinator
Eve Drayton-Hill	Head of Integrated Adult Commissioning
Roger Harris	Commissioning Body representative Newham Primary Care Trust – Director of Commissioning & Service Improvement
Graham Hismugh	Housing – Divisional Director previous Accountable Officer
Kathryn Hudson	Commissioning Body representative Newham council – Executive Director of Social Services
Hitesh Jolapra	Social services – finance
Linda Johnson	Commissioning Body representative Probation Service

---

	London Area
Ann Lloyd	Manager – integrated services for people with learning disability
Peter Nicholson	Youth Offending Team (YOT) co-ordinator
Edward Roberts	Assistant director adults – social services
Jane Tilston	Integrated commissioning manager older people
Sir Robin Wales	Elected Mayor of Newham
Peter Williams and the Supporting People team	Supporting People Team manager and team
Councillor Neil Wilson	Portfolio holder
Chris Wood	Commissioning Body representative Newham council – Executive Director of Housing and Customer Services

---

## Demographic information

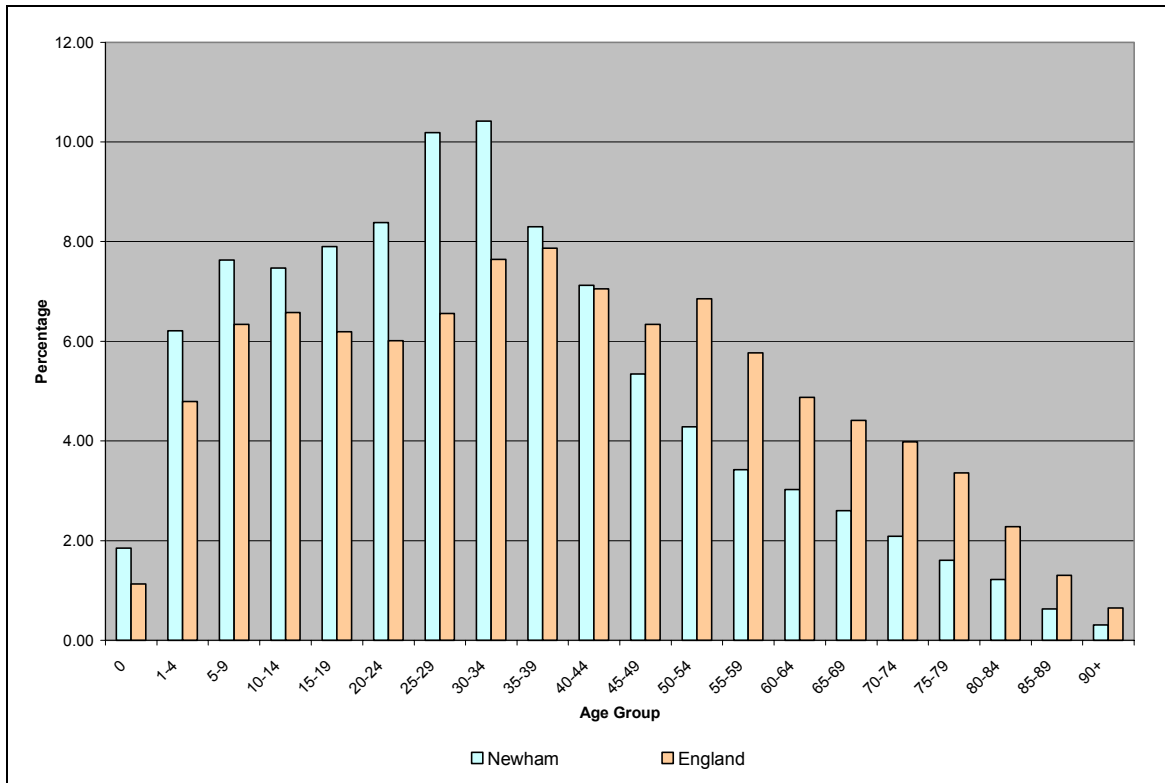
This section includes demographic information relevant to Supporting People, comparing the council and with England.

Measure	Newham	England
Population (mid-2002)	254,000	-
Percentage of the population aged 65+ (mid-2002)	8.46	15.9
Percentage from minority ethnic groups (all groups other than White – British 2002)	66.2	12.5
Percentage unemployment (claimant count rate April 2003)	5.1	2.6
Deprivation Index (1 highest, 354 lowest) <sup>2</sup>	11	-

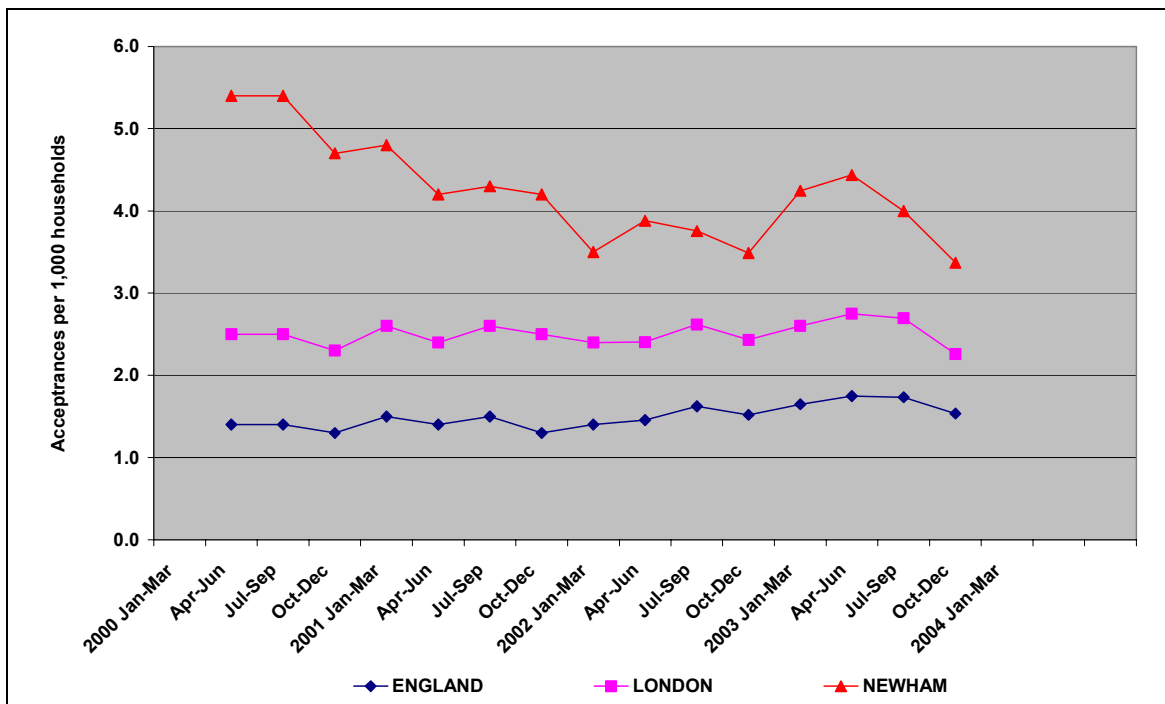
---

<sup>2</sup> 2004 Deprivation Index, average ward score for the authority.

Percentage of the population in each age group compared with England



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



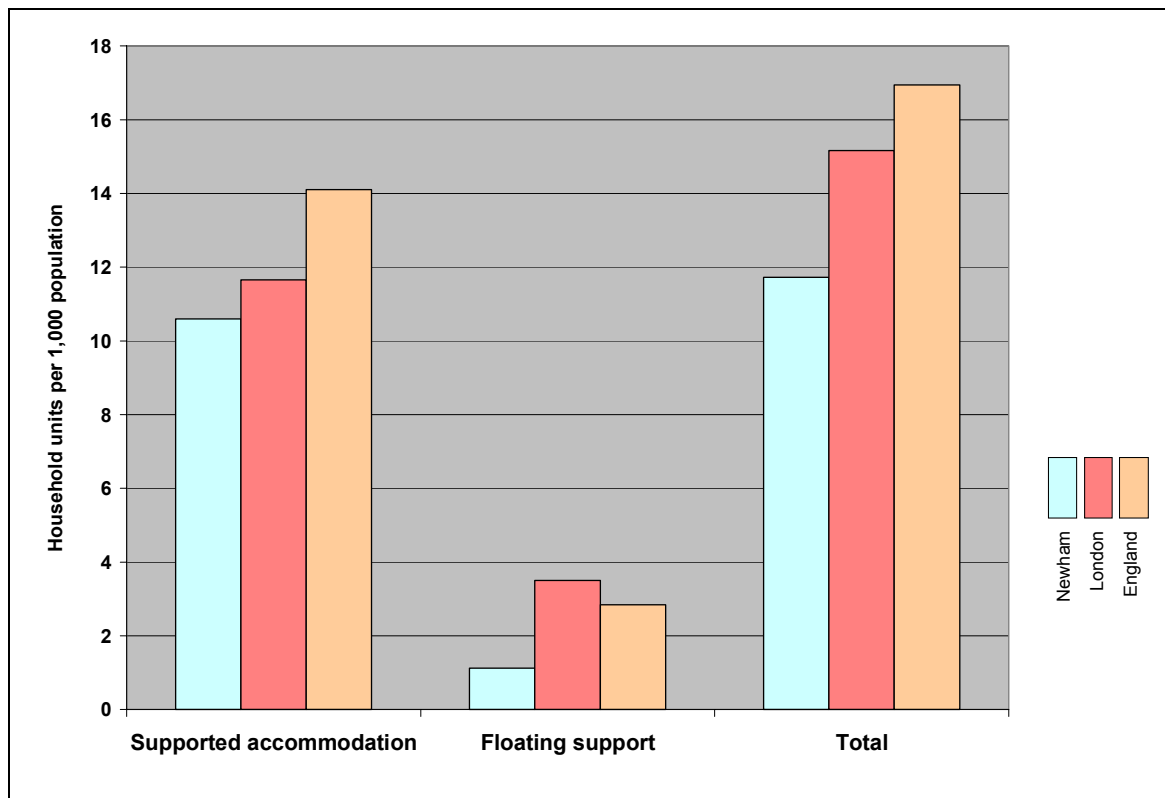
## Performance information

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

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

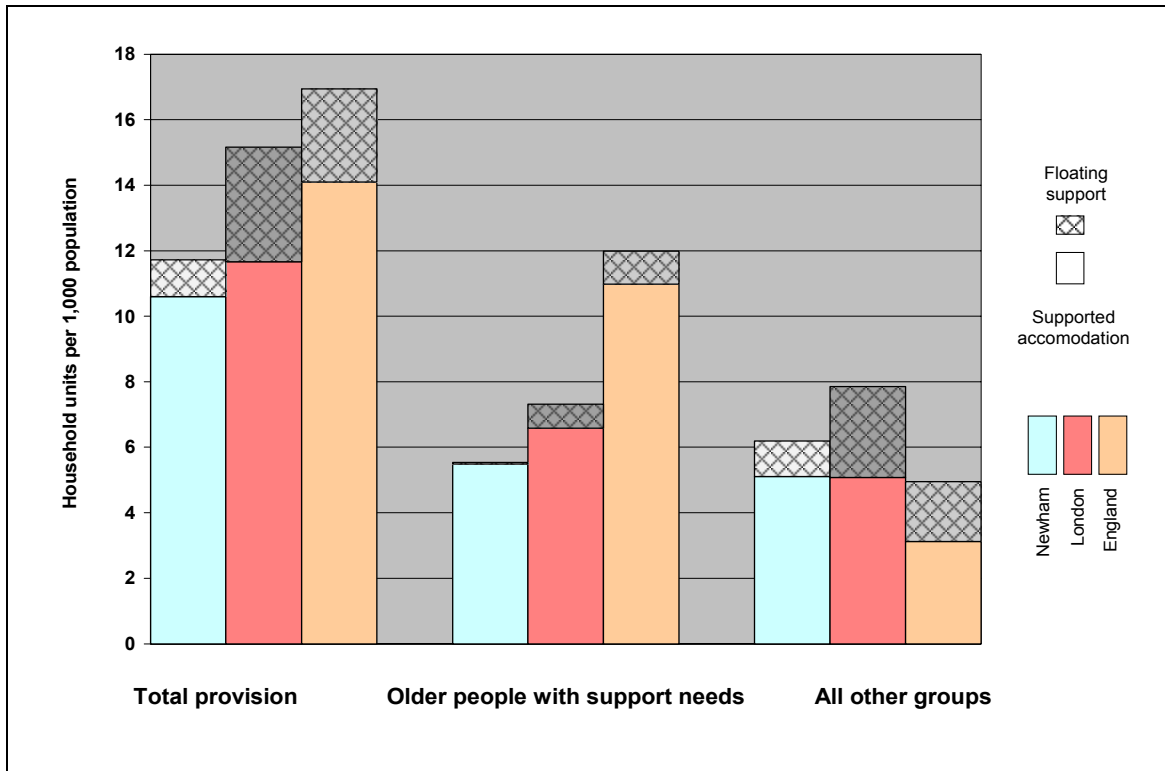
### Supporting People data

Total service provision funded through Supporting People<sup>3</sup>

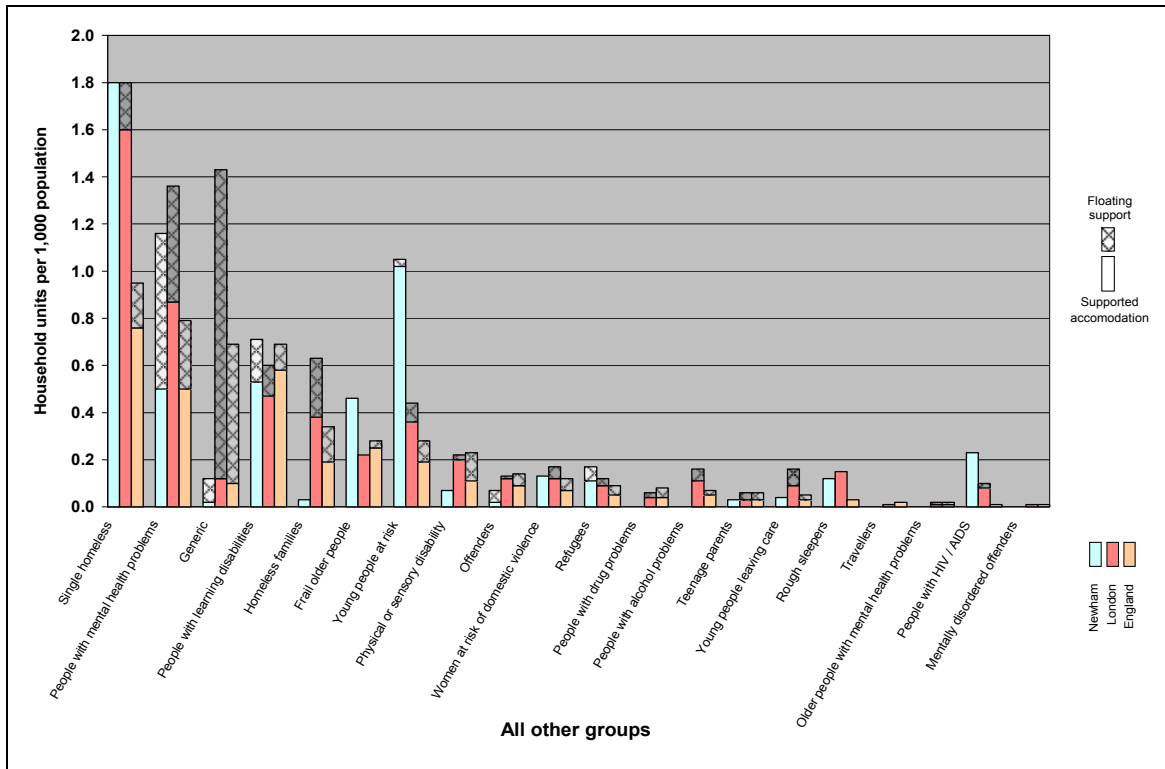


<sup>3</sup> Source: Platinum cut data, ODPM November 2003. Excludes community alarms, home improvement agencies, leasehold schemes and pipeline services.

**Services for older people with support needs compared with the region and England<sup>4</sup>**



**Services for other groups compared with the region and England<sup>5</sup>**



<sup>4</sup> Source: Platinum cut data, ODPM November 2003. Excludes community alarms, home improvement agencies, leasehold schemes and pipeline services.

<sup>5</sup> Source: Platinum cut data, ODPM November 2003. Excludes community alarms, home improvement agencies, leasehold schemes and pipeline services.

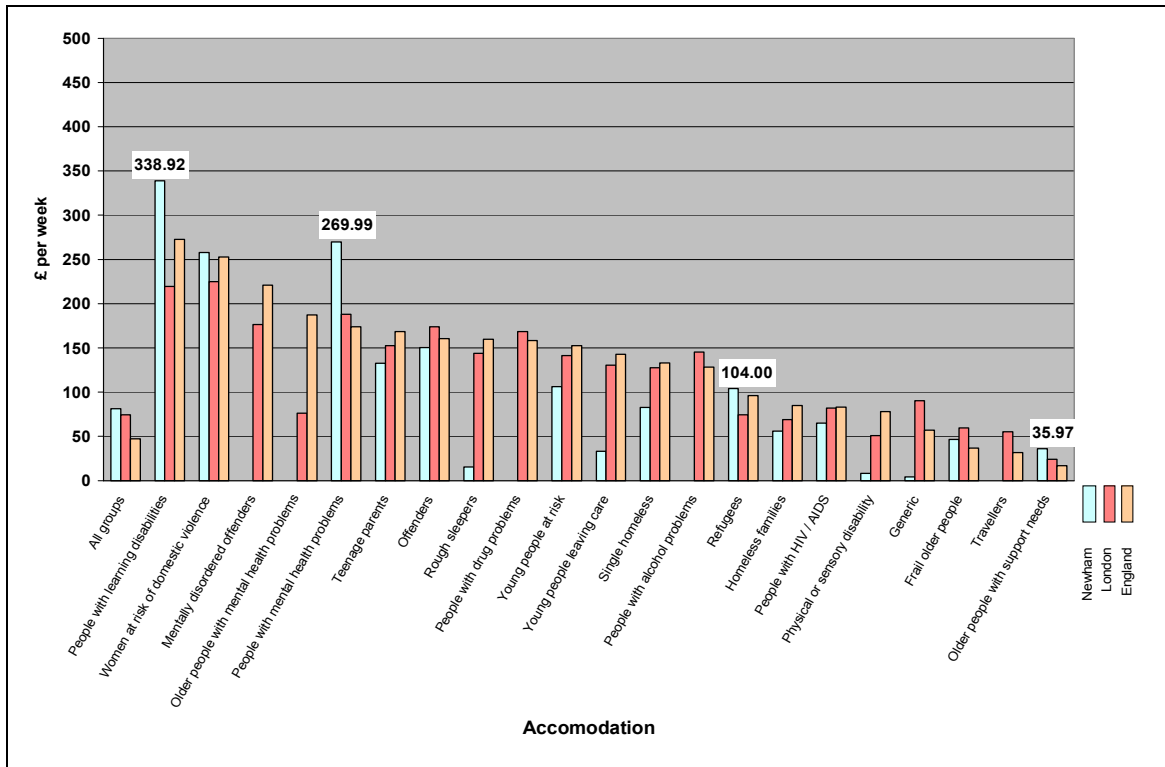
**Funding for Supporting People in 2003/04**

	<b>Final Supporting People grant 2003/04</b>	<b>Pipeline allocation June 2003</b>	<b>Administration grant 2003/04</b>
Newham	£ 11,355,458	£ 153,044	£ 260,465.26

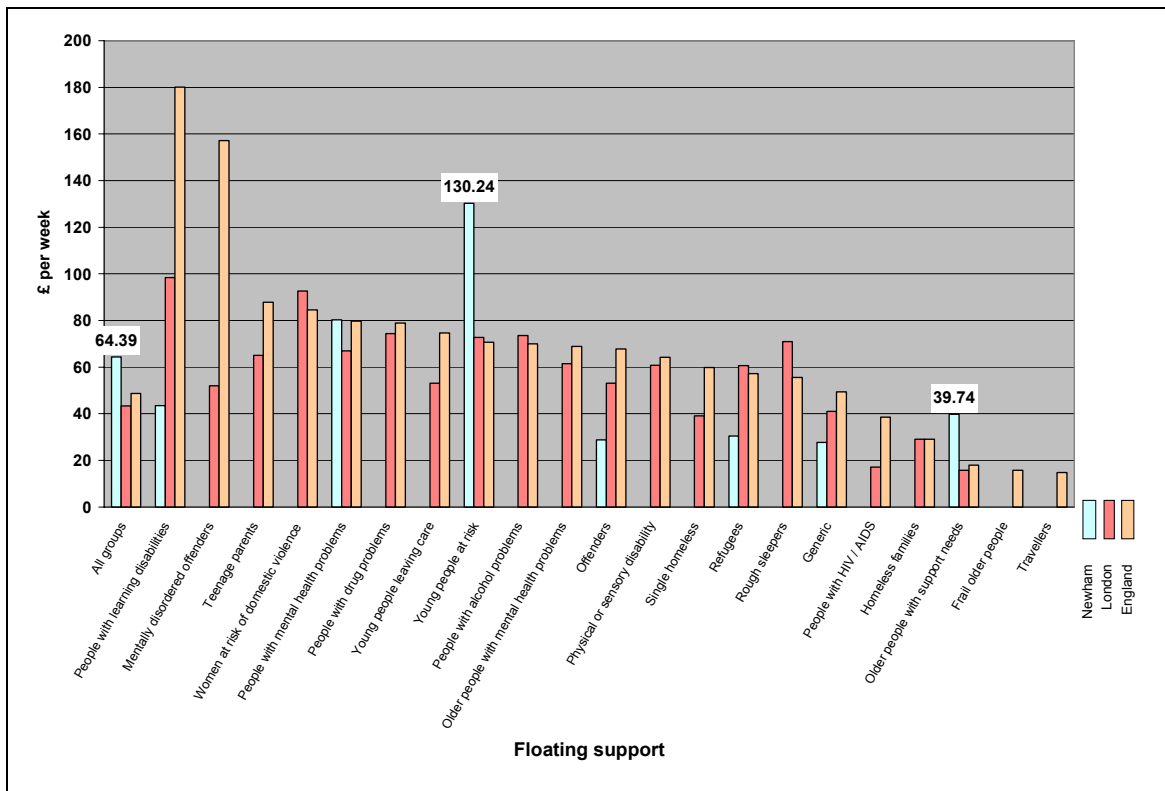
**Unit costs of Supporting People services in 2003/04 (£ per week)**

	<b>Per head of population</b>	<b>Per unit</b>	<b>Per unit excluding community alarms</b>	<b>Per unit excluding community alarms &amp; sheltered housing</b>
Newham	£ 0.86	£ 41.09	£ 59.91	£ 80.37
London	£ 0.97	£ 42.37	£ 48.73	£ 68.40
England	£ 0.70	£ 28.30	£ 34.71	£ 76.37

**Unit costs of supported accommodation compared with the region and England (labels show costs in the highest 25 per cent) <sup>6</sup>**

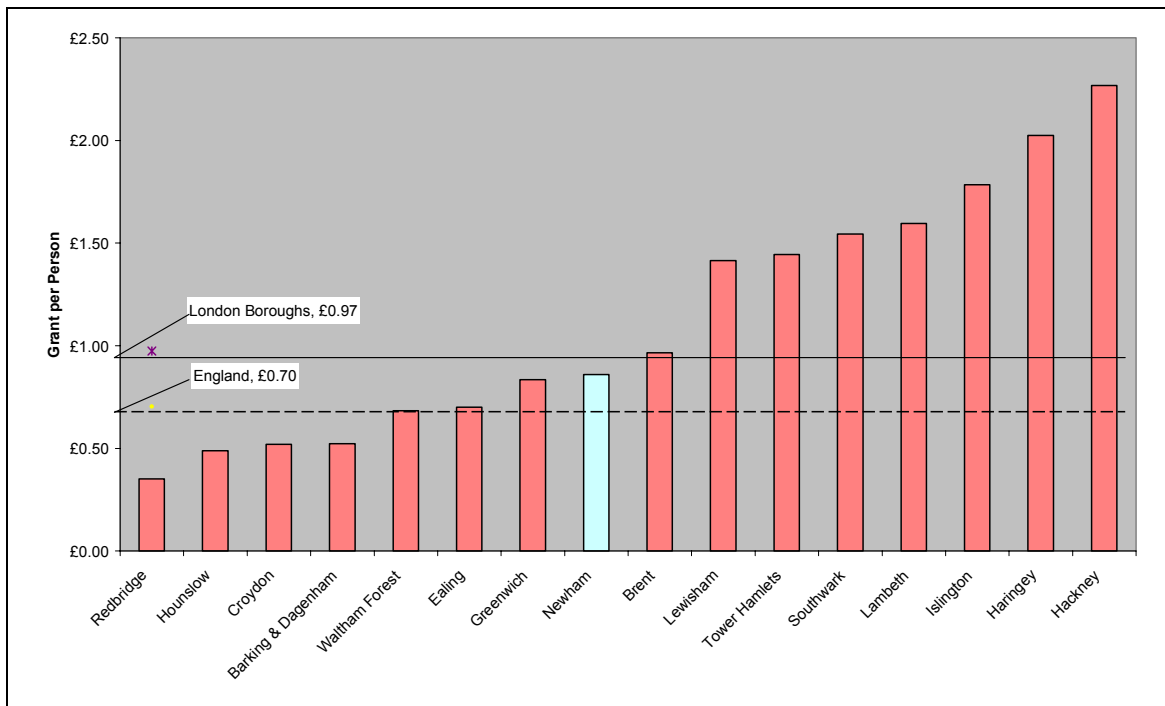


**Unit costs of floating support services compared with the region and England (labels show costs in the highest 25 per cent)**

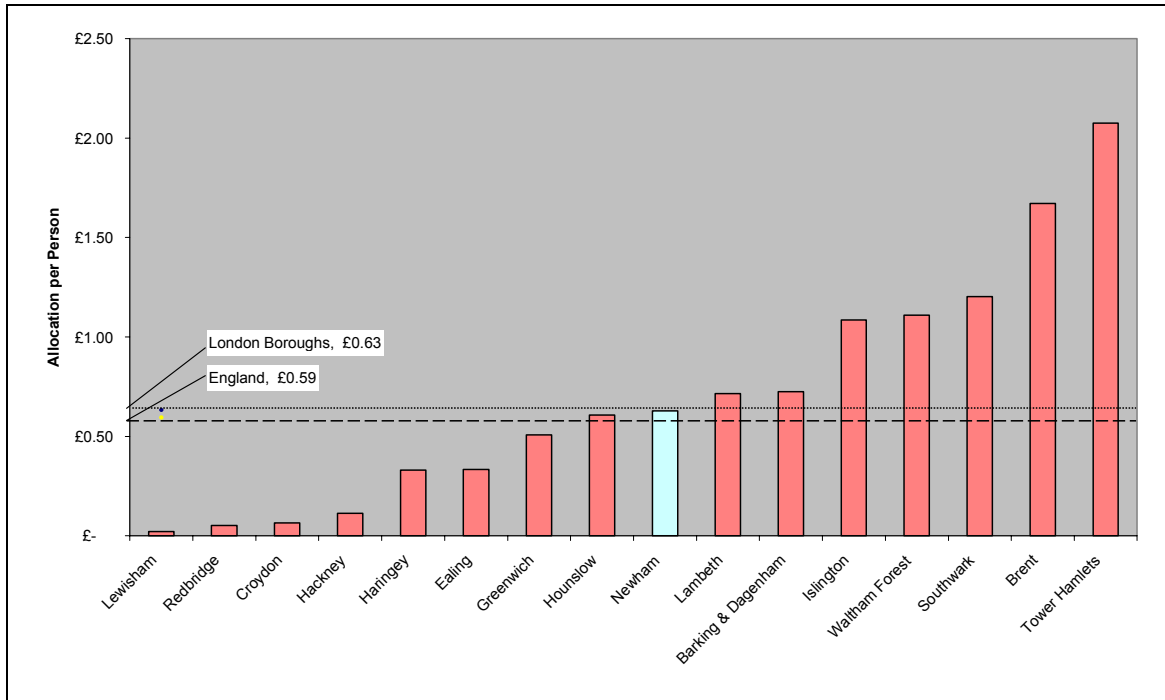


<sup>6</sup> Source: Platinum cut data, ODPM November 2003. Excludes community alarms, home improvement agencies, leasehold schemes and pipeline services.

**Supporting People grant per head of population per week compared with nearest neighbours<sup>7</sup>, all London boroughs and all English councils (2003/04)**

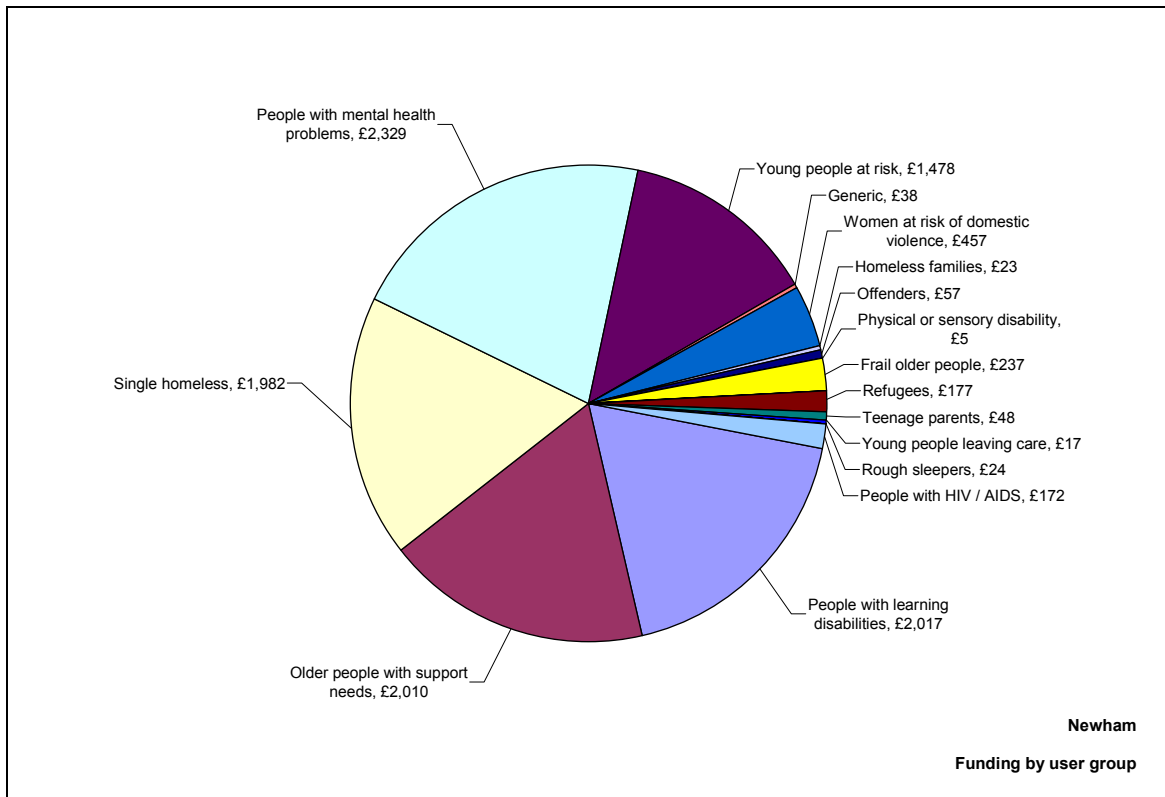


**Pipeline allocation per head of population compared with nearest neighbours, all London boroughs and all English councils.**

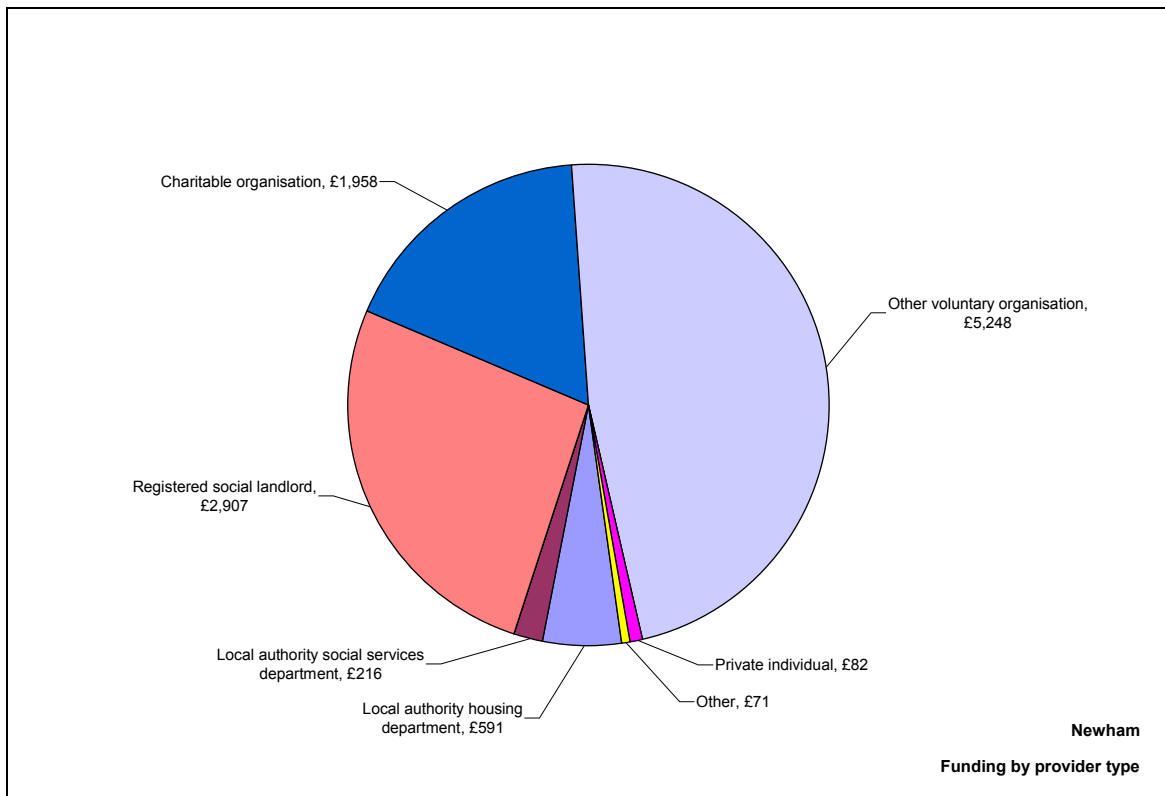


<sup>7</sup> A comparator group of similar councils.

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



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



**Social Services star ratings November 2003**

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

	Serving people well?	Prospects for improvement?	Performance rating (CPA equivalent)
Adults' Services	Some	Promising	★
Children's Services	Some	Promising	(2)

**Social services performance indicators**

**Performance Assessment Framework indicators 2002/03**

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

Newham	
Significantly above average (••••)	Employment, education & training for care leavers (A4) Admissions of adults aged 18-64 to residential or nursing care (C27) Adults with mental health problems helped to live at home (C31) Older people helped to live at home (C32)
Above average (•••)	Admissions of older people to residential or nursing care (C26) Adults with learning disabilities helped to live at home (C30) Admissions to hospital of people aged 75 or over due to hypothermia or a fall (C33) Items of equipment costing less than £1,000 delivered within 3 weeks (D38)
Average (••)	Adults with physical disabilities helped to live at home (C29) Delayed discharges for older people (D41) New clients for whom length of time from first contact to first service was more than six weeks (D43)
Below average (•)	Emergency psychiatric re-admissions (A6)
Significantly below average (•)	

## Best value performance indicators

### Performance on relevant indicators in 2002/3 compared with London boroughs

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

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

## 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)*

### The Small Specialist BME network

A small specialist and BME network has been set up which is designed to ensure that those groups are able to contribute towards the development and implementation of the strategy.

The chair of the network is also a member of the core strategy group and provides feedback between the groups on the progress of the strategy and the views of members.

The development of the small specialist and BME network is an example of positive practice for ensuring that these groups are given a positive say in the development and monitoring of the strategy.

### Obtaining users views of services

A service review was carried out at a specialist scheme for women with learning disabilities who had also suffered from abuse. The women were from varied ethnic groups and had complex multiple health problems.

To ensure that women felt safe and could feel confident to air their views, a local organisation and an advocacy service were enlisted to first hold a workshop for the women. The Supporting People review officer was present for part of the workshop to explain the process. The workshop gave service users time to ask questions about what would be involved and to go through the questions that would be asked, think of questions that were relevant for them and make suggestions for changes to improve accessibility. All material and questions were produced in pictorial form.

Interviews were then held with four service users and another woman who had moved on, by the two advocates working alongside the Supporting People team review officer. The results gave an important insight into the things that mattered most to the women using the scheme. This resulted in an action plan that incorporated the improvements that they wanted to see.